

Intro:

Today I'd like to continue a theme we began a couple of weeks ago. You may remember our message on 'The Violent Christian'.

The theme of that message was the necessity of a vigorous, indeed a militant attitude towards ourselves and especially towards the works of the flesh in order for us to grow spiritually.

The primary activity of the flesh is *desire*, or lust.

See Gal 5.16-17

James says:

Jas 4.1-2 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you?
come they not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?
Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot
obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

From the desire of the flesh the works of the flesh are carried out, as we have them listed for us in Gal 5.

What is it that the flesh desires? It desires to *have*...

- The desire to have *things* – materialism
- The desire to have *feelings* – sensuality
- The desire to have *people* and *power* – megalomania

These desires are directed outside of the self for the gratification of the self.

Inward desire, outward look, constantly seeking satisfaction

In order to walk in the Spirit, we saw that we have to *crucify* the flesh.

I tried to show you how serious that was last time by dwelling on the meaning of the word "crucify". The concept was shocking, even the word was shocking and horrible to the first century hearer.

Also remember this: the word 'crucify' is almost always used in the Bible of literal crucifixion. There are only a few occasions where it is used as a metaphor. In light of its shock value and its very rare metaphorical use, those places it is used are significant.

So, again, to walk in the Spirit, you *must* crucify the flesh.

Now, if the desires of the flesh are focused outward, what are they focused on?

The world – the system of values, "the concerns of the earth and its affairs as distinguished from heaven and the life to come"¹

¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

The flesh can't be satisfied in heaven, so it looks to the world.

It is no surprise, then, that the other use of *crucify* has to do with the world.

Read Gal 6.11-16, text v. 14

Proposition: The Christian who is trying to walk in the Spirit has adopted a militant attitude towards the world.

I. The meaning of 'world' in this context

A. What do you think of when we talk about 'the world'?

1. Pleasures
2. Power
3. Money
4. Sex
5. Drugs/alcohol
6. Music
7. Success

B. These things are often associated, however, with the flesh (see Gal 5.19-21)

1. The works of the flesh are involved in getting these things
2. Or in fighting if they don't get these things

So there is a particularly close connection between the flesh and 'the things of the world'.

The flesh desires; the flesh is occupied with desires for the things of this world.

The spiritual Christian puts those desires to death – crucifies them.

C. There is, however, something else that is connected with the world and it is that aspect in particular that we must do something about

1. Note how importantly Paul takes this (6.11)
 - a. Paul normally had a scribe writing his letters by dictation
 - b. Here he takes up the pen himself
 - c. He comments "See my large letters"
 - 1) Some have said that this is his eye disease
 - 2) Others suggest the length of the epistle (probably not)

- 3) Others say that here he is now writing in all Caps, instead of lowercase

Why would he do that? For emphasis.

Even now, if you go “ALL CAPS” IN AN E-MAIL IT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE SAME AS SHOUTING AND IS FROWNED UPON. (I have that in all-caps in my notes.)

2. The following verses are a summary of Paul’s argument in Galatians: he wants them to get it, so he is writing in ALL CAPS in his own hand
- a. He is battling against some false teachers who say that Christians must be circumcised in order to be accepted by God (12-13).
 - b. He lists three motivations:
 - 1) They were men-pleasers “fair shew” KJV, “good showing” NAU – seeking to make an outward impression [to the world]
 - 2) They were afraid of persecution [by the world] (12b)
 - 3) They wanted to boast in the number of their converts [reputation from the world] (13)

“The Judaizers wanted to make a **good showing in the flesh** by building up a large group of followers. They could do this by insisting on circumcision. People are often quite willing to observe rites and ceremonies as long as they are not required to change their habits. It is common today to build up a large church membership by lowering the standards.”²

3. The aspect of the world in view in these verses: *the acceptance of the world*
- a. The world offers to men the opportunity to satisfy the flesh (supposedly)
 - b. The world understands those who take part in this activity and generally approves

² William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*, electronic ed., Ga 6:12 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995).

I once had a boss with whom I was discussing an advertising idea. I wondered if it seemed a little too greedy. His answer, “Oh, every body understands self-interest.”

That’s right.

Everybody understands self-interest.

c. The world in particular dislikes it when you aren’t part of their world: it disapproves you

We were recently at a birthday party for a friend. The family of this friend is all lost. The friend might be, we don’t know for sure.

- We were the only ones who didn’t partake of alcohol (besides the little kids).

It quite obviously made those who noticed *uncomfortable*. It always does.

Sustained living like that in the presence of worldly people can produce antagonism: “You think you’re better than everyone else, don’t you?”

d. The Judaizers were men who wanted acceptance by the world and wanted to make Christianity acceptable to the world of their day.

II. The mind of the Christian with respect to the world

A. The spiritual mind glories [boasts] in the cross

B. The spiritual mind by the cross has been crucified the world to himself

C. The spiritual mind by the cross has been crucified to the world

There is that word again: ‘crucified’

“It is difficult after sixteen centuries and more during which the cross has been a sacred symbol, to realize the unspeakable horror and loathing which the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in Paul’s day. The word *crux* was unmentionable in polite Roman society . . . ; even when one was being condemned to death by crucifixion the sentence used an archaic formula which served as a sort of euphemism . . .

“But Paul, Roman citizen by birth and religious Jew by upbringing, not only dismisses as the merest refuse (*skubala*, Phil. 3:8) those things in which he had once taken a proper pride but embraces as the most worthwhile goal in life the knowledge of the crucified Christ and boasts in his cross—a shocking paradox indeed.”³

- In other words, there is a militant mind that we must have, not only towards the flesh which desires the things of the world, but also towards the world which desires to approve us — if we are just like them.

Are you concerned if you seem a little weird to the world?

- A little old-fashioned...
- A little ‘holier-than-thou’...
- I keep saying ‘a little’... if you live like I preach, the world will think you are *a lot weird*.

Does the acceptance of the world mean more to you than the cross of Christ?

Matthew Henry:

“The false teachers were men of a worldly temper, their chief concern was about their secular interests, and therefore they accommodated their religion thereunto. But Paul was a man of another spirit; as the world had no kindness for him, so neither had he any great regard to it; he had got above both the smiles and the frowns of it, and had become as indifferent to it as one who is dying out of it. This is a temper of mind that all Christians should be labouring after; and the best way to attain it is to converse much with the cross of Christ. The higher esteem we have of him the meaner opinion shall we have of the world, and the more we contemplate the sufferings our dear Redeemer met with from the world the less likely shall we be to be in love with it.”⁴

³ Bruce, p. 271, quoted in Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Ga 6:14 (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003).

⁴ Matthew Henry, *loc. cit.*

III. The blessing of Christ on the militant life (6.16)

- Read Gal 6.16
- Do you want blessing and peace?
- Do you want the approval of God?

Conclusion:

Proposition: The Christian who is trying to walk in the Spirit has adopted a militant attitude towards the world.

Let me close with an exhortation from John Chrysostom, the well-known preacher who lived from AD 343-407. He was called “the golden-tongued”:

“But let us with a clear voice, shouting both loud and high, cry out and say (and should all the heathen be present, so much the more confidently), that the cross is our glory, and the sum of all our blessings, and our confidence, and all our crown. I would that also with Paul I were able to say, ‘By which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;’ but I cannot, restrained as I am by various passions.

“Wherefore I admonish both you, and surely before you myself, to be crucified to the world, and to have nothing in common with the earth, but to set your love on your country above, and the glory and the good things that come from it. For indeed we are soldiers of a heavenly King, and are clad with spiritual arms. Why then take we upon ourselves the life of traders, and mountebanks, nay rather of worms? For where the King is, there should also the soldier be. Yea, we are become soldiers, not of them that are far off, but of them that are near. For the earthly king indeed would not endure that all should be in the royal courts, and at his own side, but the King of the Heavens willeth all to be near His royal throne.”⁵

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homily Mt 14.23-24.