

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
February 26, 2017

-This is the final lesson to be posted. See [Announcements](#) for explanation-

Lesson Text: Galatians 5:18-6:10
Lesson Title: Holy Living in the Spirit

Introduction

The Christian life is a daily struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh, what we are by nature, is strong and can cause many problems for the believer. But the Holy Spirit is stronger and prevails.

In our lesson text, the Apostle Paul describes the Spirit's work in our lives as he fights the flesh and victoriously leads us. Paul has been talking about the importance of love and how it fulfills the Law and about the danger of not loving, which results in biting and devouring one another as believers.

Where does the believer get the strength to love one another when it is not natural to do that? How does the believer know which path to take or which course to follow? How does the believer know how to live? The answer is either the Law or the Spirit.

No external law or set of rules can give the strength needed to live the Christian life. No external law can give us a desire to obey or fill us with love. No external law can produce holy living. The Law can provide direction to a person and boundaries by which to live. But it has no power to produce a holy life. Paul wants the Galatians to know holy living is possible only through the Spirit of God.

A Choice to Make (Galatians 5:18)

Verse 18

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

Every believer in Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit. At the moment of faith, the Spirit indwells the believer and seals him unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13). It is the Holy Spirit, not the Law, who is our guide, protector, and the One who empowers us to live the Christian life and overcome the flesh.

“But if ye be led of the Spirit” means the believer must make a choice to follow the leadership of the Spirit. Christians are “led of the Spirit.” The Spirit takes the initiative to lead, but we must make a choice to follow Him against the pull

of the flesh. How does the Spirit lead us? He always leads according to the principles of God's Word. Through the word of God, He guides us and enlightens us to God's will. The believer who is willingly "led of the Spirit" proves he is not living "under the law."

Evidence of a Fleshly Life (Galatians 5:19-21)

In verses 19-21, Paul gives the evidence of a fleshly life, one not lived under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This list of sins is a measure of a person's true spiritual condition and gives evidence of the absence of true salvation. Paul is not speaking about one time acts, but a pattern of life he calls "the works of the flesh."

Verse 19-21

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Paul begins by saying, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these..." That means they are obvious to everyone and clearly come from the old sin nature. Paul's list is not all inclusive. He says, "and such like" which means there are many more sins which could be added to the list.

The list of "the works of the flesh" is not easy to categorize, but they include sexual sins, religious sins, social sins, and sins related to alcohol and drugs. For the sake of our study today, we will give a simple and brief definition of each word.

Adultery-sexual unfaithfulness on the part of two individuals, when either of them is married to a third person.

Fornication-is the Greek word *porneia* {por-ni-ah} from where we get our English word, pornography. This word refers to any and all forms of illicit sexual relationships.

Uncleanness-a broad term referring to moral uncleanness in thought, word, or deed (Ephesians 5:3-4).

Lasciviousness-is open, shameless display of immoral activities. It carries the idea of lewdness.

Idolatry-the worship of deity in a visible form, whether the image worshiped is the symbol of the true God or a false god. Whatever is placed in our affection before God becomes an object of idolatry.

Witchcraft- "is the translation of the Greek word *pharmakeia* from which the term "pharmacy" comes. In ancient times the worship of evil powers was accompanied by the use of drugs to create trances. This vice will also be prominent in the Tribulation period (cf. Rev. 9:21; 18:23)."

(The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.)

Hatred-means "to abhor." Anyone who nurtures a dislike of someone to the point of detesting them is manifesting the deeds of the flesh.

Variance-is the result of hatred. It means discord or dissention. This was most likely a major problem in the Galatian church because of the law verses grace division.

Emulation-is competition or rivalry. When, because of jealousy, you strive to be equal or superior to others, you manifest the deeds of the flesh.

Wrath-is outburst of violent anger coming from smoldering jealousy. It is a raging resentment on the inside, finally coming out like an erupting volcano.

Strife-is a contest for superiority between two individuals. It is the attitude which shows itself in surpassing others at their expense (Philippians 2:3).

Seditious-is divisions. A sedition is a problem in the church resulting in a commotion or rebellion.

Heresies-are schools of thought contrary to biblical doctrine and the Christian faith.

Envyings-is a wrong desire to possess what belongs to others.

Murders-is the unlawful, intentional taking of a human being by another human being of sound mind. "Murder" can also be committed in other ways (1 John 2:11; 3:15).

Drunkeness-is the excessive use of strong intoxicating drink. It also includes being intoxicated by worldly indulgence.

Revelling-is from the Greek word *komos*. The word means "orgies," or "carousing." It suggest engaging in activities that throw- off all moral restraint.

“...Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past” indicates Paul had previously warned the Galatians regarding these sins. “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” does not mean a believer can lose his salvation if he commits one of these sins. It does not mean Christians never commit these sins. Christians do commit these sins and others. The word “do” means “to practice.” Paul is saying if these sins are characteristic of someone’s life, and they commit them habitually, they will be excluded from the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). “We cannot get into the kingdom of God by our own efforts to be good and to keep the Law. But we can certainly be kept out of the kingdom of God by practicing these sins.”

(John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Galatians: An Expository Commentary.)

Evidence of a Spiritual Life (Galatians 5:22-26)

Verse 22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

A true child of God will have a pattern of life that bears “the fruit of the Spirit.” The nine fruit of the Spirit Paul lists stand in contrast to the works of the flesh listed in verses 19-21. Notice they are called “fruit” in contrast to “works” in verse 19. “Works” speak of what man can do. “Fruit” must grow out of existing life, which in this case is the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer.

“Fruit” is singular which stresses that all nine of these virtues are a unity. They cannot be separated. They all go together like a cluster of grapes. If one is missing, then we do not have the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Love-is the Greek word *agape* {ag-ah-pay} and means “self-sacrificing love.” Self-sacrificing love is a distinguishing mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ (John 13:35). Love toward one another is what the world must see from the child of God. But more importantly, love must be directed toward God. It is the motivation for all we do as believers. “Love” is produced by the Holy Spirit, not the works of the flesh (Romans 5:5).

Joy-is the Greek word *chara* {khar-ah} and means “a deep and abiding inner rejoicing that was promised to all who abide in Christ (John 15:11). Joy and happiness are two different things. Happiness depends upon circumstances and is not reliable. “Joy” is dependent on the Lord, and is reliable. Believers have this “joy” because of what Christ has done for us, not because of what we have done for ourselves.

Peace-is “inner quietness in the face of adverse circumstances.” It is the gift of Christ to the believer and defies human understanding (John 14:27; Philippians 4:7).

Longsuffering-means “to suffer long.” It is a virtue that has its origin with God (Exodus 34:6). It entertains no thoughts of retaliation.

Gentleness-is “kindness in action.” Since God is kind toward sinners, believers should also be kind to sinners and to everyone (Colossians 3:12).

Goodness-is a virtue which “reaches out to others to do good when good is not deserved.” There is no “goodness” in sinful man (Romans 7:18). But once we are saved by God’s grace, we are a new creation and by the Holy Spirit can bear the fruit of “goodness” (Romans 15:14).

Faith-is the Greek word *pistis* {pis-tis} is “the quality which renders a person trustworthy or reliable, like the faithful servant in Luke 16:10-12.” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.*)

Meekness-is a humble and gentle attitude that is submissive, teachable, and considerate of others (Ephesians 4:2).

Temperance-is “self-control in all things.” While the unbeliever can exercise a certain amount of self-control, the believer’s “temperance” is more than the mind and emotions being brought under control by human will power. This “temperance” is human will being brought under control by the Holy Spirit.

“Against such there is no law” means the “fruit of the Spirit” are above the realm of the “law.” No “law” can make a man love, give him joy and peace, or produce the virtues listed in the “fruit of the Spirit.” Under the control of the Holy Spirit, the believer rises above the very standards of the law.

Verse 24

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh” is a reminder to the Galatians that their relationship with the flesh is dead. At the moment of salvation, all passions and fleshly desire are “crucified.” “Have crucified” means “it happened at a point in time.” The death of the old man and the power of the flesh with “the affections and lusts” was secured for every believer when Christ died on the cross (Romans 6:11).

Verse 25

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

These words do not question whether the believer is alive in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. The idea is since this is a fact, we “live in the Spirit,” we are to “also walk in the Spirit.”

The word “walk” in this verse is a different Greek word than in verse 16. “Walk” here has the idea of walking in line. It is a military term of marching in file to battle. Paul’s exhortation is, “keep in step with the Holy Spirit.” The Galatians were struggling with keeping step with the Spirit, so Paul exhorts them to learn to walk and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 26

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Trying to make the law our standard and legalism our rule book leads to “vain glory” and “envying one another.” The Galatians were obviously engaged in “provoking one another” and boastful of their spiritual attainments. Holy living in the power of the Spirit will not allow such arrogance.

The pursuit of holy living can lead us into self-righteousness and pride if we are not careful. While the believer’s first concern is for his own holiness and sanctified life, he must also be concerned for the holiness of all his brothers and sisters in Christ. Believers should rejoice and encourage one another to be holy rather than being “desirous of vain glory” and “provoking” and “envying one another.”

Helping Others Live (Galatians 6:1-10)

Paul has been describing the Christian life as a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. The only way to experience victory is to walk in the Spirit. But there is more required of the believer. We must help one another along the way and remember every believer struggles and needs help and encouragement.

Verse 1

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Once again Paul addresses the Galatians as “brethren.” Those we are helping in the struggles of life are our brothers and sisters in Christ. There was a battle taking place in the church of Galatia that had resulted in some overestimating

themselves. This attitude may have been a factor in some being “overtaken in a fault.”

“Overtaken” means “caught.” It carries the idea of being surprised by sin. “Fault” means “stepping out of the boundary, a falling aside, a lapse or deviation from the truth.” Some at Galatia willingly walked away from the truth, but others failed because of overwhelming influence and temptation. Paul wanted those who were “spiritual” to help “restore” those who had failed in a “spirit of meekness,” remembering it could be them who had been “tempted” and failed.

“Spiritual” believers are not people who vocally praise the Lord during a worship service. “Spiritual” believers are those who walk in the Spirit, are filled with the Spirit, and bear the “fruit of the Spirit.” Those who were “spiritual” were to help those who had been “overtaken” (Romans 15:1).

“Restore” is the Greek word *katartizo* {kat-ar-tid-zo}. It refers “to the skill of an artist to fashion something out of raw material in an expert manner.” This is a painstaking and time consuming procedure.

“Spirit of meekness” means there is no arrogance or self-serving motive when one Spirit-filled believer helps restore another believer who has been overtaken in a fault.

“Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” means “keep one eye on yourself” while you are attempting to help others. “Considering” is the Greek word *skopeo* {skop-eh-o} meaning, “to take aim at, regard.” Our English words, scope, telescope, microscope, stethoscope is rooted in this word. All of these are instruments whereby we closely look, listen, or magnify what is there.

Verse 2

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Paul’s admonition to “bear ye one another’s burdens” recognizes the fact the person described in verse 1 is going to be weak and need help. “Burdens” is the Greek word *baros* {bar-os} meaning “heavy or oppressing load.” Trying to live by the law or legalism lays heavy “burdens” on people. That is how Jesus described the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:4, “*For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*”

Note: The legalist is always harder on other people than he is on himself.

When believers “bear one another’s burdens, they “fulfill the law of Christ.” The “law of Christ” is the law of love which “fulfills” all God’s law (Romans 13:8-10).

Paul is saying, “If you insist on observing the law, make sure it is ‘the law of Christ’ and not the law of Moses.”

Verse 3

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

These words carry a tone of warning from Paul to the Galatians. One of the main reasons Christians fail to help each other is a feeling of superiority to those who have sinned. It is easier to judge and condemn than “restore” and “consider” the fact you may be in worse shape tomorrow!

A Christian who thinks he is better than other people “is nothing” and “deceives himself.” Paul just said a man who thinks he is superior to others is “nothing.” Doctor B.R. Lakin once said, “Nothing is a circle with the ring knocked off!”

Self-inflation is self-deception. Those who know they are “nothing” and know they could easily be tempted and overtaken are usually those who help others in the Christian life.

Verse 4

“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”

One way to avoid pride in thinking ourselves to be something we are not is to avoid personal comparisons. Legalists love to compare themselves to others. Paul says, “Let every man prove his own work.” That means each of us are responsible for the task God has given us, our “own work.” Christ is our standard, not each other.

“Then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” means the Spirit-filled believer “rejoices” or boasts in the Lord for what God has done in him, not what he has accomplished compared to others (2 Corinthians 10:12-18).

Verse 5

“For every man shall bear his own burden.”

The word “burden” is from the Greek word *phortion* {for-tee-on} meaning “life’s routine obligations.” This is not a contradiction to verse 2, where Paul tells us to bear each other’s heavy and oppressing load. The “burden” of verse 2 is a load too heavy for someone to carry alone. The “burden” of verse 5 is the daily

obligations of life that no one can bear for you. Each believer has an individual mission, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will give an account for how we carried out that mission. In that day, the Lord will not ask us how we did in comparison with other people. He will not ask Paul how he did in comparison with Peter or how you did in comparison with others.

Verse 6

“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”

After stressing the believer’s responsibility to himself, Paul returns to the believer’s responsibility to others. The key word in this verse is “communicate.” It means “to share with others, distribute.” The believer “that is taught” or brought to restoration by a Spirit-filled believer is to “communicate” or share “in all good things” with “him that teacheth” or helped restore him. “Good things” are “beneficial things.” This means both the teaching believer and the one being “taught” are to share a mutual fellowship “in all good things.”

Verse 7

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Paul gives another warning in this verse by using an agricultural example. His point is if you want a particular crop, you must sow a particular seed. You cannot expect to “reap” corn if you “sow” wheat. If you think otherwise, you are “deceived.”

The law of sowing and reaping applies to holy living in the Spirit. Whatever we sow, we reap. If you sow your wild oats, do not expect to reap peaches! Actions have consequences. “God is not mocked.” Paul is saying, “You cannot turn up your nose at God and expect to outsmart God.” The Bible is filled with people who thought they outsmarted God only to find they had “deceived” themselves and suffered eternal loss.

Illus. Pharaoh had many opportunities to repent. Plague after plague was sent by God but Pharaoh continued to harden his heart. Finally, God hardened his Pharaoh’s heart and he reaped what he had sown.

Verse 8

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

The consequences of “sowing to the flesh” is to “reap corruption.” “Corruption” is the decay of death. The deeds of the “flesh” are always corruptive and produce nothing but decay and death. Although a believer cannot lose his salvation, he can by unconfessed sin “reap corruption.” The alternative is to “sow to the Spirit” and “reap life everlasting.” To “sow to the Spirit” is walking in the fullness of the Spirit. It is abiding in Christ and His Word (John 15:7).

The reward of “sowing to the Spirit” is “life everlasting.” To “reap life everlasting” does not mean earning your salvation. The reward of “sowing to the Spirit” is to reap a harvest and a crop that will last forever.

Verse 9

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Holy living in the Spirit is not an instantaneous event. Planting or sowing seed for a harvest requires time and difficult seasons. A productive crop requires attention and vigilance. So, we are not to “be weary.” “Weary” is from a strong Greek term which refers to “abandoning oneself to cowardly surrender.” It means “to lose heart” or “become tired, frustrated, anxious.”

Living for a good crop is “well doing.” A good crop will come to harvest in “due season...if we faint not.” “Faint not” is an agricultural metaphor picturing a farm laborer succumbing to the heat of the Mediterranean sun. “Due season” will come for the believer when God sends it. It is not ours to determine the season, but rather “faint not” and “not be weary.”

Verse 10

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Back to where Paul started in verse 1, as believers we are to help each other. “As we have therefore opportunity” does not refer to occasional opportunities, but to the total span of this present earthly life. Literally, “as we have” means “let us have” or “let us make opportunities” to help one another.

“Let us do good unto all men” means “to be active” to do some “spiritual good” or help someone by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. We are to “do good unto all men,” even the unsaved.

“Especially unto them who are of the household of faith” refers to our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are Christ’s representatives in this world, the people with whom we will spend eternity. If we fail to “do good” to our own spiritual family, our witness to the world will be of little value.

Conclusion

Paul responded to the false teaching of the Judaizers with a powerful grace-based message of freedom in Christ and life in the Holy Spirit. Our sinful flesh ignores God and often adopts the worlds thinking and methodology. Nothing but death and decay can come from the flesh.

The struggle between the flesh and Spirit can sometimes be discouraging. Do not lose heart in the struggle. Help those struggling every time you can. Bear one another's burden. Bear you own burden. Sow to the Spirit each day. Do not grow weary. Do not try to outsmart the Lord. Live by the power of the Holy Spirit and you will "reap life everlasting."

Amen.