A WALK COMBATING THE GREAT ENEMY IN LIFE: THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH, SINFUL NATURE GALATIANS 05:16–21

Introduction

This and the next passage are two critical passages for the believer's walk. They deal with walking in the Spirit of God and conquering the flesh or the sinful nature. The lessons being taught need to be diligently followed by the believer.

- I. The answer to conquering the lusts of the sinful nature (the flesh): the Holy Spirit (vv. 16-18).
- II. The works or acts of the sinful nature (vv. 19-21).

III. The judgment of those who live by the sinful nature (v. 21).

I. Galatians 05:16–18 Holy Spirit is the Answer

The answer to conquering die lusts of the sinful nature (flesh) is the Holy Spirit of God. The believer is to walk in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. It is the only conceivable way he can keep from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. No person has the power to control the lusts of his sinful nature — not within himself. Why is clearly seen in the four reasons given by Scripture.

1. The flesh, the sinful nature fights for dominance. It lusts against the Spirit, struggles and fights to control the man. The picture is that of a tug of war (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 311). The flesh stands contrary to the Spirit — toe to toe, face to face — and it seeks to control man.

The word *desires* (<u>epithumei</u> <u>kata</u>) means *a yearning passion for*. Every person has experienced the flesh...

•	yearning	•	craving	•	taking	•	pulling
•	hungering	•	thirsting	•	desiring	•	grasping
•	longing	•	wanting	•	grabbing		

Every person knows what it is to have his sinful nature craving after something, to have it yearning and yearning to lay hold of something. The sinful nature is very strong and difficult to control. This is the first reason why a believer's only hope to control the sinful nature is the Spirit of God.

Rom 7:23 But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Rom 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

James 4:1-2 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

2. The flesh, sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit. The flesh, sinful nature has within itself base and unregulated urges and passions. A man senses the desire to do what he likes, to lift the restraints and follow his own inclinations, desires, passions and emotions. This is what the Bible means when it speaks of the "desire of the sinful nature."

However, the genuine believer has another force within his life — the force of the Holy Spirit. When the believer feels *the constraint* and *the pressure* between the sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is giving the power to overcome the sinful nature. The constraint *is the power*. The believer who listens to the constraint and walks away from the object of the pressure, and calls upon God for the courage to stay away is the believer who walks in the Spirit. The believer is to know no such thing as peaceful coexistence between the sinful nature and the Spirit (see Rom. 7:14-25; 8:18; 8:28-39).

- 3. The sinful nature keeps a person from doing what he would. Every person has experienced the power of the sinful nature; everyone has caved in to the sinful nature and done something that he did not want to do. He fought against doing it knew it was harmful or hurtful yet he did not resist the sinful nature. He gave in to the power of the sinful nature and did it. He...
 - overate acted selfishly became angry
 - committed immorality began smoking
 - got drunk became prideful
- did evil things

cheated, lied or stole

• cursed • lusted

Note another fact as well. All of us have been tempted, and we have known how to combat and overcome the temptation. However, the flesh, the sinful nature was so strong we did not overcome it. The struggle we experienced involved that of...

- controlling showing kindness reaching out
- giving loving helping
 - sacrificing being patient giving in

The point is this: the sinful nature is so strong that it often keeps us from doing what we would. The only hope of ever controlling the sinful nature is to live by the Spirit of God - in His presence and power.

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Rom 7:15-20 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

2 Cor 10:4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world [flesh]. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

4. The flesh, the sinful nature fails to keep the law. This has been clearly shown in the previous point. No person keeps the law all the time: the flesh causes us to fail, and no matter how much we try, we cannot do everything the law says — not all the time. What then is the answer? It is essential to know the answer, for every time we fail to keep the law, the law is broken and we stand condemned. We cannot satisfy the demands of the law, not perfectly. Therefore, we are guilty and must pay the penalty. Note another fact: our consciences condemn us. They bother and bug us if we are trying to live for Christ and yet continue failing time after time. Again, what is the answer?

The Spirit of God is the answer; being led by the Holy Spirit will free us from the sinful nature and from the condemnation of the law. What does this mean? (See Holy Spirit, Life, Rom. 8:2-4.) It means that the Holy Spirit frees us to live as Christ lived, to actually live out the life which Christ lived. The active energy of life, the dynamic force and being of life – all that is in Christ Jesus – is given to the believer. The believer actually lives in Christ Jesus. And the Spirit of life which is in Christ frees the believer from the fate (law) of sin and death. This simply means that the believer lives in a *consciousness of being free*. He breathes and senses a depth of life, a richness, a fullness of life that is indescribable. He lives with power – power over the pressure, strain, impediments, and bondages of life – even the bondages of sin and death. He lives now and shall live forever. He senses this and knows this. Life to him is a *spirit*, a breath, a consciousness of being set free through Christ. Even when he sins and guilt sets in, there is a tug, a power (Holy Spirit) that draws him back to God. He asks forgiveness and removal of the guilt (1 Jn. 1:9), and immediately upon asking, the same power (the Holy Spirit) instils an instantaneous assurance of cleansing. The spirit of life, the consciousness of living instantaneously, takes up its abode within him once again. He feels free again, and he feels full of life in all its liberating power and freedom. He bubbles over with all the depth of the richness and fullness of life itself. He is lull of the "Spirit of life." Life itself becomes once again a spirit, a consciousness of living. He lives now and forever.

Rom 8:2-4 Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was

weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Rom 8:14 Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

John 16:13 "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

II. Galatians 05:19–21 Works of the Sinful nature

The works or acts of the sinful nature show just how strong the sinful nature is. Note a fact of extreme importance: the body in itself is not sinful. The human body is given by God; it is for God's use. In fact, when a person is converted to Christ, his body becomes a temple for God to dwell in through the Holy Spirit. The Christian is not told to cleanse himself from the body but from "the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16), "everything that contaminates the body" (2 Cor. 7:1), and from "the acts of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:12; Gal. 5:19). The acts of the sinful nature are the fruit of indwelling sin, and sin originates in the heart not in the body. The acts of the sinful nature listed in this passage are clearly seen all throughout society; and tragically they are not only seen on the daily newscasts of every city, but within every community, home and life on planet earth. The very presence of such fleshly sins shows just how strong the sinful nature is and how helpless man is to control his sinful nature.

 Sexual immorality (moicheia): sexual unfaithfulness to husband or wife. It is also looking on a woman or a man to lust after her or him. Looking at and lusting after the opposite sex whether in person, magazines, books, on beaches or anywhere else is adultery. Imagining and lusting within the heart is the very same as committing the act. A broad word including all forms of immoral and sexual acts. It is premarital sex and adultery; it is abnormal sex, all kinds of sexual vice.

Mat 5:28 "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Exo 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery." (see Lev. 20:10)

Job 24:15-19 The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed. In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light. For all of them, deep darkness is their morning; they make friends with the terrors of darkness. "Yet they are foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one goes to the vineyards. As heat and drought snatch away the melted snow, so the grave snatches away those who have sinned. 1 Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

1 Th 4:3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.

2. Impurity (akatharsia): moral impurity; doing things that dirty, pollute, and soil life.

Mat 5:28 "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Rom 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Rom 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

3. Debauchery (aselgeia): filthiness, indecency, shamelessness. A chief characteristic of the behaviour is open and shameless indecency. It means unrestrained evil thoughts and behaviour. It is giving in to brutish and lustful desires, a readiness for any pleasure. It is a man who knows no restraint, a man who has sinned so much that he no longer cares what people say or think. It is something far more distasteful than just doing wrong. The man who misbehaves usually tries to hide his wrong, but a lascivious man does not care who knows about his exploits or shame. He wants; therefore, he seeks to take and gratify. Decency and opinion do not matter. Initially when he began to sin, he did as all men do: he misbehaved in secret. But eventually, the sin got the best of him – to the point that he no longer cared who saw or knew. He became the subject of a master – the master of habit, of the thing itself. Men become the slaves of such things as unbridled lust, wantonness, licentiousness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence (Mk. 7:22), wanton manners, filthy words, indecent body movements, immoral handling of males and females (Rom. 13:13), public display of affection, carnality, gluttony and sexual immorality (1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:2, 18). (See 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 2 Pet. 2:7.)

Rom 1:27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Eph 4:19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Jude 1:4, 7 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

1 *Pet 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

4. *Idolatry* (<u>eidololatreia</u>): the worship of idols, whether mental or made by man's hands; the worship of some idea of what God is like, of an image of God within a person's mind; the giving of one's primary devotion (time and energy) to something other than God. (See *Sin*, pt. 2, 1 Cor. 6:9.)

1 Cor 10:14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature 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.*

Eph 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Col 3:5-6 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

Rev 22:15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

5. *Witchcraft* (<u>pharmakeia</u>): sorcery; the use of drugs or of evil spirits to gain control over the lives of others or over one's own life. In the present context it would include all forms of seeking the control of one's fate including astrology, palm reading, séances, fortune telling, crystals and other forms of witchcraft.

1 Chr 10:13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance.

Isa 8:19-20 When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Micah 5:12 I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells.

Gal 5:20-21 *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.*

6. *Hatred* (<u>echthrai</u>): enmity, hostility, animosity. It is the hatred that lingers and is held for a long, long time; a hatred that is deep within.

1 John 2:9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

1 John 3:15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

Lev 19:17 "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in his guilt."

Prov 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

7. *Discord* (ereis): strife, contention, fighting, struggling, quarrelling, dissension, wrangling. It means that a man fights against another person in order to get something: position, promotion, property, honour, recognition. He deceives, doing whatever has to be done to get what he is after.

1 *Tim* **6**:**4** *He is conceited and understands nothing*. *He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions.*

Prov 17:14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam: so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

2 Tim 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

Prov 26:21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

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8. *Jealousy* (<u>zeloi</u>): wanting and desiring to have what someone else has. It may be material things, recognition, honour or position.

Gen 37:4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Prov 6:34 For jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge.

Luke 15:29-30 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

9. *Fits of rage* (<u>thumoi</u>): bursts of anger; indignation; a violent, explosive temper; quick-tempered explosive reactions that arise from stirred and boiling emotions. But it is anger which fades away just as quickly as it arose. It is not anger that lasts.

James 1:19-20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Prov 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

10. *Selfish Ambition* (<u>eritheiai</u>): conflict, struggle, fight, contention, faction, dissension; a party spirit, a cliquish spirit.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

2 Tim 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

Prov 20:3 It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

11. *Dissensions* (<u>dichostasiai</u>): division, rebellion, standing against others, splitting off from others.

1 Sam 15:23 "For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

Isa 30:1 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin."

Isa 65:2 All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.

2 *Pet 2:10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings.*

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12. *Factions* (<u>aireseis</u>): rejecting the fundamental beliefs of God, Christ, the Scriptures and the church; believing and holding to some teaching other than the truth.

Mat 15:9 "They worship me in vain: their teachings are but rules taught by men."

1 Tim 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

2 Pet 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves.

2 *Pet 3:17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

- 13. Envy (phthonoi): this word goes beyond jealousy. It is the spirit...
 - that wants not only the things that another person has, but begrudges the fact that the person has them.
 - that wants not only the things to be taken away from the person, but wants him to suffer through the loss of them.

Prov 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Prov 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.

Prov 24:1 Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company.

Rom 13:13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

1 Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

14. *Drunkenness* (<u>methai</u>): taking drink or drugs to affect one's senses for lust or pleasure; becoming tipsy or intoxicated; partaking of drugs; seeking to loosen moral restraint for bodily pleasure.

Luke 21:34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap."

Rom 13:13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

1 Cor 6:10 Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

1 Th 5:7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Prov 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Prov 23:29-30 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.

Isa 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.

Nahum 1:10 They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble.

15. *Orgies* (<u>komoi</u>): carousing; uncontrolled license, indulgence and pleasure; taking part in wild parties or in drinking parties; lying around indulging in feeding the desires of the sinful nature, lusts of the flesh.

1 Pet 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

2 Pet 2:13-14 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood!

Gal 5:21 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.

Exo 32:6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. (see Judges 9:27; 1 Sam. 30:16)

III. Galatians 05:21 Judgment of Sinful Life

The judgment of those who live by the flesh, the sinful nature. Very simply, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. This can be clearly seen: if God is righteous, then people must live righteous lives in order to be accepted by Him. However, people ignore the fact of God's righteousness and His demand for righteousness. People divorce their behaviour from religion. People...

- profess religion
 practice religion
- talk religion defend their beliefs about religion

However, they go ahead and live like they want regardless of their religion. If they want to do something, they do it feeling that God will forgive them. There are few

people who really think that God will reject them. They feel that they will have done enough good to be acceptable to God...

- enough kindness enough religion
- enough works enough service

In the final analysis, most people just think that God will accept them. This attitude conies from a false concept of God, a concept that looks upon God as a father who is indulgent and who gives his children the license to do *some* wrong.

This is a fatal mistake. It was the mistake that some of the Galatian church members were making, and it is the same mistake that teeming multitudes of religious people have made down through the centuries.

1 Cor 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders.

Believers are to inherit a kingdom, a new heavens and earth where God will rule and reign. They are to be given eternal life and given the glorious privilege of being citizens in God's kingdom and world. They are to live with Him and serve Him in *perfection* for all eternity (see *Reward*, 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Lk. 16:10-12). But this glorious privilege is to be given only to genuine believers, those men and women who have truly given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ — given their lives to live as Jesus Christ says to live. No matter how religious a person is — no matter how much zeal a person may have in keeping religious rituals and in attending services and in giving to charity — if he does not live a pure and righteous life, he "will not inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Cor 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders.

Mat 5:20 "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

1 Cor 15:50 *I* declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Eph 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Rev 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Rev 22:15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.