

VICTORY OVER THE NATURE OF THE SERPENT 2

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I want to continue with the subject we were on last Sunday. We were speaking on the nature of the serpent and having *victory* over that *nature of the serpent*. And really there are two parts to that.

When I look at the *nature of the serpent*, first of all, there was a *lack of understanding*, a *lack of revelation*. And we don't see that so much by looking directly at the serpent – not a lot is recorded there – but we see that in *Cain*.

The other part of it is: the *attitude* that Cain had.

What we understand is that when we come to the Lord and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, it's that *gift of the Holy Ghost* that really gives us the *power over the flesh*. We *have to know* that we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Praise the Lord.

If we do not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we can go through our whole life *living in a church environment* but at the end of the day, we're going to be *carnal*. That's the truth. It doesn't matter whether we're a member or whether we're a minister, if we *don't* have the gift of the Holy Ghost and we are *not being led* by the Holy Ghost, our walk is going to be a *carnal walk*.

We might *think* it's spiritual. We probably *will think* it's spiritual, just as Cain *thought* his offering was spiritual.

I have no doubt that the modern Christian today, if they were to see Cain's offering, they would say: this is beautiful. This is certainly something that God would accept.

Now when I say *the modern Christian*, I mean: the modern *professing Christian*. In other words, those today who *proclaim to be Christian*. Of course, the *true Christian* is going to have a deeper spiritual walk. Amen. We thank the Lord for that.

Let's just connect this back with what we looked at last time. Let's go back to Acts chapter 2 verse 41. This is when the Church was born. It says:

Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine

That's number one. We must have the Word.

We just heard the song: *I've learned to trust in His Word*. When everything else is falling apart around us, there is always the Word. Praise the Lord. The Word cannot be wrong. Man can be wrong but the Word can never fail. Praise the Lord.

So first of all, they were *established in the doctrine of the apostles*.

Then it says:

Acts 2:42

and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Praise the Lord.

So what we have here is: first of all, yes, it was the Word of God that was given but in second place, they were *in fellowship one with another*. This was the birth of the Church. They *loved one another*. Praise the Lord.

My message tonight – and really what it was on Sunday as well – is that when we get to the part of the *Spirit*, there's a lot we could say. Yes, it goes *beyond* just the assembly. We should have the *right Spirit* with the man of the world and we should also have the *right Spirit* with our brothers and sisters who are in other cities and other places in the world. Praise the Lord. But what we really see here in this verse is: *the local assembly*.

When it says: *they were in communion one with another and breaking bread*, we know at the beginning, in a sense we could say it like this: there was only *one church*. It was there at Jerusalem. Now yes, we know it didn't take long for the gospel to go to Antioch and other places, but what we're looking at here is: *locally*.

We know that the Lord has us in assemblies for a reason. We come together and we learn how to *reflect the Christian virtues* – if I can say it like that – one to another. We are called *brothers and sisters*. That's brothers and sisters *in Christ*.

I have to say: that should be a *much stronger bond* than even our natural family. Yes we do love our natural family but we won't be spending eternity with our natural family. Now if God saves some of them, praise the Lord! Then they become part of our *spiritual family*. Amen.

We will be spending eternity with one another. And we all have the same Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who died for us. Praise the Lord.

Let's go ahead and go to Galatians chapter 5. This is where we were last time as well. I'm going to go back a little bit to verse 14. It says here:

Galatians 5:14

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

When they asked Jesus, they said: *what's the great commandment?* He said: *love the Lord thy God with all of thy strength, with all of thy mind, and with all thy heart*, right? He said: *and the second is like unto the first. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* [Matthew 22:36-39] Praise the Lord.

This is exactly what Paul is saying.

If we want to know if we're walking in a way that's pleasing to the Lord as far as *our attitude* towards our brothers and sisters, there's a simple question we can ask: *do I love my brother and my sister as myself?*

Now somebody may say: well Brother, that's not *just* our brothers and our sisters.

I know that.

Again: yes it's for the man in the world, yes it's for any brother and sister outside the assembly. But I'm focusing today *on the assembly* because of what we read in Acts, to bring that down to *this day*.

When it speaks of those who had *received the Holy Ghost*, it said: *they followed in the apostles' doctrine, they had fellowship one with another, breaking of bread, and prayers.* [Acts 2:42] Praise the Lord. That is a *summary* of the *Christian assembly*.

We might think: well of course we love our brothers and sisters. But let's not forget: there is an enemy.

He will do whatever he can to bring a thought into *my* mind or into *your* mind to bring in some kind of a contrary spirit. He will try to set up something to put a wall even between brothers and sisters of the same assembly. The culprit is *not* the brother or the sister, it's *the devil* doing that work. And we have to be *awake spiritually* so we can resist that work of the enemy.

Each one of us can take a look *at our own life* and see if we are measuring up to the Word of God. Praise the Lord.

Verse 15:

Galatians 5:15

But if ye bite and devour one another,

What does he mean? Obviously he's not speaking literally, but he's speaking of *the way we treat each other*.

And he's giving a *warning* here: if I don't treat my brother or my sister correctly, it may be something that *comes from me and goes outward*. So he's saying: *watch out*.

He says:

Galatians 5:15

take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Because in time, that can reflect right back. This is a serious thing he's looking at.

Here he's speaking to the Galatians. We know that wasn't a particular church, it was a region. But later on, we see him speak very similarly to the Corinthians who were a particular assembly.

Let's keep reading.

Galatians 5:16

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

We have to be *nourishing the spiritual man*.

He says: *walk in the Spirit, then you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.* [Galatians 5:16] That flesh is always there to say: listen to me! I have a better idea! Right? But *to walk in the Spirit*, that's pointing at *our spiritual life*.

I want to say tonight: we're living in 2024, the hour is late. If in times past, we have been a bit – how can I say it? – *relaxed* in our reading or in our prayer life, I have to say: it's time for us to wake up. It's time we really begin to take a look at our own spiritual life. Praise the Lord.

He said: *walk in the Spirit*. That's more than just saying: yes, I was supposed to go to church and I went to church.

Now it's good that we go to church. Some people don't even do that and they need to learn to go to church. But I have to say: it's more than that. *It's a daily walk*. Praise the Lord.

And if our *heart is right*, if we're *subject to the will of God*, and we're being *led by the Spirit*, then Paul says here: *we're not going to fulfill the lust of the flesh*.

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Of course, he's speaking here that what we want to do is *the Lord's will*, but there is a *struggle with this flesh*. And we *can't* satisfy both.

That is the great error of this age we're living in today: people want to have *a foot in the world*, and they want to have *a foot in church*. I have to say: that *lukewarm spirit*, the Lord says: *I will spew you out of my mouth*. [Revelation 3:16] He says: *I prefer that you be cold or hot*. [Revelation 3:15]

You say: well *cold* isn't good. I have to say: it's better for somebody to be completely out there in the world and not know the Lord because then He can come and wake them up one day. Praise the Lord. And they can give their life to Him and start living for Him.

But the *lukewarm individual*, the problem there is that they say: I'm already serving the Lord. They don't see the *need* that they really have *of the Lord*. That's the hour we're living in: there are people sitting in church pews and *they need the Lord* but they think they have Him. *No they don't!*

We have to be *fervent*. Praise the Lord. We need to be reading the Word of God. We need to be praying. We need to be walking, meditating on the things of the Lord.

The things of this world *have* to take *second place*. That's the truth. They *must* take *second place*. *God has to be first*. And that's going to mean *a sacrifice for this flesh*. It means there are going to be things the flesh doesn't like.

But in the end, there will be a *beautiful reward* that will far surpass anything that we could ever desire of the natural world. [1Corinthians 2:9]

So let's keep reading.

Galatians 5:18

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Galatians 5:19

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;

We read these last time:

Galatians 5:19

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

I have to say: those first four he mentions are not something that would be found – or they certainly *shouldn't* be found – in the church. When people come out of the world, the Lord cleanses them up from those things. They are some of the first things.

And like I said, if that happens in a church, we would pretty much have to say: separate yourself until you overcome that. We have certain examples in scripture. [1Corinthians 5:11] I'm not going to get into that right now.

But when we get to the next verse, we begin to see some of the things that exist today in *professing Christianity*.

Galatians 5:20

Idolatry,

That's in the Branham movement. It's in other places as well but it's very clear in the Branham movement.

Galatians 5:20
witchcraft, hatred,

Now with *hatred*, remember: hatred can be *in the heart*.

If somebody hasn't received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they can go to church but maybe another member does something that irritates them. They would *not say out loud* that they have *hatred* for that individual, but can the enemy set that up *in somebody's heart*? He absolutely can if they don't have the Holy Ghost.

That's what we see with *Cain*. It was *his own brother*. [Genesis 4:8]

And it's a sad thing today but the reality is: if somebody is murdered out there in the world, the first place the police department looks: they check *the family*. The first suspects are: *brother, sister, dad, mom, husband, wife, son, daughter*. Just in the news, I think it was yesterday: a man shot and killed his father here in Phoenix. That was the first place they looked.

It should be *the opposite*. Of course we love our family members. We *shouldn't* have to imagine that it might be somebody in the family that did it. But that just shows us the work of the enemy.

Galatians 5:20
variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

I have the definition of *strife* and of some of these other words here. I'll read them because when we look at the definitions, it really gives us something that can help us look at ourselves: am I slipping a little bit?

Strife and *envy* are two things that are mentioned more than others throughout the New Testament. [1Corinthians 3:3]



Strife means: bitter conflict or dissension, it can sometimes even be violent.

We are probably not going to see the violence but can the enemy bring a *bitter conflict or dissension*? I have to say: if he gets hard at work and if we're not paying attention, absolutely he can do that. It's in *our nature*.

Now I know there may be some who will say: well see, Brother, we told you that you shouldn't be preaching about the truth. It brings dissension.

Remember: Jude said *contend for the faith* or *strive for the faith*. [Jude 1:3] Amen.

So yes, there is something *to contend* about.

Still, we have to know how to do it *the right way*. A lot of people will look at it and say: oh, it's *not* the right way, you *don't* have *love*.

I have to say: look at the Lord Jesus. He was very firm. When it came to things regarding the Word of God, he did not leave any question and he did not take a back seat to somebody just to keep them happy.

But what we're talking about here is more on the natural level of *our daily fellowship*. As Christians, we should be the happiest people on the face of the earth. We should be so happy to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we have *somebody to share this beautiful life with*. Praise the Lord.

So that's the meaning of *strife*.

Now we have *emulation*. [Galatians 5:20] The definition I have here is: *ambition or endeavour to equal or excel others as in an achievement*.

What is that? *I want to be first*, right?

If I want to *be equal or excel others*, what is it? I *don't* want to be in *second place*. I want to be in *first place*, right?

Again, that *desire*: I have to be *in first place*, I have to be *equal* to them or *even better*, that is a *carnal characteristic*. That is *not spiritual*.

Whatever God has called us to be, that's what He's called us to be. And it's *His perfect will* for us to be that. Some have certain *anointings*, some have certain *talents*. There's nothing we can do about it.

I'm just going to give a little example. Let's say: somebody *sings*. I'm not talking about anybody in this church, I'm talking about somebody who has an unbelievable voice.

Somebody might say: well I thought I had an unbelievable voice! [Laugh] I hope you can understand my illustration.

If we take somebody who has an amazing voice, there is no way that just by looking at the individual – if we've never heard them sing – there's no way we would *know* that they have that *talent* just by looking at them. It would be impossible. They could've had a voice just the same as anybody else or worse. But it's the *grace of God* or the *gift of God* that He decided to give this individual a talent.

Sometimes we say: man, I wish maybe He would've given *them* 50% and *me* 50% because they have so much more than they need!

But He's the One who is putting this all together. And He has a *specific, beautiful, and perfect purpose* for your life and for my life.

If I see a brother or a sister and *I have to have what they have*, or if *I have to be at the same place*, that's *emulation*.

And by the way, this is cousin of *envy*. I'm going to get to that in a little bit.

So *emulation* is wanting to *be the same* or wanting to *go beyond* someone else.

But if it's *not* the Lord's will, we're not going to be happy, the Lord's not going to be happy, and we'll just be pushing to be something that we're not. And all that's going to do is cause trouble.

We should learn to be *content* with what we have and be *happy* with what we have.

Galatians 5:21

Envyings,

I'm going to read about that in a minute.

Galatians 5:21

murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:

It's interesting, we may think: oh *envy*, that's not so bad. But look what Paul puts it next to: *murders, drunkenness, and revellings*. He puts *envyings* right there with all of that, right? Yet *murder* and *drunkenness* are things we can observe.

And of course, he's also talking about the *spiritual aspect* of these. Remember, many times he said: *be sober*. [1Thessalonians 5:6] So he's not just talking about actually being drunk and actual murder, but he has *envy* among those things.

I'm going to read the definition of *envy* now.

envy:

painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage

The painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. That is *envy*. They have something *I want*. And that causes *me* to have a negative feeling because *I want that. I want to be the one who has that*.

Like I said, *envy* is cousin to *emulation*. And how many times especially *strife* and *envy* are mentioned?

I'm going to come back to some of these other things but let's go down and look at verse 22.

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Galatians 5:23

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Now, notice how this is written here. It's not that I have to be working: am I producing *this*? Am I producing *goodness*? Am I producing *faith*? But this is *the fruit of the Spirit*.

If we *have the Spirit*, if we *walk in the Spirit*, and if we are *led by the Spirit*, this will *naturally* be what comes out of our heart.

Again, it's *not* for somebody else to look and say: well, you don't have *this* and you don't have *that* because we would be *judging with our eyes*.

That's what Brother Branham said. He said: I *used to say* the fruit is the evidence. Then he said: *the problem is* you look over here, it *seems* like they have a lot of fruit but *they don't have the truth*.

So he could see: *that's what we see with our eyes*, but there is a *true divine reflection of this fruit*: it's what comes *from the heart*.

Another thing – besides the truth – another way we can see it is: yes, there are a lot of people who can *feign* these fruits but what we see once there is some kind of a threat against them, they will drop all of that fruit – *supposedly fruit* – and we'll see a change in their attitude. Sometimes the difference is just like flipping a switch or maybe I should say: *turning off the switch* because that's what happens.

For the true believer, it's what's happening *in the heart*. We lose the desire: I have to be number one. We lose the desire: everything has to go my way.

But for those who *don't* have the Spirit, if things go their way: oh, they're the happiest person but you run a little bit against that, if they have to do things a little bit your way, then there's trouble.

It's what's *in the heart*.

And at the end here, he says:

Galatians 5:26

Let us not be desirous of vain glory,

I have this definition too.

Vainglory: excessive or ostentatious – I hardly know what that word means in English – so let's read it like this: excessive pride, especially in one's achievements. That is *vainglory*.

Again it mentions *pride* here but it's actually *higher than pride*. We know that *pride* is not right. And this is *excessive pride*.

Remember: Paul is speaking this *to Christians*. Let's not think that this is just something that exists out in the world. If we're not careful, it can exist right here in our heart because we are all still in this flesh.

Praise the Lord.

So if we're in this flesh, we're going to have *that struggle*.

He said: *let us not desire vainglory*. [Galatians 5:26] In other words: *let's not desire that everybody looks at us*. Like: I'm the one who stands out. I'm number one. Everybody has to recognize me.

Paul says: *no, that is a characteristic of the flesh*. And the result of it is not good.

He says:

Galatians 5:26
provoking one another,

If I am desirous of *vainglory*, I'm going to be *provoking others*. And if there is more than one of us, we are going to be *irritating each other*.

Galatians 5:26
envying one another.

There's that word *envy* again. I want to have what you have. I need to be where you are. And until I do, I'm irritated, I'm upset, I'm sad. We say in English: I'm bent out of shape. [Laugh]

So I'll end on that note. *Let us not be desirous of vainglory*. Amen.

Let's go ahead and pray.