

## *Galatians 5: 19-26, Part 5*

- **John Moon**

- **Prayer Room—24/7**

- “Prayer is the coupling of primary and secondary causes...How astonishing it is that God wills to do His work through People. It is doubly astonishing that He ordains to fulfill His plans by being asked to do so by us.”<sup>1</sup>
- For example, God knew that His purpose was to increase the men of Israel. But He said, “This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to increase their people like a flock” (*Ezekiel 36:37*).
- God knew He would preserve Abimelech’s life if the king would return Sarah to Abraham. But He said to him: “Return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live” (*Genesis 20:7*).
  - God wanted to save Abimelech, but He wanted to do it through Abraham’s prayer.
- God loves the world and He is eager to gather His harvest, nevertheless Jesus said, “Pray...the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into this harvest” (*Matthew 9:38*).
  - Why does God, the Lord of the harvest, need to be implored by his farmhands to send out more laborers? Is it because He is reticent to draw people to Himself? No, He tells us to “Pray...” because there is one thing God loves to do more than bless the world. He loves to bless the world in answer to prayer.<sup>2</sup>
- John Piper tells of hearing a seminary graduate commenting on how adequate he felt for the ministry after his years of schooling. Although the statement was intended to be a compliment it is utterly startling, because the greatest theologian and missionary that ever lived cried out, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (*2 Corinthians 2:16*).
  - Not because Paul was a bungler, but because of the incredible magnitude of the calling to emit the fragrance of eternal life for some and eternal death for others (*2 Corinthians 2:14-16*).
- *A.C. Dixon*: “When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do.”<sup>3</sup>

- **Announcement from Willow Creek/Chuck Colson<sup>4</sup>**

“Rethinking Church: Where Is Willow Creek, and Where Are We?”

- “Willow Creek Community Church, one of America’s biggest and most prominent churches, recently released a short book called *Reveal: Where Are You*<sup>5</sup>? The book contains the results of a comprehensive study that Willow Creek conducted among their own members and among

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<sup>1</sup> See John Piper, *Brothers We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Piper, 54.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in G. Michael Cocoris, *Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 108.

<sup>4</sup> The following letter is taken from: Chuck Colson, “Rethinking Church: Where Is Willow Creek, and Where Are We?” December 5, 2007, [http://www.informz.net/pfm/archives/archive\\_529389.html](http://www.informz.net/pfm/archives/archive_529389.html).

<sup>5</sup> Greg Hawkins & Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Chicago: Willow Creek Association, 2007), “Introduction.”

members of other churches that use their model. Pastor Bill Hybels has said that the results of that study are “earth-shaking,” “ground-breaking.”

- “In a nutshell, the survey results showed that heavy involvement in the church programs and activities of Willow Creek did not necessarily translate to spiritual growth and maturity. Findings like these have caused the church leaders to stand up and admit, “We made a mistake.”
- “I have to tell you, that is historic. Can you remember the last time a church leader said anything like that? I can’t, and I am very proud of Bill Hybels. He and his leaders deserve a Christian profile in courage award, and I will nominate him.
- “Bill Hybels understands the problem that the Church is in today. It is into therapy, but it needs to teach doctrine and grow people in the faith...
- “I think the lesson that the Willow Creek leaders have learned, and the courage they are showing, constitute a challenge and a warning for all Christians. We cannot let ourselves get caught up in a ‘just-get-’em-in-the-doors’ mentality, no matter how attractive and effective it looks. It can too easily lead to the watering-down of the Gospel, to a ‘feel-good’ faith, and to believers having little impact in society. As the authors of the book, Willow Creek staffers Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, put it in their introduction: “The health of your church is not just about the numbers. It’s about the movement of people toward Christ, toward deep love for God and genuine love for others...Bill Hybels’s example should challenge us all, especially pastors and those in positions of leadership, to take a long, hard look at what we are doing and ask whether it is really changing lives...”<sup>6</sup>
- “During the Reformation, the reformers had a phrase for this spirit. It was called *semper reformandi*, or always reforming. The more we continue to understand that we have not arrived, and the more willing we are to adopt the humble approach that we and our churches are in need of continual reformation, the more our churches and lives will come to reflect the God we preach.



- “I am cheering Willow Creek on. Think what could happen if, instead of tickling ears, all the churches gave the people real meat (that is, they gave people sound exposition instead of flashy, superficial sermonettes that tend to foster a kind of Christian consumer/shopper mentality—I look for a church that will meet my needs and desires, rather than having as a priority a church where you will be challenged to grow in conformity to Christ and your love for God’s glory.).
- **Colson:** “This character-oriented perspective is totally foreign to our achievement-oriented society...And it goes against everything in our consumer-oriented religious culture, where we pick and choose churches on the basis of fellowship or outreach programs or music or location or convenient parking. *Rarely do we hear believers say, ‘I decided to join this church because*

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<sup>6</sup> Chuck Colson, “Rethinking Church.”

*of its character as a holy community.*’ Nor do most choose a church on the basis of its capacity to disciple and equip them for ministry. *Yet that should be our very first consideration...its most fundamental task is to build communities of holy character. And the first priority of those communities is to disciple men and women to maturity in Christ.*”<sup>7</sup>

- **Colson:** “Rarely do we hear believers say, ‘I decided to join this church because of its character as a holy community.’ Nor do most choose a church on the basis of its capacity to disciple and equip them for ministry. Yet that should be our very first consideration. If the church is the body, the holy presence of Christ in the world, its most fundamental task is to build communities of holy character.”
- **Daniel Block:** “It remains a truism that God’s reputation in society is determined by the health of the Church and to the extent the church achieves the spiritual goals he has set for it.”<sup>8</sup>
- Then there might be hope for America after all, as serious disciples are equipped to defend their faith and take their places in our communities.

**Galatians 5:19-26**—“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

**Sins of Intemperance**

**Drunkenness (methai).**

- There is no place for drunkenness in a Spirit-directed lifestyle.
- Alcohol abuse was a common feature of urban life in the Roman Empire, but Paul expected a different, higher standard of conduct among those who belonged to Christ.
- In addition to the common abuse of alcohol, Paul may also have had in mind the cultic inebriation practiced by the mystery religion of Dionysos, the wine god.
- Paul portrayed excessive drinking as incompatible with real Christian commitment.
- However, the prohibition against drunkenness is not the same thing as a prohibition against all alcohol consumption. “Drunkenness” is not the same thing as “drinking.” Not the following chart: <sup>9</sup>

Scripture condemns drunkenness	Scripture condemns gluttony.	Scripture condemns infidelity.
Drinking alcohol can lead to drunkenness.	Enjoying food can lead to gluttony.	Enjoying sex can lead to sexual infidelity.
Therefore, Scripture	Therefore, Scripture	Therefore, Scripture

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<sup>7</sup> Chuck Colson, *The Body* (Word Publishing Group: Nashville, 1994).  
<sup>8</sup> Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 59.  
<sup>9</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *God Gave Wine: What the Bible Says About Alcohol* (Lincoln, CA: Oakdown, 2001), 32. For other words on the subject of alcohol and the Christian see G.I. Williamson, *Wine in the Bible and the Church* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Press, 1976); Andre Bustanoby, *The Wrath of Grapes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), Geerhardus Vos, *The Separated Life* (Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Committee on Christian Education, 1936) and Kenneth Gentry, *The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986).

condemns all alcohol.	condemns all food consumption.	condemns all sexual activity.
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- There are some people that should never touch a drop of alcohol for the rest of their lives.
  - However, we must be careful of making hard and fast rules where the Bible does not make such requirements. Drinking, I think, falls into this kind of category.
- **Psalm 104:14-15**—“He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth, and wine that gladdens the heart of man.”

### **Orgies (komoi)**

- This word is variously translated “revelings” (KJV), “carousing” (RSV), “wild parties” (TLB), “horsing around” (Cotton Patch).
- It occurs three times in the New Testament (here and in Romans 13:13 and 1 Peter 4:3). In each case it is linked to the sin of drunkenness.
- In New Testament times, as in our own day, the abuse of alcohol contributed to marital infidelity, child and spouse abuse, the erosion of family life, and moral chaos in society.
  - **Dallimore**: “[In 1727]... every sixth house was a gin shop. The poor were unspeakably wretched—over 160 crimes had the death penalty! Gin made the people what they were never before—cruel and inhuman. Hanging was a daily gala event; those jerking on the ropes were watched and applauded by men, women and children who crowded the gallows for the best view. Prisons were unimaginable nightmares; young and old, hardened criminal and first-time offender were thrown in together to fight for survival.”<sup>10</sup>

### **and the like.**

- I’ve mentioned before, that this little phrase simply means that Paul could go on & on.

### **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

- This is not an idle threat but a solemn warning from the New Testament.
- In this verse Paul looked forward to the personal, visible return of Jesus Christ in glory.
- This is the blessed hope of the Christian, but it is also an event of great foreboding for those outside of Christ because Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).
- **Question**: But, if this is true, had Paul now ceased to teach that we are justified by faith alone apart from the works of the law?
  - **Answer**: There is nothing in this passage that suggests the slightest hint of compromise on this cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith.
  - **R.A. Cole**—“Paul’s whole point is that *they which do such things* thereby show themselves to be without the transforming gift of faith...[the Christian] shows the reality of the ‘faith that justifies,’ and the reality of the ‘new life in Christ’ that is within him, by a clear break with all these ‘works of darkness,’ familiar though they may have been to him in the past.”<sup>11</sup>
  - Those who are slaves to the works of the flesh show themselves to be no heirs of the kingdom of God
- **Ills**. A few months ago I had a young man come in for an appointment. He had kept himself sexually pure his entire life, waiting until he would marry (he was about my age—40). He had never dated too much but he had recently met someone and was now engaged. Since his fiancé lived out of state she moved to Washington so they could get to know each other better and work toward marriage. But because finances were tight they decided to live together. He came to meet with me for a couple

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 1:19-27. This description is of the city of London.

<sup>11</sup> R.A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 164.

of reasons, one of them was to talk to me about this situation. Although he knew what he was doing was wrong (and he didn't want to stop), he felt the sting of a guilty conscience and he wanted to find some way of alleviating it. He admitted that he knew that what he was doing was wrong, "But," he asked, "do you think God will send me to hell if I don't repent?" That was it! That was the real reason he had come to see me: he wanted to know if his refusal to repent was going to cost him eternally.

○ **Question:** How would you answer him?

- **Timothy George:** "Paul said that those who 'behave in such ways' (NEB), that is, those who habitually indulge in such immoral, idolatrous, impure, unjust, or intemperate acts, will be excluded from the celestial blessedness of the kingdom of God."<sup>12</sup>
- Throughout these verses Paul has led us down fifteen steps into the pit of depravity.
- **However**, where is the Christian who can stand and boast that he has achieved perfect victory over the flesh and must no longer struggle with it?
- **Calvin:** "For who is there who does not labor under one or another of these sins? I reply: Paul does not threaten that there shall be excluded from the Kingdom of God all who have sinned, but all who remain impenitent. The saints themselves are heavily burdened, but they return to the way. Because they do not surrender, they are not included in this catalog. All the threatenings of God's judgments call us to repentance, for which pardon is always ready with God; but if we continue obstinate, they will be a testimony against us."<sup>13</sup>
- Paul did not sound his warning in order to instill despair in struggling Christians. Rather he wanted us to see the heinous character of sin and so be led by the Spirit to repentance and mortification of the flesh.
- In stark contrast to the "works of the flesh," are the character traits of grace. That is, these are the evidences of a Spirit-filled life.
- According to John 3:5–8 the human nature, with which all of us are born, will not enter into the kingdom of God unless it is changed.
- That is, the Holy Spirit establishes himself as the new ruling principle of our life. John 3: 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'
- In other words, that which is begotten by the Spirit has the nature of the Spirit, is permeated by the character of the Spirit, is animated by the Spirit.
- *Walking by the Spirit is what we do when the desires produced by the Spirit are stronger than the desires produced by the flesh.*
- Speaking during the revival of the Great Awakening, John Hamilton of Glasgow, Scotland told of the experience while George Whitefield was in Cambuslang.
- **John Hamilton:** "I found a good many persons under the deepest exercise of soul, crying out most bitterly of their lost and miserable state, by reason of sin; of their unbelief, in despising Christ and the offers of the Gospel; of the hardness of their heart; and of their gross carelessness and indifference about religion...I heard them express great sorrow for these things, and seemingly in the most serious and sincere manner, and this not so much...from fear of punishment as from a sense of the dishonour done to God..."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* in *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 398.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, trans. T.H.L. Parker, in *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 11:104-5.

<sup>14</sup> Duncan. Macfarlan, *Revivals of the Eighteenth Century* (London and Edinburgh, n.d.), 55, as quoted in Dallimore, *George*

