

## The works of the flesh and "The Party Spirit"

What the Bible says about Party Spirit? It is one of the works of the "Flesh" or sinful nature. In Gal.5:19-21, the apostle gives us a listing of the works of the flesh and concept of the flesh to remind us that we dwell in a body which constantly pulls us toward the desires and actions of our fallen sinful natures. *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, wickedness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, divisions, party spirit (heresies-denial of a revealed truth, sects with peculiar opinions), envy, murders, drunkenness, violent celebrations, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

What are the two spirits in the Bible? The spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Parties are indeed factions. Faction or strife is defined as self-seeking, rivalry, competition, party making. The party spirit is an evident sign of carnality. *for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* (1CO3:3-5) By this, he means that the Christians in Corinth, despite having power from the Holy Spirit, are still selfishly serving themselves. They have access to God's Spirit, and the ability to grow into selfless, Christlike lives, but they have not made any progress. It is here listed with other things which will prohibit from heaven. This alone should cause us to examine ourselves to see if we are free from its stain. We earnestly desire an entrance into the everlasting kingdom. We must be willing to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. But the party spirit is very deceptive. Paul has called out a source of hot conflict between the Christians living in Corinth. Instead of being united together, as God has called them to be, they have divided themselves into factions based on the party fixation among God's people to different leaders claiming Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ.(1CO1:10-13) The sinfulness of parties within the church. There is no doubt the sinfulness of factions/groups rallying around their leaders Those who boast about their freedom from it are often tragic victims of its poison. Parties are a creative cause of infantilism/immature. In environment of groups there is prevailing spiritual retardation. After all, Christ is not divided. Paul says to Christians, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. (v.1) Every person who is a Christian has been marked by God. They are called to be saints with all Christians everywhere.

Peter issues two warnings against corrupt teachers who are leading the Christian communities astray with their way of life. Peter shows one motive of the false teachers: greed. They want power and money, and they're willing to distort God's Word to try to get it from God's people. They tell false stories about other things, as well. 2 Peter 2:1-3, *"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them— bringing swift destruction on themselves"*. From this verse, we see that heresy is anything that denies the teaching of Jesus—heresies that led to schisms in the body. Heresy is the translation of the Greek haireisis— meaning literally "choice" or "selection". Even in the Bible, it is mostly used to refer to a party or a philosophy with which a person had chosen to identify or ally himself. A second definition is "dissent or deviation from a dominant theory, opinion, or practice." Other translations say "divisive person," "factious man," and "person who stirs up division." Thus, haireisis is frequently translated "sect." In Acts, applies it to the Sadducees (ACT5:17) and the Pharisees (ACT15:5;26:5) However, haireisis meant a destructive element within the church that creates division through consciously formed opinions and ideas in disagreement with the teachings of the apostles. The party syndrome among religious people has blinded their eyes regarding the "one faith" and "one body" taught in the scriptures.

Symptoms of Party Spirit: **1.** A reluctance to admit the truths held by others. Truth is truth, regardless of who holds it. The partisan-prejudiced (one sided opinion) is afraid to acknowledge truth held by those outside of his group for fear it will reflect favorably upon them. If he does admit truth on the part of another, he must hasten to speak deprecatingly (disapprove) of the person or some other position he holds. If someone remarks that a person spoke the truth in his fight against evil, the partisan replies, "Yes, but look at all the money he gets for doing it." If questioned as to how much he gets, he does not know, but he seeks to offset the fact that truth was spoken by creating suspicion against the man and his motives. No one in the group belongs ever preaches for money, but every member of another religious party and who speaks truth, does so insincerely, because he knows better, his sole object is to inflate his pride and secure filthy profit.

**2.** Inability to rejoice over the good done by others. It seems that some would rather see men left to stumble in depression than to see others credited with helping them. They "pass by on the other side" and then revile the "Samaritans" who stop and relieve the wounded and forsaken. **3.** Unwillingness to hear both sides of an issue. See some sect seeks to maintain its narrow exclusiveness by refusing to permit its members to read anything which conflicts with its tradition. Free men in Christ are not afraid to read anything, or hear anyone. Party men must stay in good with the party. **4.** A tendency to abandon the search for truth and rest satisfied. There is nothing left to learn, no new discoveries to be made. All that was to parrot the same sermon outlines, misapply the scriptures in the same fashion, defend the same wrong in reasoning; mistake the same customs and traditions for God's word, and stir up the same false emotions in the congregation toward others. There is nothing which bothers a sect more than to be around one who refuses to be made a sectarian. A real partisan does not seek for new truths. He does not need to do so. His party has ascended to the highest peak of spiritual attainment. There is nothing beyond to challenge his thinking or stimulate his intellect. There is nothing ahead but stagnation and decay! *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*(EPH5:11)

1. It breeds inconsistency. In many congregations, the arguments are frequent over marriage and divorce, relation to civil government, our obligation to non-members, etc. 2. It shrinks the souls of men. The humanitarian love of God which should expand our souls and cause us to grow in grace withers under the chilling frost of the party spirit. 3. It destroys the sense of proper spiritual values. The party spirit, in opposition to the Spirit of Christ, always demands "sacrifice instead of mercy." 4. It produces legalistic extremes. The members of each party regard that party as the one holy, and apostolic church of God upon earth. 5. It is sinfulness of factions/groups rallying around their leaders. The party fixation prevents loyalty to Christ. "I am of Paul" mindset prevents dedication to Christ. Parties are conducive to sinful attitudes and practices in the climate of strife (partyism) One of the difficulties that plagued the church in Corinth was a spirit of divisiveness that ran counter to the Savior's prayer for unity. There were factions at Corinth that revolved around "hero" exaltation, - loyalty to men. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, ambitious. They separate into groups. "For where envying and strife is," "there is confusion and every evil work" and faction members are lost.

We must look to Lord Jesus, not a party or any man. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake,"(2CO4:5) The party spirit will keep us out of heaven. All of us have been stained with it. It is a passion of the flesh. We should try to overcome it. We need elders today who will cultivate in their flock a breadth of vision, a charitable spirit, a love for fallen humanity, and a sense of the need of reformation. It is with the leaders that the future of the church of God actually rests. We must all revere God's revelation, refuse to compromise truth, and cling to the word of God. But we do not need to be dogmatic, arbitrary and hateful. It requires no sacrifice of principle to make allowance for honest mistakes, or lack of proper education. We do not forfeit truth when we make a distinction between those who knowingly and deliberately disobey Christ, and those who obey him to the best of their present knowledge, even though it is faulty and imperfect. Christianity we are dealing with revelation, with God-given truth, with absolutes. A heretic is a man who believes what he wishes to believe instead of accepting the truth of God that he ought to believe.

*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire.*(1CO3:13-22) A man over confident in his superior knowledge is always a dangerous man. The most learned are always the most humble. To find the cure for the party spirit, we must search for the real root of its evil. It is precisely self-satisfaction, but it may take form as pride of wisdom; pride of power. A man wants to be separate from his brethren and to be counted superior to them. The party spirit is willing to take sides and follow leaders, and he who follows may be quite as wrong and as mischievous as he who leads. If we enter into and maintain right relations with Christ, we shall certainly be delivered from any undue allegiance to men. Christ is Lord, and he is supreme; all teachers are but ministers, divine agents, by whom we believe, and who are graciously used to help our spiritual joy. Christ alone is ours to follow and obey, ministers and teachers are ours to use and to honour for their works' sake. All are in commission to Christ; all are in use, by him, for the instruction and edification of His Church; and therefore we ought to follow after no one of them, but only after Christ. Let party spirit cease. There may be party feeling doing mischief within Christian communities, though it may not reach the length of separation or schism. We need anxiously to watch against the beginnings of this evil in ourselves.

How does the Bible deal with Party Spirit? "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject"(TIT 3:10) When a person in the church departs from biblical teaching, the correct response is to, first, try to correct him. The truth of Christ will unify believers (JOH17:22-23), but heresy, by its very nature, cannot peacefully co-exist with the truth. Of course, not every disagreement in the church is heresy. Having a different opinion is not wrong, but when the opinion is divisive or maintained in defiance of clear biblical teaching, it becomes heretical. The peacemaker is able to direct love and peace to those experiencing confusion and disarray. And God's love is a powerful force. Satan has no defense against it. The reason peacemakers are blessed is because they are joined to the Prince of Peace. The 'peacemakers' will be called His children is because they are most like Him. God's peacemakers bring healing love into a troubled situation. In every ministry, you will find these special people. They are 'the approved' of God. They are people who have been through the battles, have learned the spiritual disciplines of the walk of love. They have been found worthy. They are pleasing to God.

How do we guard against party-spirit? "*Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*"(PHI2:2-3) As we submit ourselves to the authority of God's Word and deal with one another in love and respect, divisions and party-spirit will be diminished. Paul admonishes the Corinthians to resist contentions, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, backbiting, whispering, slander, conceit, agitation. A true, godly minister does not draw people to himself, but instead to God. Not placing Christ at the forefront will lead to carnal-mindedness. Paul appealed for unity among the Philippians and offered encouragement, reminding them that their relationship with one another was through Christ. Paul encourages Titus to seek out teachers who have an ardent love of the truth, and warns him about false teachers who deceive the congregation. The occupational of the Church and members is to humbly forgive and love each other. *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*(1CO1:10)

"Fellowship" and "friendship" are not synonyms or equivalent. Friendship is good-will ie. helpful, or cooperative feelings or attitude (uncountable) condition of being friends while fellowship is a company of people that share the same interest or aim. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.*(1JO1:6-7)The word fellowship is derived from Greek word koinonia. Koinonia describes the unity of the Spirit that comes from Christians' shared beliefs, convictions, and behaviors. When those shared values are in place, genuine biblical fellowship occurs. So the word fellowship is not about gaining a relationship, but rather about maintaining love one another, and unity within a relationship. There are people with whom we maintain a relationship of compliment (by friendship, kinship, etc.) to whom we cannot extend congregational fellowship, or becoming partners with them in moral and spiritual efforts. For Christians, desire for human interaction has added dimension of wanting and needing fellowship for mutual sharing, as of experience, activity, interest.

The important concept for Christian fellowship is "participation" in spiritual gathering. Bible tells us we have been called into fellowship with Christ (1CO1:9), with the Father (1JO1:3), with the Holy Spirit.(PHI2:1) As believers, we have fellowship with one another by virtue of the blood Jesus shed for us on the cross.(v.7) and fellowship with Christ is to partake of His suffering(PHI3:10) Once a person is born into the family of God, they have entered into an unbreakable and unchangeable relationship with God and with every other member of the family. When the Bible talks about fellowship with God, it is telling believers how to enjoy and fully experience their relationship with God and with fellow Christians. In partaking Lord' supper, each person is expressing personally placed his faith in Christ as his Savior. "Communion" means to be in union with. The one loaf reminds us that we are one body in Christ for we all partake. We gather together as divine brothers and sisters around the table of the Lord. We are demonstrating our common faith, commitment, concerns, love, devotion to Christ and the ministry. It signifies fellowship with Christ, experience his life(power), death(suffering) and resurrection (victory) So we may partake of the elements as one to express our unity in Christ. Pray that we will become like Jesus and live up to God's standard of meekness and humility. We are warned not to have fellowship with evil.(1CO10:20) As believers, we are to guard ourselves against temptation, remembering that "bad company corrupts good character"(1CO 15:33) Just as light and darkness are incompatible, there should be no fellowship between Christians and sin of party spirit.

Paul explains on the conflict of flesh vs. spirit. the flesh stands for the natural desires of a person operating apart from God. A person who has not been raised to life spiritually is still "in the flesh." a person who is spiritual is one who has been born by the Spirit, even if that person occasionally fails to live up to that reality. *"Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"*(GAL3:3) Once the spirit of a person has been raised to life by the Spirit of God, old desires of the flesh do not disappear. There is a battle that rages on. *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want"*(GAL5:16

The person who has been brought to spiritual life—the work of the Holy Spirit within—will want to please God. But the pull of the world and temporal, physical needs and pleasures are still present. Therefore, Christian must feed on spiritual food and continually yield to God's Spirit on a day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis. Feeding the spirit and yielding to the Spirit are done by reading, studying, waiting upon the Lord and obeying God's Word and then availing oneself of all of the means of spiritual nourishment that the Word prescribes, such as prayer and fellowship. The more one gets into the Word, the more he or she will desire what God desires. The more a person gets into "the world," the more he or she will desire what "the world" desires. "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." we are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, that this peace should govern our minds. He is able to keep you at peace as you seek him first.

The strength of the Christian's spirit's placement with God's Spirit is in direct correlation to what the Christian chooses to focus on. The anointing of the Holy Spirit always produces power. The word 'power' which is associated with the anointing comes from the word 'dynamo' which means ability. He gives us the power to overcome sin. We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, he brings in the Fruit of the Spirit which is how we are to live as redeemed Children of God. When we live by the Spirit, we become people of love, which fulfills God's command to love others as ourselves. *But the fruit of the [Holy]Spirit is love, joy(gladness), peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*(GAL5:22-23) There are nine characteristics that are included in the Fruit of the Spirit. They become traits of the one who follows Jesus in their life. They are called fruit because they're a product of the tree that they grow from, in this case, Jesus. He is the vine, we are the branches. To walk in the Spirit means that the Holy Spirit lives in you. You are putting your life in the continual presence in the Spirit of God. Leading a Christian life means living a life guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit living in us and through us helps us to do the will of God. The Holy Spirit guides and convicts our hearts so we want to be more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us to not want to sin. As a child of God, you'll want to shape your life around by the lead of the Holy Spirit. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*(GAL5:25-26)