

CONFLICT AND CONQUEST
Gal. 5:16-26

Intro: Paul in his letter to the Galatians teaches us that we are not saved from the penalty of our sins through our own obedience to the law of Moses, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins, and rose again!

This point is very clear.

However, as we move through the epistle we gradually become aware that he is answering another objection to the Law. It is this: THESE LEGALISTS WERE TEACHING THAT THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THE PEOPLE OF GOD FROM DOING THE WRONG THINGS IS TO PUT THEM UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES.

So--they were teaching that the Law saves men from the penalty of sin, and that it also saves us from the power of sin.

This is the reason that in the passage before us this morning Paul raises the question of

I. CONFLICT.

Paul was used to conflict.

The writing of this epistle was a conflict with "false brethren" (cf. 2:4).

In Phil. 1:30 he speaks of his "conflict" with unbelievers. He writes, "Having the same conflict . . ."

In Eph. 6 he writes about a Christian's conflict with the forces of Satan.

Sometimes believers have conflicts with each other. There was on waging in the churches of Galatia--even against Paul himself. Cf. 4:15, 16; 5:15.

BUT THE CONFLICT WHICH HE MENTIONS HERE IN GAL. 5 IS PROBABLY THE MOST IGNORED AND THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD OF ALL THE CONFLICTS WHICH A CHRISTIAN HAS.

It is the conflict which goes on inside of every Christian --the conflict between the Holy Spirit and the flesh.

Let us see if we can understand this conflict.

First of all, who is the Holy Spirit?

He is One of the members of the Godhead. He is equal in

deity with God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Here in Galatians we have learned that He lives in every person who is a child of God. Cf. 3:13, 14; 3:2.

Then at least twice Paul has told us why the Holy Spirit has come to indwell us. Cf. Gal. 5:5; 3:3.

What stands in the way of my attainment to the goal of my salvation--complete conformity to Christ?

The world? Certainly. The world makes it just as difficult for us to live for the Lord as it can. All of us suffer more from worldliness than we realize.

But the world is not our greatest enemy.

Well, then, you say, it must be the devil.

No one who knows anything about the Bible and anything about his own experience will doubt the reality of Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

Ill. I recently discovered new insights into this truth in teaching Revelation. What happens to the world and to the devil during the Kingdom Age, the Millennium? The world becomes a place of peace and Satan is cast into the bottomless pit, and Jesus Christ rules as King over the whole world. Peace last for 1,000 years, but then what happens? We find that man is just the same, and things soon start in the same direction was when the Great Tribulation came to an end: world-wide rebellion against God!

Listen carefully. THE GREATEST CONFLICT YOU AND I ARE EXPOSED TO IS THE CONFLICT THAT GOES ON WITHIN US CONSTANTLY, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MY FLESH, THIS DEGENERATE HUMAN NATURE OF MINE WHICH IS DEPRAVED AND TOTALLY RUINED BY SIN, AND WHICH IS UNCHANGED AFTER I BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

This is a point that many Christians do not understand. They feel that when they become a Christian they will not have this inner turmoil any longer, but to their dismay they find that after they receive Christ the conflict is worse than ever before!

Why?

Because before they were struggling with a weakened con-

science; NOW THEY ARE STRUGGLING AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Now note some things about this conflict.

- A. It can only take place in a Christian, because only a Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling him.
- B. It is constant. There is never any let-up. You will have no negotiated peace here. Both are determined to win.
- C. It is a paradoxical struggle. Sometimes we can be on one side; sometimes on the other. Sometimes we are on both sides at once. We want the will of God, but we find a strange fascination to sin.
- D. It is a conflict which prohibits me from doing what I want to do: "So that ye cannot do the things that ye would"—and this works in both directions. Paul discusses this fully in Rom. 7.
- E. It is irreconcilable. I will never succeed in getting my old fleshly nature to get on the side of the Holy Spirit. Perfectionism is out. I will never lose my ability to sin.

It looks hopeless. Why should we even discuss it?

The answer is simple. It is because it is NOT hopeless. Paul is giving us the answer for our

II. CONQUEST.

How do we attain it? In answering this question I want to make one negative statement and two positive.

- A. First of all, we will never conquer the flesh by putting ourselves under the law. This only adds to the problem, making our rebellion greater.

How do you react when you are told that you cannot do anything?

Even in every day human life, laws must be imposed and enforced, but law is not the final answer. It is only when we want to do the right thing that there can be any semblance of order.

So, the Law is not the answer. It cannot save me, and it cannot keep me from sin after I am saved.

What is the answer then?

It is twofold.

B. I must understand the truth of Gal. 5:24.

My deliverance from the penalty of my sin began with the imparting of truth.

My deliverance from the power of sin in my daily life will come about the same way.

Paul is talking here lit. of those who are "of Christ Jesus," that is, who have come to eternal life through Him, who are children of God through Him, who belong to Him because of what He has done for them!

What does Paul say about us?

That all of us, 100% of us without one exception, lit. "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

It is not something we are to seek; it is a truth that already applies to every one of us. Paul was speaking for every child of God when he said, "I am crucified with Christ . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

LEARN TO DISTINGUISH IN THE BIBLE BETWEEN WHAT APPLIES TO ALL BELIEVERS AS COMPARED WITH THAT WHICH ONLY APPLIES TO SOME!

I like what Watchman Nee says--that self-crucifixion is a human impossibility, and it is a spiritual impossibility.

You do not need to seek to be crucified; you already are.

When did it happen? When Christ died on the Cross. When did I begin to benefit from it? When I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

BUT, YOU SAY, I CAN STILL SIN. HOW COULD I BE CRUCIFIED?

Turn to Rom. 6:9-11, and read.

In what way was Christ crucified to sin? "Death has no more dominion over Him." How am I crucified to sin? I am crucified to sin in that sin no longer is my lord. Before I became a Christian, sin was my lord. Now the LORD JESUS CHRIST is!

THIS IS A TRUTH WHICH I MUST UNDERSTAND.

Cf. Phil. 3:10, 11.

But there is one other point. This second is not just doctrinal, but it is practical in nature.

B. I must act upon the truth of Gal. 5:16.

W-A-L-K is the greatest word in the NT for believers.
It means L-I-V-E.

Live how? By means of the Holy Spirit, in dependence upon Him.

This is the most difficult thing for a Christian to learn. We are all our lives learning to live this way. Before I became a Christian I did everything for myself. I depended upon ME! Now I must turn my dependence to the Spirit of God.

But how do you do this?

It has a very practical answer. Cf. John 16:12-15, "I have yet many things . . ."

This is why the Psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid . . ." (Psa. 119:11).

THE LORDSHIP, THE DOMINION OF SIN WAS BROKEN WHEN CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS. IT BECAME MY BIRTHRIGHT AS A CHRISTIAN WHEN I RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS MY SAVIOUR. IT IS MINE IN EXPERIENCE ONLY AS I WALK DAY BY DAY IN DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT AS HE SHOWS ME HOW TO LIVE BY THE WORD OF GOD.

Concl: What a Saviour! He alone is sufficient. He delivers me from sin's penalty, from sin's power, and some day even from sin's presence. No wonder Christ alone is sufficient; this is all I need.

Have you trusted Him as your Saviour? If not, this must come first.

If you have trusted Him, are you walking in the Spirit? The promise is certain: "Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."