

Liberty From the Flesh

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

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Faith in Christ brings liberty from the Law; Paul presented this fact through various logical perspectives, illustrations, and condemnations. How then should we live? What does liberty from the Law produce? Do the blessings of liberty have accompanying obligations? The conclusion of the letter has answers for these pressing questions.

The selfishness of man's flesh prevents him from fulfilling the law of love. The power of the Spirit working in the believer enables him to crucify the flesh, to live above the Old Testament Law, and to keep the New Testament ethic of love in practical living.

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.

This lesson provides a balance to Lesson 12.

Walking in the Law cannot bring about justification, and walking in the works of the flesh cannot accompany justification. Christian liberty is the experience and the expression of life in the Spirit. Its experience reaches down to include the deepest recesses of the heart. Its expression cannot be hidden in the little things we think, say, and do. God uses His liberated sons and daughters as a testimony to the flesh-dominated world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

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

“Walk in the Spirit”

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ (KJV) *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.

“Fulfil the Law of Christ”

Galatians 6:1-10

¹ (KJV) 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.

“Glory . . . in the Cross”

Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹ (KJV) 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

“Walk in the Spirit”

1. Why does walking in the Spirit dispel the lusts of the flesh?
2. Enumerate the various forms of peace that result from the fruit of the Spirit.
3. Why is continuous effort needed to maintain our walk in the Spirit?

“Fulfil the Law of Christ”

4. What is the law of Christ? How are we to pay our debt?
5. What balancing thoughts do we find in 6:3-4?
6. What is the lay member’s obligation to the ministers of the flock (6:6)?

“Glory . . . in the Cross”

7. What contrasts can be learned from sowing to the flesh versus sowing to the Spirit?
8. Why is it proper to glory in the cross?

Analysing 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 (5: 16-26). 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. Just as the Spirit dispels the fleshly appetites (5:16), those who are led of the Spirit find freedom from the bondage of the Law. However, the Spirit does not lead one to perform the conduct that the Law condemned. Instead, the Spirit enables the believer to overcome the tension between the flesh and the Spirit, so that he is free not only from the Law, but also from the evil conduct that the Law restrained. He is now at liberty to produce the fruit of the Spirit, without limit or boundary. The fruit of the Spirit in all its forms is complementary. Since all the Law is fulfilled in one word—love (5:14), it is logical to conclude that the list that follows in 5:22 consists of the elements of love. They are the outworking of love in one's life. No strife, provocation, or envy arises between those who have both fully crucified the flesh and live and walk in the Spirit. Have we achieved that blessed condition? Except for temperance, the Spirit fruit are divine attributes. God has no bodily desires, so He has no need to control them. Those who live in Gospel and Spirit liberty conduct themselves according to divine patterns of conduct. The attributes of God become the attributes of His children. "If we live . . . [and] walk in the Spirit" (5:25), we are able to restore the erring, to bear one another's burdens, to serve without weariness, and to do good to all men.

Principles and Applications

"Walk in the Spirit"

- I. The power of the Spirit of God is greater than Satan's hold through the flesh (5:16). All people of the age of accountability realize that the lusts of the flesh are strong and easily perceived through the bodily senses. Furthermore, most people acknowledge that indulgence of the flesh brings inward turmoil and external conflict. The Holy Spirit presents Himself to those who invite Him in. He walks with those who choose to walk with Him. His guidance must be sought and desired. His voice is less urgently perceived than fleshly lusts, but it is more powerful. To those who walk in the power of the Spirit, they overcome the hold of the flesh and escape its ruinous results. What a blessing!
2. We are involved in a spiritual warfare to obtain liberty from the bondage of the flesh (5:17). The Spirit and the flesh are contrary to each

other. The flesh can be overcome, but not eradicated. We must keep the flesh under by walking in the Spirit.

3. Freedom from the bondage of the flesh is essential to inherit the kingdom of God (5:21). The works of the flesh are only partially enumerated here. The list is unbounded, yet the conduct is condemned in every society, violating social norms and legal statutes. These works have something in common—they produce no productive crop to be harvested, but rather an outcome of ruin, waste, and deprivation. Such works cannot be rewarded. Eternal judgment is the only possible outcome of such conduct.

4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to bear the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). What are the works of the Spirit? Paul does not focus on that so much, but rather on the outcome. The fruit of the Spirit is in harmony, poise, and balance. The list of Spirit fruit is exhaustive, but the outworking thereof is unlimited by any legal framework. The works of the flesh are repulsive even to those who perform them. The fruit of the Spirit is desirable, even to those who claim no desire for spiritual things. The fruit of the Spirit reflect the divine attributes of God. The power of the Spirit enables our conduct to become Godlike.

“Fulfil the Law of Christ”

5. The Christian brotherhood fills a vital role in helping individuals to remain free from the bondage of the flesh (6:1-3). These verses make clear that sinless perfection is beyond our reach in this life, yet failure can be overcome. When performing this restorative work in meekness, we partake of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The process of restoration places obligations on both sides. Those who have been overtaken in faults, large or small, must accept the help they receive as being for their own spiritual welfare. Those rendering the spiritual help must do so in the awareness of their own frailty.

6. To remain free from the bondage of the flesh, we must refuse to sow to the flesh, but rather sow to the Spirit (6: 7-8). The seeds we sow in our thought life produce actions. The seeds we sow by example reproduce in our children. We must guard the seeds we sow with our tongue. We sow seeds as we respond to life’s tests. A conscientious response will likely be copied by those who follow us.

7. The effort that goes into remaining free from the bondage of the flesh will be amply rewarded (6:9). The power of the Spirit makes well-doing possible, but not easy. Indulging the lusts of the flesh is a way of life that brings the pleasures quickly and the suffering gradually. Living and walking in the Spirit is grueling. The weariness comes quickly and the rewards emerge slowly. Yet the harvest is sure in its certainty and large in its outcome. Bearing our own burdens and sharing the burdens of others creates a virtuous cycle of life with an ever-expanding influence that will one day receive an abundant reward, if we faint not!

“Glory . . . in the Cross”

8. Liberty from the bondage of the flesh is possible because of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:14). May we, like Paul, glory in the cross of Jesus Christ. Through the cross our sin debt was paid and the gap bridged between a holy God and sinful man. Through that reconciliation we receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, giving us power to crucify our sinful nature.

9. Those who are experiencing liberty from the bondage of the flesh will bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ (6:17). The world can clearly see this, and they will frequently respond in mockery or some form of uncomprehending admiration. Those who are Spirit-filled no longer mind either the flattery or condemnation of the world, but rather they focus only on the approval of God.

Important Teachings

1. The power of the Spirit of God is greater than Satan's hold through the flesh (5:16).

2. We are involved in a spiritual warfare to obtain liberty from the bondage of the flesh (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 (5:22-23).

5. The Christian brotherhood fills a vital role in helping individuals to remain free from the bondage of the flesh (6:1-3).

6. To remain free from the bondage of the flesh, we must refuse to sow to the flesh, but rather sow to the Spirit (6:7-8).

7. The effort that goes into remaining free from the bondage of the flesh will be amply rewarded (6:9).
8. Liberty from the bondage of the flesh is possible because of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:14).
9. Those who are experiencing liberty from the bondage of the flesh will bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ (6:17).

Answers to Questions

1. Why does walking in the Spirit dispel the lusts of the flesh?
The flesh and Spirit cannot coexist; one will dispel the other. The flesh can include indulging the bodily appetites, self-reliance for spiritual merit, or the commission of sins of the mind and spirit. Whatever aspect of the flesh is primarily in focus, the Holy Spirit does not approve of such conduct but rather provides the wherewithal to live in victory.
2. Enumerate the various forms of peace that result from the fruit of the Spirit.
We are at peace in our own mind. The conflict between our carnal nature and our guilty conscience is resolved. We are now able to accomplish that which our enlightened mind desires (5:17). In terms of behaviour and conduct, we are at peace in the community. Whatever Christians may be persecuted for, it is not for being such model citizens. Indeed, the fruit of the Spirit produces a dilemma for those who persecute. We are at peace among ourselves, within our families and congregation. No more envy, provocation, or jockeying for position that are so common in human affairs.
3. Why is continuous effort needed to maintain our walk in the Spirit?
Our sinful nature is ever present, waiting to snatch an opportunity to express itself. Satan is not happy with those who are experiencing a life of liberty, and he will do all he can to destroy their peace.
4. What is the law of Christ? How are we to pay our debt?
This refers to 5:14, the injunction to love our neighbour as ourselves. Christ is the supreme example in that His concern for our well-being moved Him to leave the glories of heaven and die for our redemption. We both acknowledge our debt and fulfill or complete Christ's example by assisting others in the bearing of their own burdens. May we consider this an honour and privilege!
5. What balancing thoughts do we find in 6:3-4?

In ourselves, we are nothing. Yet in Christ we are enlightened and enabled with meaning, purpose, and capacities. By doing Christ's work of noticing and bearing the burdens of others, we find an outlet for our Christ-given capacities, and in the discharge of that work we find our highest meaning.

6. What is the lay member's obligation to the ministers of the flock (6:6)?

Paul's consuming interest and focus was on the well-being of his spiritual children. All leaders who follow Paul's example share this burden, to the detriment of their personal and occupational interests. It is only fitting that we help to bear the temporal needs of the ministry. This includes assisting in their everyday needs. It may be a helping hand around their home, sharing of garden produce, or providing transportation to an assignment. We consider it a privilege to contribute in the offering to meet their needs.

7. What contrasts can be learned from sowing to the flesh versus sowing to the Spirit?

Sowing to the flesh reaps corruption; the crop is less than the seed that was sown. Sowing to the Spirit is the exponential opposite. The seed that we sow is small, and even that is provided to us. The crop is beyond our sowing, even in this life, and the ultimate outcome is eternal life.

8. Why is it proper to glory in the cross?

The cross is the path to liberty. We are released from the attractions of the outward world, from the downward gravity of our inward carnal nature. The world has no interest in us either. The cross has liberated us from guilt, has restored us to an intimate relationship with our Father, has given us a lifework of purpose and meaning, and promises us an eternal reward in heaven!

Summarizing the Lesson

These closing verses portray the way godly people live. They are responsible for their own conduct, yet are outward facing to perceive the need of others. They both receive sound teaching and communicate it to their own hearers. They steadily persevere in sowing to the Spirit in anticipation of a rich harvest. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Research Guide

1. Study Colossians 3:1-17 and Ephesians 4:17 through 5:21 as parallel Scriptures.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13 to verify the singularity of the fruit of the Spirit.