

Lesson 13 27 July 2014

Liberty From the Flesh

Lesson Scope: [Galatians 5:16](#) through [Galatians 6:18](#)

Lesson Focus

The previous lesson treated the doctrinal issue of freedom from the Old Testament Law. It was negative in the sense that a person who claims justification by the Law has fallen from grace. This lesson is positive in that it declares that faith working by love is the guiding principle of all conduct. The idea that liberty is the absence of restraint is false. True freedom is found in the injunction "by love serve one another."

But how is this possible? Since when can such a high standard be attained? The answer is found in the injunction "Walk in the Spirit." Freedom from the Law is not a license to indulge the flesh. True Gospel liberty enables the believer to live above the pull of the flesh and to walk in the Spirit.

At the very core of Christian experience and the heart of this lesson is the fruit of the Spirit—love. However, you must be careful not to get hung up on this facet of the lesson and for your inspiration and careful use, a brief exposition follows. Of special interest is the fact that the fruit is singular. One expositor said that there should be a colon after love. This is confirmed by comparing it with 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. The listing that follows puts this into perspective: Joy is love's consciousness; peace is love's confidence; long-suffering is love's habit; gentleness (kindness) is love's activity; goodness is love's quality; faith (faithfulness) is love's quantity; meekness is love's tone; and temperance is love's victory.

Also, keep in mind that Galatians 6:11-18 is a conclusion of the entire epistle. Nevertheless, it does blend with the thoughts and conclusion of this lesson.

Lesson Aim: To present principles related to Gospel liberty from the bondage of the flesh.

Theme Verses: [Romans 8:12-13](#). Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Lesson Text

Walking in the Spirit

[Galatians 5:16-26](#) ¹⁶ *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. ¹⁸ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ 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. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Ministering to Others

[Galatians 6:1-10](#) 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. ² Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³ For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. ⁴ But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For every man shall bear his own burden. ⁶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. ⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 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. ⁹ And let us not be weary in well doing: for

in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ¹⁰ As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Glorying in the Cross

Galatians 6:11-18 ¹¹ Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. ¹² As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. ¹⁴ But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. ¹⁶ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷ From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸ Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Questions for Study

Walking in the Spirit

1. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?
2. How is the flesh brought into subjection?
3. What practical direction is given in verse 25?

Ministering to Others

4. What is involved in bearing one another's burdens?
5. What are the involvements of bearing one's own burden?
6. What incentive is there for faithful service?

Glorying in the Cross

7. Why should we heed the warning concerning glorying?

Analyzing the Passage

Having explained the conflict that exists between the flesh and the Spirit, Paul came right to the point and listed the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. It is of interest that works is plural; these are linked with death. In contrast fruit is singular and refers to an operation in the realm of life. If there is no life, there will be no fruit!

Since all the Law is fulfilled in one word—love, it is logical to conclude that the list that follows consists of the elements of love. They are the outworking of love in one's life.

In Galatians 6, Paul made detailed applications to the stated life principle. This love enables the Christian to restore the erring, to bear one another's burdens, to serve without weariness, and to do good to all men.

The similar wording found in Galatians 5:6 and Galatians 6:15 make it very plain that faith which works by love is the outworking of spiritual life.

Principles and Applications

Walking in the Spirit

1. The power of the Spirit is greater than Satan's hold through the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The Gospel of Jesus Christ has made possible a life of victory over the sins of the flesh. In Christ's absence the Spirit has come to be our comforter and guide. His indwelling presence is our source of power to live above the dictates of the flesh. If we fall, it is because we have failed to stay connected to the source of power.

2. We are involved in a spiritual warfare (Galatians 5:17). The conflict is within. The Spirit and the flesh are contrary to each other. We must be proactive. This means that we keep the flesh under by walking in the Spirit. The apostle Paul's list of the works of the flesh helps us to be proactive. A practical study of the list sharpens our perception.

3. Freedom from the bondage of the flesh is essential to inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). The apostle left no room for any question on the matter. The church is responsible to take disciplinary action when individuals lose the battle. But she is also responsible to restore "such an one" in love if he repents. No one is beyond the possibility of failure; we must all guard against yielding to the dictates of the flesh.

4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22-23). Love is of God "for God is love" (1 John 4:8). When we love, we are manifesting the character of God. Truly, "against such there is no law." It is impossible to be too loving because we cannot be too godly. The elements of love that Paul listed are a practical help in comprehending and living out this marvelous attribute. Do I really possess this fruit of love?

Ministering to Others

5. Brotherly love qualifies one to aid in the spiritual victory of others (Galatians 6:1-2). Those who are free desire to help others become free! Has your brother fallen? Lift him up! Be tenderhearted; be understanding; be humble and meek. Does he have a burden? Help him carry it! Love does not make excuses: "I don't know what to say," "I don't understand him," "It's his own fault," or "He's hard to relate to." We can always pray for each other. That will make a difference.

6. Brotherly love makes one willing to give material assistance to those who minister the Word (Galatians 6:6-10). Of course it does not stop there; it also carries over into a broader involvement of brotherhood assistance. It is all a part of bearing one another's burdens. We are to labor that we may have something to give (Ephesians 4:28). Helping others makes life satisfying and fulfilling.

Glorying in the Cross

7. Liberty from the flesh leads one to glory in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14-16). It was on the cross that sacrifice was made for the sins of the whole world. Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The flesh recoils before the cross. But, like Jesus, we submit to the will of the Father; thus we experience death to the old man. We have nothing to glory in! We could not save ourselves. Our abilities are a gift from God. We serve as unto the Lord. Pride is replaced by a humble spirit. We turn our backs to the world and our faces to the cross.

8. The true Christian bears the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:17).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). That says it all. The life that is lived according to Christian principles will be noticeably different from the world. And the scars of suffering will not be reason for complaining, but for a testimony of one's commitment to the Gospel.

Important Teachings

1. The power of the Spirit is greater than Satan's hold through the flesh (Galatians 5:16).
2. We are involved in a spiritual warfare (Galatians 5:17).
3. Freedom from the bondage of the flesh is essential to inherit the kingdom of God (5:21).
4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22-23).
5. Brotherly love qualifies one to aid in the spiritual victory of others (Galatians 6:1-2).
6. Brotherly love makes one willing to give material assistance to those who minister the Word (Galatians 6:6-10).
7. Liberty from the flesh leads one to glory in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14-16).
8. The true Christian bears the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:17).

Answers to Questions

1. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

To walk in the Spirit is to live under the direction of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:25 a distinction is made between living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. The walking is the practical outworking of the living. They have the same relationship as faith and works. Verse 18 refers to being led of the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is living in obedience to the principles of the Scriptures and being governed by the law of love.

2. How is the flesh brought into subjection?

The answer is in Galatians 5:24. When an individual receives Christ as his Saviour, he is born into the family of God. This involves the crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We know by experience that this is not a once-and-done happening. But as Christians, we know it is real and makes all the difference. The flesh is no longer in charge!

3. What practical direction is given in verse 25?

The Christian life is more than a profession of faith. It is a living of the faith! The person who professes to be spiritual and lives according to the dictates of the flesh is deceiving himself. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

4. What is involved in bearing one another's burdens?

The text mentions two specific involvements: the restoring of one who has faltered in the faith and the giving of financial help to the ministry. Then in verse 10 it is broadened to include all men, but especially those of the brotherhood. The church's effort in relief work and brotherhood assistance is certainly involved in bearing one another's burdens. But there are many ways that we can fulfill this calling on a personal level. Let us be willing to be sacrificial without taking any credit to ourselves.

5. What are the involvements of bearing one's own burden?

Bearing one's own burden involves making sure that we are living faithfully ourselves. We may not allow our helping of others to make us feel that we are someone who is important. We stand or fall in regard to our own faithfulness. After all, we are as needy as anyone else. And we owe all that we are to the grace and gift of God. I bear my own burden when I serve the Lord in humility of mind and out of true love for God and my fellow men.

6. What incentive is there for faithful service?

The incentive for faithful service is the reaping that follows. Those who are selfish and sow to the flesh will reap a bitter harvest. But those who bear one another's burdens will reap "life everlasting." A reaping also takes place in this life. When we help others, their gratitude is a valuable source of encouragement. And when we are on the receiving end, it strengthens our willingness to give. So the reaping is twofold and reciprocal. And the blessings far outweigh the sacrifice.

7. Why should we heed the warning concerning glorying?

It is so native to the flesh to glory in accomplishment or personal merit. This was happening with the Jews who were holding to the Law and the practice of circumcision. The fact was that much of the Law was being ignored. Neither do we have anything in which to glory "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But for the cross, we all would be lost. But for the grace of God, all our gifts and service would be wasted in pride.

The warning is valid, and we do well to take heed.

Summarizing the Lesson

The key to victory over the flesh is walking in the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The law of love overrules the works of the flesh; one or the other must go. "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" (Galatians 6:8). "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Research Guide

1. Read 1 and 2 John to broaden your understanding of the vital place of love in Christian experience.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13 to verify the singularity of the fruit of the Spirit.
3. Read Romans 8 to enrich your perception of the spiritual warfare as touched in the lesson.