

This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.

SEVENTH DAY  BAPTIST



Lesson 13 February 25th, 2017

Christ Creates Holy Living

Study Scripture – Galatians 5:18 – 6:10

Background Scripture – Galatians 5-6

Key Verse:

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

Galatians 5:22-23

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture must be looked at in the context of the times in which the Book of Galatians was written in order that one can deal with and refute the arguments of those that pick and choose verses from different Books to support their contention that the “law” as they define it, is done away with and people are now free to follow what they consider to be the leading of their spirit which they equate with the leading of the Holy Spirit. This position allows them to attack others with different interpretations and as a result there are not only many splits in the Christian community, but the moral behaviour in the Christian community leaves a lot to be desired. Christians are selective in the moral and ethical standards and rules they follow because they refuse to accept any idea of “biblical law” which must govern their behaviour.

It must be firmly and clearly stated that the New Covenant promised to Israel and clearly stated in the Book of Jeremiah meant that the law of God would now be written on the heart, a newly softened heart, instead of on Tables of stone. There seems therefore no question that somewhere there is “law” despite any contrary position. Christians of a certain stripe therefore have difficulty with the last chapters of the prophet Isaiah which unmistakably refer to certain “laws” which will apply on Jesus’ return to rule and to reign on earth.

There can be little genuine questioning that God’s commandments still apply, for these commandments were given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and reflected the nature, character and will of God.

What is called the “Mosaic law”, the law given by Moses, certainly incorporated these early given commandments of God, including the Sabbath commandment, and those basic laws on the Tables given at Sinai. In addition to these Moses wrote additional laws needed for the operation of the theocratic state of Israel, with practices meant to teach Israel about the serious nature of sin, and the corruption of human nature with its unfailing inclination and tendency to idolatry, the rejection of the Almighty God and His will.

Messiah came at the time appointed by the Father to clear up the mess made by successive men who imposed laws and commandments which were not in inspired Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah, came and showed the real meaning of the commandments of God and underlined the two Laws on which all the commandments hung. It is not that men did not know the fundamental laws of loving the Almighty God, and loving others as oneself. They knew this but they did not care for those commandments of God, and prophet after prophet condemned the people of Israel for this and paid for this with their lives.

Now at the appointed time Messiah came and died to bring in the New Covenant to Israel and to all those Gentiles that believed in Him, for He was the only way of salvation.

Note therefore that these many laws, interpretations of these laws, and the resulting tradition accepted by Israel became a burden that no one could and should bear.

Belief in the Messiah and His salvation led unfortunately to errors about what God wanted from men and from believers. One writer describes this unfortunate state of affairs that confronted the Apostle Paul:

"Here is what we are going to find. Judaism and Judaizers are two different things. Judaism is the religion on the Jews. A Judaizer is one who has practiced Judaism, but who has become a believer in Messiah. A Judaizer is a believer in Messiah who still practices Judaism."

It cannot be stressed too much that Phariseeism and Judaism, the religion of the Jews based on the traditions of the fathers and which has been compiled in the Talmud and other writings is not biblical in the sense that it is not often in accordance with the Biblical text and the gospel of the kingdom of God for they reflect the views of men who often contradicted themselves and others.

Never forget that there were many divisions in theological thought in Israel, such as beliefs held by the Pharisees, with different ideas held by the Sadducees, and ideas held by the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scroll fame, who thought that those groups previously mentioned had corrupted the truth and so the Essenes left and lived by themselves isolation. Note also there were many other groups with different ideas.

When the Apostle Paul came along and taught what Jesus Christ had taught him, (Galatians 1:1) Jews as well as Gentiles listened, coming together with all the baggage of ideas they had grown up with. When he faced people from various backgrounds, we can only imagine the arduous responsibility he had for he had to deal with the issues in these fledgling congregations. One writer reminds us of what Paul faced as he stood before people who tried to interpret the law of God through their own systems:

"According to the Messiah, congregations have the mandate to become one, so there will be calendar issues and new moon issues. There will be beginning of the year issues. There will be



feasts and festivals and how do we celebrate them issues. If anything, there will be issues on what do we do with the law and how do we deal with the law and what applies to us from the law today. There will be all of these issues to work through.

Paul meticulously tries to address the issues in a manner where the people can understand and begin to become one according to the prayer of Messiah.

Paul does this like no one else. Paul had a more difficult task than Peter or James or John. You see, Peter, James and John and the other disciples were in a congregational type setting where they all had Hebrew backgrounds. For the most part, everyone who was in the setting of the assembly of Jerusalem was of Hebrew origin. Paul goes outside of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Israel into communities where the people coming in are Gentiles. These are non-Hebrew people who have not had any Torah. They have not had the law".

When we read the letters of Paul to the mainly or overwhelmingly Gentile churches we must remember that these people did not come to the congregations steeped in Jewish lore and practice.

The question therefore arise as to what Paul was teaching, and whether he had rejected the teaching and law of God and thrown away all the teachings of the Torah and even all Jewish practices. This we know was not true for Paul still made vows and worshipped in the Temple, but we also know he did not think that these practices were needed to bring salvation to Gentiles. No wonder then that the Apostle Peter, when Jews accused Paul of teaching against circumcision and some other Jewish practices, he had to defend Paul and said (in a plain English translation)

"You know, a lot of what Paul taught was misunderstood and misinterpreted".

Paul insisted that he preached nothing contrary and in Acts 24:14, 16 made it clear to the governor Felix he believed all things written in the law and the prophets. He stood behind this position in his defense before Herod Agrippa recorded in Acts 26.

Note carefully therefore that Paul had no problems with the law and the prophets but certainly did not go along with all the traditions of the elders which included the position that physical circumcision was essential for salvation, rather than the correct position that circumcision of the heart was what Messiah now required since He had offered Himself as a sacrifice for redemption of all men who came to Him. Now Jesus was resurrected, and was now at the right hand of the Father interceding for men. Circumcision of the heart and a new heart was what God wanted.

Now that Messiah had come as promised and had been made a sacrifice for sin, the veil of the Temple was rent, the Temple had been destroyed and sacrifices there had ceased, Messiah had called on men to have the New Covenant with the law written on their hearts, and live by the direction of the indwelling Holy Spirit who had come on the Day of Pentecost as God had promised. This did not mean that the idea of "law" was done away with, as some like to say.



The issue now therefore before the Apostle was to have the believers understand the wonderful idea that

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery".

Be aware that the yoke of slavery is religious performance. Believers are in the situation that can be summarized the Flesh vs. The Spirit. The word translated "flesh" (*sark*) is the sinful nature, the twisted self-centeredness, the being prone to sin.

This essentially means the human beings worship themselves, their pleasures, their exaltation, their successes, their reputation, for they are as one writer states "**enormously self-centered**".

Note clearly therefore that "I", man, woman, is the problem. That has been so in succeeding generations and as a result all the schemes to produce and redistribute wealth, introducing modern technology which promises to restore paradise, can only keep on leading to moderate or no real benefits, but certainly producing immorality, greed, hurt, stress. With all the new schemes, we can safely say It's not working. There is no hint of paradise though some things get better.

Note therefore that Israelite believers were like all men. They corrupted the truths of God and arranged things to suit themselves, to the chagrin of the prophets. Even King David had problems in this regard.

The Apostle emphatically declares that it is not two natures inside the Christian fighting against each other. The problem is God's Holy Spirit in the believer in conflict with the sinful nature of the believer. See 3:3; 4:29; 5:16, 18,22, 25; Romans8:4-6, 9, 13. One writer warns us:

We will always experience conflict, whether we side with the Spirit against the flesh, or with the flesh against the Spirit. The "things that you please" may be good or evil. It is impossible for us to remain neutral, we either follow one or the other. Note, too, that we cannot blame Satan and his demons for all the conflicts we experience. Our own sinful nature is responsible for many of them".

Another writer adds:

"So long as we remain in this present life, we never outgrow or transcend the spiritual conflict Paul was describing in this passage. There is no spiritual technique or second blessing that can propel the believer onto a higher plane of Christian living where the battle must no longer be fought".

Given that you and I are the problem the good news is that there is a breakthrough offered. That is freedom. The freedom allows the believer to walk in the Spirit and not do the harmless and hurting things we are accustomed to do.



Practical help is offered. This involves being a lover of others, for if one concentrates and thinks on the words of Scripture, that believer will think less often of themselves and more often of others. In this the believer will discover their spiritual gifts that they have been given to serve the body of Christ, and as they serve, the spiritual immune system will be strengthened and the sinful nature will not succeed in its efforts to ruin the believer's walk.

This is how spiritual progress, the daily walk, is achieved in the power of the Spirit. With this loving your neighbour as yourself there will be no biting, devouring, or consuming one another when there are disagreements. There will be no violation of the law to "*love thy neighbour as thyself*". Note that the nation of Israel knew this command from Sinai, and there they even agreed to follow its precepts.

THE TEXT

Verse 18. The language by the Apostle is quite emphatic. He believes that since the believer is led by the Holy Spirit that believer will be under the moral will of God and not under the code of the law. For the Spirit will help us understand the will of God as He has revealed it in Scripture. This means that the believer cannot expect that by remaining under the law of any kind he or she will ever be able to overcome the desires of the flesh. There must be in contrast to submission to the law, submission to the Spirit.

Note that Spirit has all power and could if He wished force us to do the will of God. But instead of doing that He encourages us to walk day by day under His leading, and not walk according to the desires of the flesh. One writer in fact calls for radical submission to the leading of the Spirit. He puts it this way:

"To be led by the Spirit, in the full sense of it, is to be under His benign and powerful influence in all thoughts, aspirations, and acts,--to be yielded up to His government without reserve,--to have no will without His prompting it, no purpose without His shaping it,-- is to be everywhere and in all things in willing submission to His control, and always guarding against any insubordination which may grieve the Holy spirit of God....To be led by the spirit is much the same as to walk by the Spirit".

Note that our motivation to do what is right comes from the Spirit and not from our sinful nature. He gives us the power to obey and so we are told to allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit so that we will live. A believer really cannot be able to please God by following detailed lists of rules and checkmarks about what to do and what not to do. That will certainly lead to stress which is a killer. He is pointing the believer to being in a relationship to a living person with the Spirit changing the heart and giving access to that Person.

So there is to be a daily walk, experiencing the ordinary and commonplace things of life, breathing, and living, at all times in the normal process of living looking at the double standards we adopt, judging our prejudices, our tone of voice when we encounter other persons, and



listening to the Spirit as we put one foot in front of the other. When great problems and stresses occur and since we would have been making choices guided by the Spirit and we would have been maturing, we would be able to make the choices the Spirit wants.

Verses 19-21. Paul assumes the believers are honest and he therefore states that the “*deeds of the flesh are evident*”. They are plain. We will be tempted by attractively designed things which will be presented to us as good for us. But these things of the flesh, no matter how cleverly disguised, always involve and lead to indulgence, sin, and the inevitable wages of sin, namely death. We therefore are encouraged to look at ourselves honestly and we will see if we are in the flesh.

The story is told of an Emperor who was quite foolish and his tricky tailors told him they had made him some amazingly beautiful clothes. When they dressed him and he looked in the mirror he could not see this beautiful new suit but he did not want to admit that he only saw his underwear. The tailors kept telling him his new clothes were beautiful and he just accepted that. But when he went in a big parade dressed in his supposed beautiful new clothes the crowd who had been similarly fooled by the tailors saw the emperor had no clothes but they thought they were the ones who could not appreciate the beautiful new suit being worn by their leader. But one little boy finally blurted out very loudly, “The emperor has no clothes”, and the bubble was burst and the people started laughing at the emperor and he was very embarrassed.

The apostle encourages us to be willing to be honest. But to be clear in case we want to fool ourselves he lists some of the works of the flesh. If you find yourself doing any of these you are in serious trouble and if your Pastor or Leader is afraid to warn you, go and talk to the Spirit for that might be you only hope. One writer comments:

“Paul identified five categories of sins here. He seems to have been saying ironically: “Look at the accomplishments of the flesh”.

Sexual sins (vs. 19)

“Immorality”, fornication (Gr. *Porneia*, all types of forbidden sexual relationships).

“Impurity”, uncleanness (Gr. *akatharsia*, all moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed).

“Sensuality”, licentiousness, indecency debauchery, lasciviousness (Gr. *aselgeia*, the open, shameless display of these sins).

Religious sins (vs.20)

“Idolatry’ (Gr. *eidololatria*, worship of anything but God and the practices associated with that worship)

“Sorcery”, witchcraft (Gr. *pharmakeia*, attempts to aid the powers of evil and the practices associated with that).

Societal sins (vv. 20-21)



“Enmities”, quarrels, hatred (Gr. *echthrai*, hostilities).
“Strife” discord, variance (Gr. *eris*, antagonism)
“Jealousy”, envy, emulation (Gr. *zelos*, self-centered animosity).
“Outbursts of anger”, fits of rage, wrath (Gr. *thymoi*, temper eruptions)
“Disputes”, strife, factions, selfishness, selfish ambition (Gr. *eritheiai*, putting others down to get ahead).
“Dissensions”, divisions seditions (Gr. *dichostasiai*, disputes over issues or personalities).
“Factions”, heresies, party spirit (Gr. *haireseis*, divisions over issues or personalities).
“Envying’s”, jealousies (Gr. *phthonoi*, wrong desires to have another’s possessions).

Intemperate sins (vs.21)

“Drunkenness”, drinking bouts (Gr. *methai*, excessive use of intoxicants)
“Carousing’s”, revelling’s, orgies (Gr. *komoi*, parties involving excessive eating and drinking)

Other sins (vs. 21)

“*Things like these*” (similar violations of God’s moral will).

Note that Paul had previously warned that those that practised those kinds of sins would not inherit the kingdom of God. They are either unbelievers, or masqueraders posing as Christians. Sadly, many in the church, leaders and members alike seem quite capable of these fleshly indulgencies, and like to make excuses for their behaviour, despite the warning of Scripture. This kind of behaviour which is so prevalent today reflects the corruption in the modern as well as the ancient church.

Verse 22. In contrast to the condemned behaviour where the sinful nature dominates and leads is the behaviour characteristic of those led by the Spirit. So if you feel led by the Spirit seek out those with these characteristics and avoid the other kinds of persons. Do not follow them or let them lead you. The writer lists what the spirit produces:

Mental or God-ward qualities (vs. 22)

“*Love*” (Gr. *agape*, self-sacrificing affection for others).
“*Joy*” (Gr. *chara*, deep-seated gladness regardless of circumstances).
“*Peace*” (Gr. *eirene*, inner quietness and repose regardless of circumstances).

Interpersonal or other-ward qualities (vs.22)

“*Patience*” (Gr. *makrothymia*, forbearance even under provocation).
“*Kindness*” (Gr. *chrestotes*, benevolence and graciousness).
“*Goodness*” (Gr. *agathosyne*, constructive action reaching out to others).



General or self-ward qualities (vvs.22-23)

“Faithfulness” (Gr. *pistis*, reliability, trustworthiness).

“Gentleness” (Gr. *praytes*, acquiescence to authority and consideration of others).

“Self-control”, (Gr. *enkratēia*, ability to master oneself).

Note that all of these seem to add up to describe the personality of Christ. They are graces. We are being transformed into the image of Christ by the work of the Spirit. These graces are the product of God the Holy Spirit and thus no law can be against this fruit.

Note the word “Fruit” is singular. The Spirit produces all these graces and they are one, not looked at as piecemeal items, with some of them seen in the life of the believer while others are absent. They must all be seen together.

Note then that human endeavour cannot produce this thing of beauty, this ‘fruit’ of the Spirit. Only the power of the Spirit can produce this. The believer therefore must be led by the Spirit.

Verse 24. The conflict continues, and the flesh fights on, but note that the outcome had already been established. The person who belongs to Christ cannot lose this fight, for the strong clutches and grasp of the flesh have already been crucified. The believer belongs to Christ and the sacrifice Jesus made is also our sacrifice. The flesh fights for it has not been eradicated. But it will be one day.

Christ has broken the domination of our sinful nature, and though we still have that nature it no longer controls us. The outward expressions of our innermost sinful desires, our passions, have been crucified and have no longer the life or power to control us.

Verse 25. Since the believer has new life that person must walk step by step with the Spirit. We must learn to follow the Spirit, day by day, for He has been provided by the Father to enable us to live the victorious life. The struggle will continue but those who come with a new law must be rejected. We can test them to see if they have the fruit of the Spirit. This is now a daily walk in dependence on the Spirit for this walk is holy living.

Note that walking by the Spirit shows itself in a deeply relational life. It shows the love for others for it cannot be in isolation. It produces love that is freely given. Our love for God shows itself in our love for people. The gospel gives us the freedom and liberty to do just that.

Verse 26. We must as believers never have the wrong opinion of ourselves. The believer cannot be conceited, boasting of things or possessions that have no true worth. There can be no licence to think more highly of oneself than is possible. Without dependence on and the leading of the Spirit there is simply weakness and inability. There is no room for boasting. That is a sign of the flesh ruling

CHAPTER 6



Verse 1. As the Apostle presented how the believer led by the Spirit should live in the community, the question would naturally arise on what should be done about those Christians who give in and follow the flesh. This person is overtaken in a fault or in a sin. He has been tempted and had turned aside to the flesh. How should that person be treated?

The word used for “trespass” means this is not a habit but is an isolated action. It is not intentional but an inadvertent fall. Note we are now looking at relationships and managing life together.

Restoration is called for, and the task falls to those who are spiritually mature. One is to do for one’s neighbour what they would like someone else to do for them, and to do what God has done for them in the past. Those who are led by the Spirit can bring healing and unity where there is a slipping and division.

This is not a time for frowning and finger wagging, and a time for false accusations. The person caught in sin must be rehabilitated in a spirit of gentleness. This word “gentleness” is not weakness but power under control showing the ability to bring the appropriate response in response to the circumstances. Jesus used this word to describe Himself in Matthew 11:29 and is used in Matthew 21:5 when Jesus refused to defend Himself at his trial.

There can be no spiritual pride, but instead an action of restoration guided by the Spirit. Note that sin in the church and moral failure should not surprise us. And it should not bring fatal consequences. The spiritually mature will have a compassionate view of the one who has sinned for when one sins, they create victims, but they themselves are also victims, hurting themselves by their sinning.

The broken bones must be healed so that the body will recover from its injury and become healthy and productive again. Sin will spread and have a domino effect in the life of the sinner and in the life of the church so restoration must be powerful and effective. This can only be done properly by those led by the Spirit.

This must be done by persons who are aware of their vulnerability. When there is understanding of the need to restore with gentleness that will put the spiritually mature on guard against temptation for they will always want to be ready to assist those caught up in a sin.

Verse 2. Providing help means to carry another’s burden. Christians led by the Spirit will help those in the church as well as those outside the church who need help and are caught in sin. The law of God commands that one LOVE God and love one’s neighbour. This attitude is in contradiction to the works of the flesh. Loving one’s brother and sister in Christ means carrying their burden and helping them in following Christ. God wants Christians to be genuine friends to each other. They are not to bite, or devour each other.



Verse 3. Big egos are not of God. People are not to deceive themselves into thinking they are superior or better than others in the faith. There is to be a proper frame of mind that would enable a person to help a brother who had turned away from the proper path.

Self-deception and conceit are two dangerous errors. Those who think they are something are really nothing, says the Apostle. We are warned about the Pharisees who loved to look down on others, condemn them for their sins, and refused or neglected to restore those that had sinned. Self-delusion is a terrible state to be in.

Verses 4-5. Believers are to examine themselves, their motives, and their actions, testing both critically to see what has value and what does not have value in the sight of God. Each believer should focus on improving themselves, instead of watching others critically. The only legitimate ground for feeling satisfied about what one is doing is by remembering that it is God that has worked through us. Being high minded is ruled out.

A believer should focus on achieving their God given mission in life. Each person has a load that they must carry and that is where their life should be focused. The believer has to help others and also must help himself, doing everything that God has given to him to do.

Verse 6. It is felt by some that this verse supports the giving of sustenance to those that teach the word. Some however believe that the context shows Paul had another idea in mind. Those that have been restored must return to the fellowship of good things from which he had been parted. It is believed Paul had in mind that the one restored should go back to his previous state where he would share all he had with others.

Verse 7. We cannot fool God for He knows our hearts. If we focus on our own needs and not on service to God, God will know our minds and we will reap what we will not like.

This reminds us of what happened to our parents in the Garden of Eden where they learned the hard way that they should not have listened to Satan's clever insinuation that God could be mocked. But God means exactly what He says. King David learned that hard lesson. There is the way of life of the Spirit and the way of life of the flesh and the consequences of following each path are clear.

The whole of life consists in sowing. There is a universal principle which applies to each person without exception. If a person has sown to please the flesh, there will be destruction. There is no such thing as blind fate. A person makes a choice and the reward for that choice follows without fail. Spirit motivated sowing will bring the best harvest. Each person must make their own decision.

When we sow to greed, arrogance, pride, cruelty, laziness it will grow on us to grip us tightly and we cannot escape its clutches. When persons choose to trust God, we will become like Him. It will grow on us. The Father will repay us and we will be with Him.



Verses 9-10. The Book of Proverbs 24:30-31 had taught and the Apostle is reminding us of this fact. It reads:

"I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man lacking in sense. And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles. Its surface was covered with nettles. And its stone walls was broken down".

This is a statement about tragedy we should all learn. The writer continued in verses 32-34:

"When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction.

"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,",

Then your poverty will come as a robber, and your want like an armed man".

Do not let fatigue or tiredness slow you down. Growth in relationships require effort, and do not happen without some work. Believers cannot lose heart and slow down. Believers have a responsibility to do good to all men, but especially to other believers. So think about it carefully and do what is worth doing.

CONCLUSION

Eternal life beckons. CHRIST has created a good and holy life for us and we should enjoy it by being led always by the Spirit. One writer warns:

"To "sow to the flesh" is to pander to it, to cosset, cuddle and stroke it, instead of crucifying it. The seeds we sow are largely thoughts and deeds. Every time we allow our minds to harbour grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy, or wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh.

