



Coffeeville First Baptist Church
By **Craig Baker, Pastor**

Happy New Year! Every year people stay up later than usual on the night of December 31st to see the clock tick from 11:59pm to 12:00am, to see the old year out and the New Year in. We have come up with a lot of ways to celebrate that tick of the clock. A ball drops in Time Square, an onion in Bermuda, an electric Moon Pie in Alabama, a clam in Maine, a pickle in North Carolina, a watermelon in Indiana, a 1000-pound block of cheese in Wisconsin, a guitar in Tennessee, or a giant piece of bologna in Pennsylvania. There are many other strange and interesting ways we celebrate the New Year, but why? Why do we make such a big deal out of that moment when the clock strikes 12am and the calendar shifts from Dec. 31st to Jan 1st?

The truth is, most of us have a hope and an expectation that in some way the new year will be better than the one before. It is common, almost expected, as we begin a New Year that we will all make resolutions; a commitment to do something in the New Year that we did not do in the old. The beginning of a New Year is the time when we think about new beginnings and the opportunities we have to do all sorts of things differently, but as we do so let us be reminded of the Apostle Paul's warning in Ephesians 5:15-17.

As Paul was writing to the believers at Ephesus about avoiding those things that are improper for God's people, he wrote, "Be very careful, then, how you live;

not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Have you ever done anything unwise? We all have. Unfortunately, many people have not just done a foolish thing here or there but are living a life of foolishness. They are living unwise in these evil days, so my question to you is, "How are you living?" In Romans 8:1-17, the Apostle Paul wrote about how we are to live as Christians. Throughout this passage, Paul repeatedly wrote that the distinction of a true believer is that they walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. He says that is how we know our faith is real, but that leads us to another question, "How do I know if I am walking in the Spirit or if I'm walking in the flesh?" To answer that question, as with any question, we must examine what Scripture teaches us.

In simple terms, walking (living) in the flesh is having desires and actions that oppose God. Walking in the flesh enslaves us, leading us into a destructive lifestyle and ultimately into eternal death. How do we know if we are walking in the flesh? Paul gave us a list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries,

and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Does this list describe your life? If so, I want you to listen very carefully to the last part of verse 21, "Those who practice such things will NOT inherit the kingdom of God."

Just as he gave us a list of the works of the flesh, in Galatians 5:22-26 Paul also gives us a list of the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

That is a much different list, isn't it? Paul said these fruits are the evidence that you are walking with the Spirit, and Jesus said the greatest of these, the one that will really set us apart is our love for one another. Do you love the church, not the buildings but the people? How are you doing when it comes to loving your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? What about longsuffering? Do you fly off the handle over any little thing or are you slow to anger? Are you faithful to God and in doing the things that please Him? What about the rest of these fruits? The fact is we are either practicing the works of the flesh or producing the fruits of the Spirit. We are either walking toward God or walking away from Him, so as we think about what the new year may bring, the things we want to change or make better, I encourage you to consider your life compared to the evidence that Paul has given us, and ask yourself, "How am I living?"

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