

Works of the Flesh

Genesis 3:3-24

Romans 5:12-19

Galatians 5:13-26

August 6, 2023
Pastor Dave Bolte



Today we heard the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall into sin. The story of the Fall is pretty familiar to everybody, even unbelievers will recognize the story the devil using a serpent to tempt Eve; and Eve listening to him and eating of the fruit of the tree that God commanded her not to eat from. Soon afterwards, Adam joined her in **rebellion and disobedience** and he too ate from the tree.

If only the punishment for that sin was thorns and thistles and hard work for men and difficult childbirth for women! *However that's not the case.* **Sins against God are serious; disobedience to God's Word is fatal.**

Because of their sin, death came into the world; and every single person ever conceived -- including you and me -- will die someday somehow; and until then, *we all live with a sinful nature*. Adam and Eve lost the Image of God; and in its place we all have inherited Original Sin¹. Rather than loving the Lord our God with *all* of our heart with *all* of our soul and with *all* of our strength, and our neighbor *as ourselves*; we are conceived and born with a sinful nature: we neither love God nor do we love our neighbor. Here is how we as conservative Lutherans confess and teach the doctrine of Original Sin to the world:

[Lutherans] teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, **without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence**; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing **ETERNAL DEATH** upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost. Book of Concord, Augsburg Confession, Article 1

¹ An easy way to think about Original Sin is to see it as a complete, 100% reversal of the Image of God. The Image of God, that only Adam and Eve had, was that they loved God with all of their heart, mind, will, and actions. That Image of God is lost; and now since their sin, everything is turned upside down. In its place is Original Sin: you are totally turned in on yourself and your heart, mind, will, and actions are totally self-centered and self-serving. Along with this loss of the Image of God, death and dying have entered the world. In Romans 5, St. Paul teaches us to understand death as the sign of Original Sin. All will sin because all have Original Sin.

That's a harsh paragraph; But it reflects the reality of Original Sin. You can see this easily in the world around us, as well as in your own life. Because we have a **sinful nature** we do not fear God's Law, we do not trust in God's Son, and we are full of *concupiscence* -- which means evil desires. God judges and condemns your sin; and left on your own, **ETERNAL DEATH** awaits you.

This part of you is called by various names; you have probably heard of it being referred to as your “sinful nature,” or the “Old Adam,” or even the “flesh”. Whatever name it's called by, it's serious. It separates you from God and leads to **ETERNAL DEATH**.

When we renounce the
devil and all his evil works
and all his wicked ways;
We are also
confessing that
We renounce our sinful
nature and all of it's evil
desires, sinful thoughts,
and rebellious ways.

Thankfully, the Lord does not leave us in our sin. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to rescue you from sin, even your “sinful nature,” or your “Old Adam,” or even your “flesh”!

Jesus came into the world to do what Adam and Eve should have done: that is **obey God**. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought death into the world; Jesus, the Son of God, obeys God and brings life into the world. Here's how the Bible teaches that to us:

For if the many died by the trespass of **the one man**, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of **the one man**, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ... judgment followed **one sin** and brought condemnation, but **the gift** followed many trespasses and brought justification. ... just as **one trespass** resulted in condemnation for all people, so also **one righteous act** resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the **one man** the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the **one man** the many will be made righteous. Romans 5, selected verses Note that it is an on-going comparison between Adam and Christ

Jesus fully obeyed God at all points and at all times. In life, Jesus fully obeyed the Law, Commands, and the Will of God the Father. And in His death, He passively obeyed the will of the Father by giving up His life for the sins of the world. Jesus' **perfect obedience** is how we are saved; it's His life and His death that rescues you from sin. In the Resurrection, God the Father is announcing to the world that He accepts Jesus' perfect obedience for your salvation!

Through faith in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, God begins to *renew* the *Image of God* within you. God works within you through His powerful Word and Spirit to overcome your “sinful nature,” your “Old Adam,” your “flesh”! You are a new creation in Christ; the Holy Spirit lives within you, and you start to obey God; you start to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as Christ has loved you. You are *sanctified*; that is, *set apart* to live a holy and godly life!

In Galatians, St. Paul teaches us that you are to have *nothing to do* with your “sinful nature,” or your “Old Adam,” or even your “flesh”!

The *works of the flesh* are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 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.* Galatians 5:19-21

These kind of sins reveal that your sinful nature is in control of your life². You are not to fall into these and make them your lifestyle. *Those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God!*

Because of the world that we live in and the false teachers that have invaded the Christian Church, *there's a point that has to be made concerning the works of the flesh*. Four of the words that are listed refer to sexual sins. *And this would clearly include homosexuality and the gay pride lifestyle.* There are false teachers inside the Christian Church who promote homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle for Christians³.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY THEM; DO NOT BE MISLED BY THEIR FALSE TEACHING.

² Note that this is a foreshadow of **Judgment Day**. God will point to the *works* of people to show publicly and make it evident what was on the inside, specifically, faith or no faith. In this section of Galatians, a similar revealing is occurring. Those controlled by the sinful nature (which you cannot see) are made public by the works of the flesh (which you can see). In a similar way, those controlled by the Holy Spirit (which you cannot see) are made public by the fruit of the Spirit (which you can see).

³ Remember *Romans 1:32* “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also *approve* of those who practice them.” Although you personally might not be engaged in a particular sin, you cannot let yourself get to a point of accepting, approving, or supporting sinful disobedience, rebellion, and immortality. If you do, you have joined in with them.

Homosexuality is a *work of the flesh*; it is rebellion against God and disobedience of His commandments. As a baptized child of God, rescued by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, have nothing to do with it and do nothing to support or encourage it. The Bible is absolutely clear in its warning: *I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Galatians 5:21

If you're somehow caught up in homosexuality; or *any of the works of the flesh*, God has given you away to break free from them: *confession and absolution.*

REPENT OF YOUR SIN! Turn away from it! Confess it to God and know that He forgives you through His Son Jesus Christ! The works of the flesh are not the unforgivable sin; turn away from them, confess them to God, and know and believe that you are forgiven because the Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly obedient to His Father. In Him your sins are forgiven, even when you get tangled up in the works of the flesh⁴. Today repent! Confess your sins! And trust in Christ for forgiveness!

God's will for you is **NOT** that you chase after the works of the flesh; God's will for you is that you live by the Spirit and bear the Fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

The Spirit lives within you.

You belong to God the Father. You are redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ!

Let your life reflect Who's you are!

Amen!

⁴ "The struggle is a sign of faith! This truth is important for us Christians, for it serves us first of all as a comfort when we are troubled because of our weakness the sins of Christians are not painted sins; they are real sins. The Christian flees them, he fights against them, he hates them, but they are there. Therefore the Christian daily asks God for forgiveness, and he is comforted by the fact that the saints of old were also troubled by their sinful flesh. The Christian must remember that the ungodly are not troubled because of their sins, but they delight in the sins. They often consider the very sins themselves as the joys which are coming to them. In fact, at times some of the sins are considered virtues, as, for instance, greed, sharp practices, lies, deceit, revenge. We Christians indeed suffer from these temptations and these fruits of the flesh, but we are fighting against them daily. And the very fact that we hate them and fight against them is a sign that we are true children of God and that God's Spirit lives in us." [The Abiding Word](#), III.288-289, Sanctification, Roger L. Sommer

God the Holy Spirit

we thank you for calling us to faith in Jesus the savior.

We ask that you convict us of our sin and lead us to repentance,

so that we do not chase after the works of the flesh

and lead sinful lives and disobedience to your word.

Rather grant us faith so that we may repent of our sins,

and live holy and godly lives to the praise and glory of our father in heaven

and our savior Jesus Christ.

We pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

Genesis 3:3-24

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush[b] your head, and you will strike his heel." 16 To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." 17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken for dust you are and to dust you will return." 20 Adam[c] named his wife Eve,[d] because she would become the mother of all the living. 21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Romans 5:12-19

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned— ¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come. ¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ ¹⁸Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Galatians 5:13-26

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”^[b] ¹⁵If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. ¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For 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^[c] you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ 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. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.