

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 18th October 2009

## Kingdom, Power and Glory – Power to change us

### Galatians 5:13 -26



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

When we look at our own character we can sometimes want to change the person we are but feel powerless to do so. This week we focus on 'Power to change.'

At the beginning of this Autumn term we began a series of preaching and teaching that focussed on the final words of the Lord's Prayer – for Yours is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory' – a Kingdom characterised by Love. In the very same prayer we pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Essentially we pray that God's kingdom and his will – ie his plans and purposes of love for his creation - will be fulfilled on earth – ie here and now - as well as in the future. But what we often fail to acknowledge is that the key to God's Kingdom coming is us, living day by day! "*God has no hands but our hands to do his work today. God has no feet but our feet to lead others in his way. God has no voice but our voice to tell others how he died and God has no help but our help to lead them to his side.*" St Teresa of Avila  
It is you and I who are the hands and feet of God and yet we so often feel so powerless and weak...

This week with the aid of Paul's well known exhortation to the Church in Galatia we 'hold a mirror up to ourselves' and take a good honest look at the core of our very being, the person that we are.

Paul helpfully draws up two lists for us (read 5:19 -23). Paul is under no illusion that there is a battle going on between the sinful and spiritual what John Stott describes as an "irreconcilable antagonism" between our sinful nature and the fruit of the spirit read v13 -18. How can this battle be won? Well Paul is supremely confident in his answer – read v16. It may well be beyond our human power to give up those acts of the sinful nature (19-21) but it is not beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit for one of the key aspects of the Spirit's work is to enable us to change and become the people God intended us to be – like Jesus (Romans 8:29).

A word about Gifts and Fruit! The last couple of weeks we have been focussing on the gifts of the Spirit and how necessary they are to build up others – the Gifts of the Spirit describe what Christians do, but, in the last analysis, the value of what we do depends on the kind of people we are, which is where fruit comes in! The fruit of the Spirit is the growth of Christ like character in us and Paul urges us to let the Holy Spirit in to direct our lives and enable such fruit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self control to flourish and grow whilst at the same time helping to prune those parts of our nature prone to sin and self centredness. It is the Holy Spirit that gives the 'Power to change.'



#### Witness: questions to discuss

**Before discussion, read the Bible passage and ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider one or two questions below – don't feel you have to use them all but do consider the key question! Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.**

1. Looking at Paul's list of some of the characteristics of our sinful nature, list the 3 that you/your group have most of a problem with and would like to change.
2. Are there other similar characteristics that you would like to change but don't feature on Paul's list?
3. Looking at the fruit of the Spirit list the 3 that you would like to see more of in your life.
4. Each member of the group compile a list of group members and write next to each name one or two 'fruit' that you think is most obvious in their lives. Share your answers. Which is the fruit that is most/least evident in your group?
5. Regarding the sort of person we are to be, the aim of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to become like Jesus (Romans 8:29) How do you feel about this?
6. Looking back on your Christian life so far can you identify ways in which you have changed as a person?
7. When we see little or no evidence of fruit of the Spirit in a Christian's life does it mean that the Holy Spirit is absent?

**Key question:** What is the relationship between gifts and fruit? Can I only be given gifts if I have reached a certain maturity or fruitfulness?.... What about those people who seem to have lots of so called gifts but whose lives are full of bad news...how does that all work?

#### Worship:

- Light a candle and place it in an empty biscuit tin on a table in the middle of the room
- On small pieces of paper write down the 3 or more characteristics of your 'sinful nature' you have identified.
- During a period of quiet and stillness reflect on Gal 5:16.
- As you feel led put your paper in the tin as a sign of giving to God those parts of your nature that need to change. ( you may light them as you place them in the tin or if too dangerous at the end of the session take the tin outside and burn them all together).
- Begin a time of prayer and ministry to one another asking the Holy Spirit to be present in power and to bear fruit in the lives of one another.