

# ***The Gospel in Galatians***

## ***Living by the Spirit***

Lesson #12 for September 16, 2017

Scriptures: Galatians 5:16-26; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Romans 7:14-24; Jeremiah 7:9; Hosea 4:2; Matthew 22:35-40.

1. This lesson discusses the basic battleground in the great controversy over the character and government of God. Are we living by the Spirit? Or, are we practicing the works of the flesh? As Christians, are we exercising true Christian love? Or, satanic selfishness?
2. Where does the great controversy actually take place? Where does Satan conduct his fiercest attacks? Is he fighting hardest with people who are already fully on his side? Or, with people who are trying to escape his wiles? How do we actually bury the old self? This is not a physical battle but a mental and spiritual battle. (Romans 7:14-24) It is a battle that occurs in each of us—in each person's brain. Do you feel like a battleground? And how do we win by walking in the Spirit? (Galatians 5:16) How does that work out in modern life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? (Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Every honest Christian will admit that there is a daily struggle between the fleshly desires—the natural human wishes and wants—and the promptings and pleadings of the Holy Spirit. How do we get from the “works of the flesh” to “walking in the Spirit”? (Galatians 5:16)

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal [68] Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.... **Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.**

**It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*\* 67.3-69.2. [Bold type is added.]**

4. The only mechanism that seems to work is the one described in GC 555.1 and 1 Corinthians 3:18. “It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed....” What happens to a child as he beholds his parents and does his best to become like them? Compare Psalms 115:1-8. The Assyrians worshiped a god of war; that is what they focused on as a nation, and they became a very warlike nation. Or, did they make a god

of war because they liked to focus on war? What modern-day “idols” do people worship? What are our favorite things to do? Movies? Novels? The Internet? Bible study? Witnessing to others? Each of these actions changes us!

5. As you look around you in the church or even in the world, how much of this kind of change do you see going on? We claim to be an end-time remnant people; we hope to accomplish something that no other group has accomplished in the history of our world. Are we making progress in that direction? Are we “in the world but not of the world”? (John 15:19; 17:14)
6. Why do you think God allows this warfare to go on? Why doesn't God just allow us to be “once saved, always saved”? God could put a wall around Satan and not allow him to harass us. How much day-by-day transformation would take place in that situation?
7. Do you find that it is easy to tell right from wrong? Or, do we get confused? To identify a counterfeit, one must know the true very well. Is it always clear which influences are coming from the flesh and which influences are coming from the Spirit? Isn't crucifying the old nature a daily task? Paul said, “I die daily.” (1 Corinthians 15:31) Then he said:

**1 Corinthians 15:33:** Do not be fooled. “Bad companions ruin good character.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., 1 Corinthians 15:33). New York: American Bible Society.

This is actually a quote from the Greek poet Menander from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

8. What is “walking in the Spirit”? How is walking in the Spirit related to self-control? (Galatians 5:16-18,23) There are going to be at least two “messiahs” that are going to show up at the end of the world. In fact, Jesus said that there will be many! Will it be easy to identify which is the false and which is the true? (Matthew 24:4-5, 11,23-24; Revelation 13)
9. In the earliest Christian writings, the Christian life was described as “the Way.” (Compare John 14:6.) Luke and Peter talked about this in several places. (Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9,23; 24:22; 2 Peter 2:2) In New Testament times, Christians had to be very careful because Christianity was an illegal religion. And as we know, many people were killed for their Christian beliefs. When walking along some country road, one might meet someone coming from the other direction and stop to talk with him briefly. If the Christian came to suspect that the other might be a Christian, he could casually “doodle” a lazy “curve” in the dust. If the second person was a Christian, he would complete the picture by making a mirror image curve next to the initial curve to complete a primitive picture of a fish. The fish symbol became a symbol for Christianity because the name for fish in Greek is *I ch th us* (The *ch* and the *th* are each a single letter in Greek.) That was an acronym for *I* = “Jesus,” *ch* = “Christ,” *th* = “of God,” *u* = “the Son,” *s* = “Savior.”
10. In the Old Testament, the life of the faithful Jew was described as *Halakhah*, “walking in the law.” (Read Exodus 16:4; Leviticus 18:4; Jeremiah 44:23. Compare Galatians 5:16,25; and Romans 8:4.) How is that different from “the Way” described by Luke and Peter? Is it easy to walk in the Way? Or, is it hard? (Matthew 7:13-14)
11. The Bible describes human beings as being born in sin. (Psalms 51:5; John 9:34) How did we get that way? We are separated from God by our sin. (Isaiah 59:2) What basic change happened when Adam and Eve became the first human sinners? How has that affected us? Do we understand how sin actually changes us? Do our children obey us because they

fear us? Or, because they love us? Before they sinned, didn't Adam and Eve obey God voluntarily and freely?

12. There is a Christian bumper sticker which says: "Born once, die twice! Born twice, die once!" What does that mean? How does this relate to the daily walk that the Christian must experience if he is to remain a Christian?
13. How does this daily walk relate to those who claim that we are "once saved, always saved"?
14. Plato told his Greek students that human beings consist of a body which is basically evil. He taught that trapped inside that evil body is a soul which is good. This dualistic view of man was incorporated into certain Christian views in the early centuries. It was known as gnosticism. On one extreme, it led to the ascetic movement. The ascetics believed that every fleshly pleasure—even eating food which tasted good—was evil. That group did their best to separate themselves from any human pleasure.
15. This type of thinking led to things such as the actions of Saint Simeon Stylites. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon\\_Stylites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Stylites)) Living outside Aleppo, Syria, Simeon was so concerned about the sins in his life that he decided to build a tower ten feet tall and live on top of that tower. He thought it would be much more difficult to sin living up in the air many feet off the ground. As time went by, he made the tower taller and taller until he was up to 50 feet in the air. Soon, other Christians followed his example. The famous Order of the Stylites—the Pole Sitters—was the result. Ascetics believed that by putting the flesh to death, they were giving life to the soul.
16. By contrast, there was another group who also had a dualistic idea about human beings. They concluded that since the body was hopelessly evil, it really did not matter what they did with their bodies since the only part that was savable was the soul. They thought they were free to commit every kind of sin, more or less doing whatever they wanted. The Gospel of John was written at least partially to counter these gnostic heresies. Neither of those groups lived loving lives.
17. Which side of the great controversy are we on? On a daily basis, do we sometimes do what the Spirit wants us to do and, thus, place ourselves on God's side? At times, on a daily basis, do we also do what the flesh yearns to do and, thus, place ourselves on Satan's side? Are we fighting on both sides of the great controversy? How do we actually go about favoring the side of the Spirit making it stronger and more powerful every day while we starve the old man of sin—gradually putting to death or crucifying the flesh? Unfortunately, there are times when we have to choose between two bad choices! For example, sometimes we do potentially dangerous surgeries to cut out cancers. So, we choose what we hope will be the lesser of two evils.
18. In Paul's writings there are several lists of sins. How would you compare them? (Romans 1:29-32; Ephesians 4:1,17; Colossians 1:10; Galatians 5:19-21) Which sins seem to get the most attention? What is the basic essence of sin? Isn't it selfishness as opposed to love?
19. Look at these lists of sins. All of these sins are manifestations of selfishness. By contrast, look at the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Notice that the first portion of the fruit of the Spirit is love. Does love produce joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and even self-control?
20. Notice a couple of interesting contrasts between these two lists. Self *demands* we follow

its inclinations. By contrast, the Spirit *produces* its virtues. Does God ever use force on us?

21. The second major difference between these two groupings is that the works of the flesh are plural while the fruit of the Spirit is singular. While Peter suggested in 2 Peter 1:5-7 that virtues need to be added in a ladder-like fashion, Paul seemed to suggest that the Christian virtues come all together as a single fruit. Which of these truths more closely describes your personal experience? What was Paul trying to emphasize? What was Peter trying to emphasize? Is this a fruit with many seeds? Are these seeds the characteristics that we are talking about?
22. There are a lot of things to think about in these lists. Is God trying to make things difficult? Does it really matter what we believe?

The present age is one of idolatry, as verily as was that in which Elijah lived. No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the gods of this world—after riches, fame, pleasure, and the pleasing fables that permit man to follow the inclinations of the unregenerate heart. **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.** Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and [178] His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*\* 177.1. [Bold type is added.]

23. Erroneous views about God and about basic human nature can lead us to do many wrong things. Satan's number one goal is to misrepresent God and, thus, to turn us away from Him. Which of Satan's "gods" are most attractive to us?
24. Contrast Paul's list of virtues in Galatians 5:22-23 with what other Bible writers have said about sins. (Jeremiah 7:9; Hosea 4:2; Mark 7:21-22; 1 Timothy 3:2-3; 1 Peter 4:3; Revelation 21:8)
25. How do the Ten Commandments relate to Paul's lists of sins and virtues? Would it be correct to say that obedience—a true, humble, willingness to listen to God—to the Ten Commandments will produce the fruit of the Spirit?
26. Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:8,10; and Galatians 5:14 tell us that love is the fulfillment of all law. Jesus Christ said that the law is summed up in love for God and love for our fellow man. (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 10:25-28) Is it clear that love for God is spelled out in the first four commandments while love for our fellow humans is described in the last six?
27. In contrast with the fifteen evil results, all of which come from selfishness, the nine virtues that Paul described in Galatians 5:22-23 have been grouped in various ways. Some have suggested that there are three groups of three included in this list. Some have suggested these groups of three suggest the preeminence of the Trinity. Others say they reflect how we should relate to God, to our neighbors, and to ourselves. Others see this list simply as a description of the life of Jesus Christ which we are to follow. Does this list divide itself naturally into groups of three? Does this seem a little far-fetched to you?
28. Paul emphasized the role of love in Galatians 5:6,13. He included love in almost every list of virtues. (See 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:12; 6:11; and 2 Timothy 2:22.) Love is also the preeminent fruit of the Spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 5:5.) What did Jesus Himself say about the role of love in the lives of Christians?

**John 13:34-35:** "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I

have loved you, so you must love one another. 35If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”—*American Bible Society. (1992). The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., John 13:34-35). New York: American Bible Society. (Compare DA 668.3.)

29. Almost everyone recognizes that the preeminent characteristic of Christianity is love. And that is *agape* love. How many people in your church love like that? How does self-denial and crucifying the flesh relate to love? Is it possible to love without self-denial and self-control?
30. While we do not want to oversimplify the truth, it is fairly clear that most non-Christian religions focus on rules and the retributive results if one does not follow them. Many legalistic Christians take the same approach to God. How can we make sure that we are not doing the same? How can we gradually transform our lives from being self-centered to being God-centered? How can the Holy Spirit help us to accomplish this?
31. According to Paul, the victorious goal toward which we are striving can be accomplished by following five steps:
  - 1) Walk by the Spirit; or, let the Spirit direct our lives.
  - 2) Let the Spirit lead us—following the example of Jesus—and no longer focus on our own behavior. Note that Martin Luther was consumed by concern about his past sins.
  - 3) Then, we will live by the Spirit who gives us life and controls our lives through His guidance.
  - 4) Then, we can keep in step with the Spirit.
  - 5) But, this is only possible by crucifying self!
32. Why did Paul use the very strong word *crucify* to describe this step? Doesn't that seem extreme? Of course, this is figurative language. Paul was not asking us to build wooden crosses and nail ourselves to them. Are we really trying to crucify self? How much would it hurt to cut off a hand? Or, pluck out an eye? (Matthew 18:8-9)
33. But, it is hard to deny the desires of the flesh. They always seem to come back. So, Paul said they must be crucified. What changes do we need to make in our lives to accomplish this step? Is that easy?
34. Is it possible to identify these spiritual truths in the lives of others? Should people be able to tell that we are true Christians? (John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:16) We need to help each other with these challenges. We need to encourage each other; and, as far as possible, we need to demonstrate the Christian virtues in our lives so others can see what it means to be a Christian. See 1 Corinthians 11:1.
35. How does all of this relate to the forensic aspects of Christianity? If our salvation rests exclusively on what Jesus has done for us, then why are we being asked to do all of this now? Is it clear how all this is supposed to fit together?

The life of the Christian is not all smooth. He has stern conflicts to meet. Severe temptations assail him. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” [Galatians 5:17] The nearer we come to the close of this earth's history, the more delusive and ensnaring will be the attacks of the enemy. His attacks will grow fiercer and more frequent. Those who resist light and truth will become more hardened and unimpressible, and more bitter against those who love God and keep His commandments.—Ellen G.

White, *MS 33, 1911\**; *6SDABC\** 1111.7.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul. We do not see Christ and speak to Him, but His Holy Spirit is just as near us in one place as in another. It works in and through every one who receives Christ. Those who know the indwelling of the Spirit reveal the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.—Ellen G. White, *MS 41, 1897\**; *6SDABC\** 1112.1.

The Spirit of God keeps evil under the control of conscience. When man exalts himself above the influence of the Spirit, he reaps a harvest of iniquity. Over such a man the Spirit has less and less influence to restrain him from sowing seeds of disobedience. Warnings have less and less power over him. He gradually loses his fear of God. He sows to the flesh; he will reap corruption. The harvest of the seed that he himself has sown, is ripening. He has a contempt for God's holy commandments. His heart of flesh becomes a heart of stone. Resistance to truth confirms him in iniquity. It is because men sowed seeds of evil, that lawlessness, crime, and violence prevailed in the antediluvian world.

All should be intelligent in regard to the agency by which the soul is destroyed. It is not because of any decree that God has sent out against man. He does not make man spiritually blind. God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force man to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil. If man resists evidence that is sufficient to guide his judgment in the right direction, and chooses evil once, he will do this more readily the second time. The third time he will still more eagerly withdraw himself from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course he will continue until he is confirmed in evil, and believes the lie he has cherished as truth. His resistance has produced its harvest.—Ellen G. White, *MS 126, 1901\**; *6SDABC\** 1112.4-5. [Content in brackets is added.]

36. Assuming we are following the way of Christ, as we grow to become more and more like Him, do you think Satan will become more fierce in his temptations? Or, will Satan become less fierce? If we as end-time remnant Seventh-day Adventists are living in the last days, then we should be prepared for the time when we will have to face the Devil directly. We should be prepared to stand up for what we believe, and we should demonstrate in our lives the truths that Paul was talking about in our passage for this week.

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Last Modified: July 9, 2017

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