

Galatians 5:1, 13-25
"Stand Firm"
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

June 25/26, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Vicar Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

Through Christ alone we are free. We are free from sin, death and the devil's power over us. We hear that all the time. That is true.

Do you know what else is true?

The devil is still working to turn us from freedom to submit again to a yoke of slavery.

The Apostle Paul, through Inspiration, tells every Christian to stand firm against the works of the flesh.

But how do you stand firm against the devil when you are immediately labeled as a hater, or worse yet, labeled as a bigot?

In his commentary on Galatians, Martin Luther wrote this about this about Galatians chapter 5:

"Satan most deadly hates the light of the Gospel, that is to say, the doctrine of grace, liberty, consolation, and life ...

"Paul is warning us – the faithful – not to sleep, not to be negligent; but constantly and valiantly to resist Satan, that he spoil them not out of that liberty which Christ has purchased for us."

Even though Our Lord Jesus Christ conquered the devil and has destroyed his power over us, he keeps tempting us to turn back to his shackles. The devil wants us to disown the True God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and place him as our new god.

Paul writes to us today saying, ***"to not use our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love to serve one another"*** (Galatians 5:13b).

[Culture]

Today's culture is all about the works of the flesh. Today, being immoral is seen as a virtue. Just watch primetime network television. We have programs like "Mistresses", "The Bachelor", "Modern Family", "The Real O'Neals", "Big Brother", "2 Broke Girls", and "Family Guy" to name a handful where being immoral is encouraged. Even television advertising is promoting immorality.

Or, better yet, watch any awards presentation – from the Grammys to the Emmys to the Academy Awards. Being immoral today is praised. Being immoral is seen as real.

The opposite is true for morality. Morality is seen as fake. It is seen as old fashioned.

The devil is working overtime to desensitize and propagandize you and me to what he wants. The devil wants you and me.

[“Natural”]

Paul writes: ***“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do”*** (Galatians 5:17).

We want to do what we want to do. It is only natural to oppose God. We were born with the natural inclination to go against God – our Old Adam. When we were baptized, God came to us and made us His own. But, even with that baptism, we still want to fight back against God.

As Christians, our lives will always be at battle. There is an ongoing conflict between what the rebellious Old Adam wants to do, which is contrary to God's will and what the new man, guided by the Spirit, wants to do in accordance with God's will.

Likewise, today many people justify a variety of behaviors by calling them “natural.”

American psychiatrist and best-selling author Morgan Scott Peck, who is best known for his book “The Road Less Traveled” said this about using the word “natural”:

“Calling it natural does not mean it is essential or beneficial or unchangeable behavior. It is also natural to defecate in our pants and never brush our teeth. Yet

we teach ourselves to do the unnatural until the unnatural itself becomes second nature. Indeed, all self-discipline might be defined as teaching ourselves to do the unnatural.”

[Works of the Flesh]

Now, many of us can think back to those old cartoons where there would be a conflicted character who had a devil on one shoulder and an angel at the other.

The devil would say, “Do what you want!” Meanwhile, the angel would attempt to convince the character not to do that deed.

Today, the real devil is saying “Do what you want!” while Jesus is saying “Follow Me. I am the only way to salvation.”

Paul goes into a lengthy list of the works of the flesh: (Galatians 5:19-21)

He identifies sexual sins: sexual immorality, impurity and sensuality.

Sins against God: idolatry and sorcery.

Social or relational sins: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions and envy.

Sins of excess: drunkenness and orgies.

Paul concludes that list of vices with a dire warning.

“I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21b).

Today, that warning would be returned by many saying that Paul must be a hater.

Today, most of those vices are cheered by the World as fun ways to live out life.

Now, who among us is without sin? None of us.

No person is without lusts and desires, and thus no person is free from temptations.

Paul is not writing of individual lapses into sin that the Christian repents of and receives forgiveness for.

You see, Paul is writing of a pattern, a consistent and persistent lifestyle.

The original Greek makes that plain as day. Literally Paul writes, “Those continuing to do things of that sort will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

[The Ticket]

Now, God is serious about sin! How can the Galatians, and we today, carelessly continue to live in a sinful lifestyle? Each time we sin in thought, word, and deed, we move further away from God.

Do you give in to the devil's temptation to sin? As Christians, we are to stand firm against the devil's lies. But, we don't always do that.

There is good news, Paul is not saying that these sins are unforgiveable.

Jesus died for all of His creation upon the Cross. Jesus died for the just and the unjust. Through repentance, we are all forgiven our sins.

That is the ticket: Repentance.

If there is no repentance, then there is no forgiveness from God. Without forgiveness, you do not inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus forgives all who repent of their sins. Today at the Sacrament of this Altar, Jesus forgives all of us broken sinners and strengthens our faith saying, ***“For this is my body and my blood, which is given for many for the forgiveness of sins”*** (Matthew 26:26-28 paraphrased).

[Fruit of the Spirit]

As Christians, we are to bear the fruit of the Spirit. And what is the fruit of the Spirit? Love.

Now, it isn't always easy living out our sanctified lives. We all make mistakes. But the goal is to improve day to day, so we bear good fruit.

Paul is teaching the very same thing which Christ taught: ***“You will recognize them by their fruits”*** (Matthew 7:16a). By their fruits, you will know if the person follows the guiding of the flesh or of the Spirit.

These fruits that flow from love are: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

So let us ever stand firm against the works of the flesh! For we have an eternal reward: life everlasting with our risen Lord! Amen.

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen!