

## Galatians 5:13–6:10 and Spirit-directed Living

### Prayer

### Introductory Questions

- How can you discern if someone is being led by the Holy Spirit?
- How can you discern if someone is *not* being led by the Holy Spirit?

### Introduction

Galatians 5:13–6:10 explains that the Holy Spirit enables Christians progressively to overcome sin in their lives, to develop Christlike character, and to serve one another through love. The following points provide context for our lesson.

1. **As part of the apostle Paul’s first missionary journey, he ministered in the province of Galatia in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.** He proclaimed and people received *the one, true gospel*, which is the good news that Jesus died and God raised him from the dead to save sinners (1 Cor. 15:1–4). We receive its saving benefits when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus (Acts 20:21). And, as Paul instructed the Galatian churches, we must never attempt to add to or subtract from the gospel.
2. **False teachers were encouraging the Galatian Christians to add to the sufficiency of Christ’s work at the cross.** How? By requiring them to be circumcised in accordance with the Mosaic law and to follow the law’s instructions. This was a false gospel (1:6–10).
3. **To protect the Galatians, Paul outlined and defended *the one, true gospel*, which is received by faith (1:11–5:12).** He wrote: “13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” 14 The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13–14).
4. **Trusting in Jesus Christ is the only way that sinners can be justified (declared righteous) by God the Father, not through “the works of the [Mosaic] law” or any other set of works (v. 16; cf. Eph. 2:8–9).** Through Jesus’s death and resurrection (which, again, is the one, true gospel), believers have been *set free from* the Mosaic law (Gal. 5:18). But they have also been *set free to* a life that is directed by the Spirit (Gal. 5:1). What is the freedom produced by the gospel? What is Spirit-directed living? To that Paul now turns.

We organize Galatians 5:13–6:10 into four sections: (1) Expressing Our Freedom by Serving Others through Love (5:13–15), (2) Overcoming Our Sinful Ways (5:16–24), (3) Turning Away from Pride and Caring for One Another (5:25–6:6), and (4) Working for the Good of All (6:7–10) (Moo, *Galatians*, 339–341). We conclude this lesson by providing examples of Spirit-directed living.

## 1. Expressing Our Freedom by Serving Others through Love

13 For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another. (Gal. 5:13–15)

Christians have been set free from the authority of the Mosaic law—and set free from the power of sin and death (v. 13; cf. Rom. 8:2). But we should not use that freedom as an opportunity for *the flesh* (our sinful desires that are part of this world in rebellion against God) (v. 13). Instead, we should serve others as an expression of our love (v. 13). The entire law is fulfilled in the command to love our neighbors as ourselves—a command *fully accomplished by Christ through his perfect obedience and love for us displayed at the cross* (v. 14; cf. Matt. 5:17) (Moo, *Galatians*, 347–348). Serving one another is one of the main solutions to the churches' conflicts, which were threatening to destroy people and their relationships (v. 15).

- From what have we been set free? How should we express our freedom?
- In what ways can you serve those in your family, church, and community?

## 2. Overcoming Our Sinful Ways

- "16 I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (Gal. 5:16–18)
- "19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things." (Gal. 5:19–23)
- "24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal. 5:24)

Christians are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome their flesh—their sinful disposition that stands in opposition to God (v. 16). The desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are against one another (v. 17). And all who are led by the Spirit are not under the Mosaic law (v. 18). The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit are both apparent (vv. 19–23). By the power of the cross and the Holy Spirit, believers have already crucified (put to death) the flesh, including its power and desires (v. 24) (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 339–351).

- Considering vv. 19–21, how are you trying to put away “the works of the flesh”?
- Considering vv. 22–23, how are you trying to cultivate “the fruit of the Spirit”?

### 3. Turning Away from Pride and Caring for One Another

5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. 2 Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else. 5 For each person will have to carry his own load. 6 Let the one who is taught the word share all his good things with the teacher. (Gal. 5:25–6:6)

Christians live by the Spirit, and therefore we strive to keep in step with him (5:25). Negatively, we must “not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (v. 26), nor engage in prideful comparisons with others (6:3–4). Positively, we must restore those who fall into sin (6:1), “carry one another's burdens” to fulfill Christ's expectations (v. 2), examine ourselves (v. 4), remember that we will bear our own responsibility before God in the final judgment (v. 5), and support our teachers (v. 6) (Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters*, 82–83).

- What is pride (in the sinful sense of the word)? How it can damage a church?
- How do we restore those who have fallen into sin? Carry one another's burdens?

### 4. Working for the Good of All

7 Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, 8 because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith. (Gal. 6:7–10)

We must not be deceived: “God is not mocked” (treated with contempt) (v. 7). Why? Because God has ordered reality such that people will reap *in eternity* (destruction OR life) how they

sow *in this life* (to the flesh OR to the Spirit) (vv. 7–8). With eternity in mind, may we never grow tired of doing good, especially to those in the household of God (vv. 9–10).

- What does it mean “to sow to the flesh” and “to sow to the Spirit”? Examples?
- In what ways do you get tired of doing good? What are the antidotes?

### Sound Doctrine: Spirit-directed Living

For all who are Christians, we live by means of the Holy Spirit, and therefore we must “keep in step with the Spirit”—which means that we must align ourselves to his will and go where he leads (Gal. 5:25). Below are seven expressions of Spirit-directed living:

1. **We center our lives on the Father and the Son.** The Holy Spirit directs us to the Father and the Son—in faith, hope, love, and worship (John 4:23–24; 15:26; Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:3). We should be highly suspicious of any teacher who claims to be led by the Spirit but fails to direct us to the Father and the Son, who was crucified, was raised, and is ruling.
2. **We seek to understand and obey the Bible.** The Holy Spirit enables us to know and obey God’s will as revealed in Scripture (Ezek. 36:27; 1 Cor. 2:12; Eph 1:17–18).
3. **We turn away from sin.** The Holy Spirit not only convicts us about our sin, but he also broke its power in our lives and enables us to turn away from it (John 16:8–9; Rom. 8:2).
4. **We put on the character of Christ.** The Holy Spirit produces Christlike character within us, such as love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness (Gal. 5:22–23).
5. **We serve others.** The Holy Spirit gives us gifts that we use for the strengthening of the body of Christ and the glory of God (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:7–11, 28; 1 Pet. 4:10–11). In this way, a spiritual gift is not simply *a capacity* to do something, but it is *a ministry* to others.
6. **We teach the gospel to non-Christians and Christians.** The Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel with clarity and boldness, and he enables others to respond in repentance and faith (John 16:8–11; Acts 4:31; 1 Cor. 2:1–4; 1 Thess. 1:5–6).
7. **We seek unity.** The Holy Spirit produces unity in the church, not only in our beliefs but also in the way we love one another (Eph. 4:1–6; 5:15–21; Phil. 2:1–4). One of the most important strategies for seeking unity is to study and submit ourselves to the Word of God.

- What questions or comments do you have about this lesson?
- What is one thing you can do in response to this lesson?

### Prayer