

The Gospel in Galatians
The Gospel and the Church

Lesson #13 for September 23, 2017

Scriptures: Galatians 6:1-10; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Romans 15:1; John 13:34-35; Luke 22:3.

1. This lesson is about the church and how it deals with sinners. Is your church more like a hospital for sinners? Or, is it more like a club for saints? Have you helped another Christian to bear his or her burdens recently? How should the church respond to sinners either outside or inside its ranks? Shouldn't the church welcome sinners? Aren't we all sinners?
2. As you look around in your church, do church members frequently put others before themselves? Are we practicing the golden rule?

Matthew 7:12: Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 7:12). New York: American Bible Society.

3. These are tough questions. Jesus was not talking about Wall Street's "golden rule": "He who has the gold makes the rules!" There were other law codes before the days of Moses. They included rules like: "If you don't want someone to do something to you, don't do it to him." Hasn't every mother said that to her children? How was Jesus's instruction different? And what about the platinum rule: "Do unto others what they would like to have done to them."
4. Like other human beings, Christians make mistakes. How should we deal with church members who make mistakes? How does the church relate to sinners who are outside of its membership but who might be considering joining? Do they feel welcome?
5. Read Galatians 6:1. Does helping others who have fallen into sin make us more prone to sin ourselves? Surely, we should recognize the general principle that Christians should constantly watch against temptation. How do we warn others about their sins without seeming judgmental? (Read Galatians 6:3.)
6. Is there a difference between a mistake and a sin? The words describing church members who inadvertently commit sin are revealing. The Greek word suggests that they are "overtaken" or "surprised" to find themselves once again sinning. Sins are a trap! (Proverbs 5:22) Is it ever appropriate to lie? When you are feeling terrible in the morning, do you still respond, "I'm fine"? If someone looks really bad, do you tell him/her so?
7. What does the Bible teach us about unintentional sins and intentional sins? Read Numbers 15:22-29. There are very clear instructions about unintentional sins. But, what does the Bible say about intentional sins?
8. Consider this passage written by Moses:

Numbers 15:30-31: ³⁰ But any person who sins deliberately, whether he is a native or a foreigner, is guilty of treating the LORD with contempt, and he shall be put to death, ³¹ because he has rejected what the LORD said and has deliberately broken one of his commands. He is responsible for his own death.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Numbers 15:30-31). New York: American Bible Society.

9. Immediately after that, Moses described the case of someone who intentionally broke the Sabbath. (Numbers 15:32-36) At God's command he was stoned to death outside the camp. Paul also talked about dealing with defiant sins. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) What about David's sins? Why do you think Bathsheba had been married for some time to Uriah and had not gotten pregnant? If she had gotten pregnant during that time, she would have been at home with her child and would not have gotten involved with David. Did God, knowing the future, keep Bathsheba from getting pregnant so that when she had that affair with David she would get pregnant and David would not be able to hide? Or, did the Devil keep her from getting pregnant? The same thing could be asked about Judah and Tamar. (Genesis 38)
10. Does repentance change a sin from being intentional to unintentional? (See Psalms 51.)
11. It seems that God's plan was for intentional sins to be taken very, very seriously. How many of our sins are unintentional? The word in Galatians 6:1 translated as *fault* or *sin* comes from the Greek word *paraptoma* and does not describe a deliberate sin but rather an unintentional mistake. What about habitual sins? Are they ever unintentional?
12. So, how should the church respond to lapses in righteousness when it is a church member who is caught in unintentional sins? It is the work of the church—like the work of a hospital—to restore such a person. The Greek word *katartizo* which is used in this passage is the word also used for mending nets or even for setting broken bones.
13. In our day, how often do we follow the advice Jesus Himself gave in Matthew 18:15-17? Have you ever seen that done in your church? Do we reach out to our fellow church members, putting our arms around them when they sin, restoring them? Or, do we talk about them behind their backs? Or, even despise them in our hearts? How did God deal with Nadab and Abihu? (Leviticus 10:1-11) Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? (Numbers 16) Uzzah? (2 Samuel 6:1-8) Ananias and Sapphira? (Acts 5) What about Peter's sin? (Mark 14:27-31,66-72)

So with the apostasy at Sinai. Unless punishment had been speedily visited upon transgression, the same results would again have been seen. The earth would have become as corrupt as in the days of Noah. Had these transgressors been spared, evils would have followed, greater than resulted from sparing the life of Cain. **It was the mercy of God that thousands should suffer, to prevent the necessity of visiting judgments upon millions. In order to save the many, He must punish the few. Furthermore, as the people had cast off their allegiance to God, they had forfeited the divine protection, and, deprived of their defense, the whole nation was exposed to the power of their enemies.** Had not the evil been promptly put away, they would soon have fallen a prey to their numerous and powerful foes. It was necessary [326] for the good of Israel, and also as a lesson to all succeeding generations, that crime should be promptly punished. **And it was no less a mercy to the sinners themselves that they should be cut short in their evil course. Had their life been spared, the same spirit that led them to rebel against God would have been manifested in hatred and strife among themselves, and they would eventually have destroyed one another. It was in love to the world, in love to Israel, and even to the transgressors, that crime was punished with swift and terrible severity.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 325.3. [Bold type is added.] (Consider the story of Achan as

recorded in Joshua 7.)

14. The God of the Old Testament was Jesus. (1 Corinthians 10:10-4; Luke 24:44; John 5:39-40) So, we must understand these statements while understanding that Jesus was the One who guided Moses, and Joshua, etc. There are some who do not believe that God would ever cause the death of anyone, even in the first death. They often use statements from Ellen White concerning the death of sinners in the final destruction to support their views concerning the first death. This is a question that each of us must think through very carefully for ourselves. I would recommend the reading of the handout entitled *The Final End of Sin and Sinners* found at our website www.Theox.org for a better understanding of this whole issue. (Use the search option or go to Teacher's Guides, then look for General Topics, then go to "The Final End of Sin and Sinners.")
15. Have you ever found yourself condemning another church member—even secretly in your thoughts—when you discover s/he has committed some sin? How often have you found yourself guilty of that same sin a short time later? Is that why we have the common expression in the English language, "It takes one to know one"? Compare Matthew 7:1-5.
16. Who is the worst sinner? Is it the one who commits an unintentional sin? Or, the one who, filled with spiritual pride, condemns that person in his heart? Does this sound like the Pharisees in the New Testament? Do we as church members actually consistently practice the golden rule? (Matthew 7:12) Why is spiritual pride such a serious problem for Christians? Why did Jesus choose certain women as His followers? (Luke 8:1-3) Or, did they choose Him? How do you feel about Jesus and His disciples traveling around with a former prostitute and some wealthy society women? Were they all saints? Remember that every person who has died will be judged fairly by God.
17. Why do you suppose Paul in Galatians 5:14 and Romans 13:8,10 said that if we love our neighbors as ourselves, we have fulfilled all law? Is that really true? If we really did that, would we eliminate all gender, racial, tribal, and class distinctions?
18. In Galatians 6:1, Paul did an interesting thing. The Greek verb in the first portion of the verse is in the second person plural. But, when Paul talked about looking after our own selves, he turned to the second person singular, meaning that each Christian is to take this personally.
19. We do not know if Paul had a specific sin or incident in the church at Galatia in mind when he gave this instruction. It may be just a general form of instruction. But, there are plenty of examples, even in the lives of Bible heroes, of being caught in serious sins.
20. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then arranged for her husband, Uriah, to be killed in battle. Was that an unintentional sin? When Nathan the prophet came to confront David concerning this sin, how did David respond? How would you have responded? (2 Samuel 12; Psalms 51; 32) Moses was a murderer before spending 40 years as a shepherd. (Exodus 2:14; Acts 7:28)
21. Peter swore to Jesus that he would follow Him even to death if necessary. A few hours later, he realized that he had denied his Lord three times! Were those intentional lies? (Matthew 26:34)
22. Unfortunately, we were all born with sinful natures. It is so easy to be filled with spiritual pride and conceit when we think that others have fallen into sin and we are still standing. 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns us to beware when we think we are standing lest we fall.
23. It has been almost 2000 years since Christ came the first time. Why hasn't He come back?

Why hasn't the gospel been preached to all the world for a witness to all nations? (Matthew 24:14) Don't we have more evidence than any previous generation? How should our experience compare with that of Adam and Eve who walked with God in the garden? Or, with the disciples who spent years with Jesus in person?

24. Instead of using sinful humans, wouldn't it have been better for God to use angels who could even appear on this earth as human beings to spread the gospel? Wouldn't they have represented God and told the truth more clearly than we erring, sinful, human beings have done? But, it would take away our opportunity to grow by witnessing. God could even have asked beings from the other worlds to come and finish the gospel on His behalf. No doubt, there are other ways God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, could have done it Himself. Part of the problem is that it is much harder to unlearn something that we have come to believe and trust as truth than it is to learn something new. Are we committed to erroneous pictures of God?
25. But, God has chosen to involve us for several reasons. First of all, in order to speak the truth to someone else, we need to study it and learn it well enough so we can explain it clearly. The reason we need to practice witnessing to others is because in order to teach something to others, you must understand it very well yourself. That is a great opportunity for us to grow. Furthermore, our fellow human beings can see that we are humans like they are, and this should encourage them that they too are able to live a Christian life. Finally, God has given us the glorious opportunity of sharing in His work. We should consider this opportunity a precious one. What could be better than working with God to accomplish the most important task left to be done here on planet earth? What would happen if every church member took this as his top priority? Wouldn't you love to have an hour every week to sit down with Jesus and ask questions? If God granted that, guess who would demand equal time! Will there come a day when God's faithful people have a clear, consistent message to give to the world?
26. Look back over the past year. How many church members can give a good explanation—with the texts to support them—of our doctrines? What kind of preparation do we need? Would God pour the latter rain on us so we can misrepresent Him?
27. Read Galatians 6:2-5. In what ways are we supposed to bear one another's burdens? Shouldn't it seem natural that the spiritually strong should help the spiritually weak? And surely, we are not supposed to compare ourselves with others. We should leave the judging to God.
28. The Greek word *baros* in Galatians 6:2 originally meant a very heavy weight or load that someone had to carry a long distance. Later, this word came to have a broader meaning, describing any type of trouble or difficulty, even the burden of a long day's work on a hot day.
29. How do we explain the apparent contradiction between Galatians 6:2 and 6:5? The Greek word in Galatians 6:2—*baros*—refers to a very heavy load that needs to be carried for some distance. By contrast, the Greek word *phortion* used in Galatians 6:5, refers to a ship's cargo, a soldier's backpack, or even a child in the womb. Some burdens can be set aside or jointly carried. Some cannot. It is not possible for a pregnant woman to share the burden of carrying her child. Some burdens can only be shared with the Lord. But, He is always there to help us.
30. There are several important principles we should have in mind when we consider this injunction from Paul. First of all, no Christian is exempt from burdens. We all have them. They might even involve a physical ailment, a mental disorder, or crises at work or in the family, a lack of employment, or, perhaps, demonic oppression.

31. Secondly, clearly, God does not intend for us to bear all our burdens alone. (Matthew 11:28-30) So many of us are proudly self-sufficient. We are not even willing to accept the help which is offered to us. This is a form of spiritual pride; it should be avoided.
32. God asks us to help bear the burdens of other Christians because that is a great way to develop camaraderie and to make God's comfort manifest to others. God intentionally works through us. (2 Corinthians 7:6)
33. Have you ever been in difficulty or had a burden you were afraid you could not bear but were afraid to ask anyone for help? Why does that happen? Pride, shame, lack of trust, even a sense of self-sufficiency are sins that could bar us from the kingdom of heaven.
34. How should church discipline be handled? Clearly, if we are to follow the instructions of Jesus recorded in Matthew 18 and the instruction of Paul noted in Galatians 6, we should make every effort to restore those who have fallen. There should be no vindictive punishment involved.
35. Consider the case of the woman taken in adultery as described in John 8. The church should be a hospital for sinners and not just a club for saints. We may feel zealous for the church's reputation, and we may think that ridding ourselves of an erring member will protect that reputation. Such a course of action may be necessary in the case of public and recalcitrant sinners; but, it is certainly the final step and should never be done as a first step.
36. Remember that the best hospitals tend to have the sickest patients. The church and church members should forcefully battle sin and not sinners. Or, do we think that the church should only admit to its membership people who are in the best possible standing in society so our church has a good reputation?
37. What is "the law of Christ" which Paul spoke about in Galatians 6:2? (Compare John 13:34-35.) This expression is unique in the New Testament. Various attempts have been made to explain the meaning of this expression. Some would even suggest that the law of Christ was given to replace the Ten Commandments which is called the law of Moses. Others have suggested that it is a general principle describing the way in which Christians are to help bear the burdens of others. Of course, this is an excellent idea; but, in context, the similarity with Galatians 5:14 suggests that we should fulfill the moral law—the Ten Commandments—by exercising love. (Romans 13:8,10)
38. In light of how Jesus dealt with sinners, what approach should the church take? If we followed the example of Christ, would we ever go wrong?
39. Read Galatians 6:6-10. In Galatians 6:7, there is another unique Greek word. The word translated *mocked* in the *King James Version* is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It means "to turn up one's nose in contempt." It is found in several places in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint (*LXX*) and usually referred to the despising of God's prophets. (2 Chronicles 36:16; Jeremiah 20:7)
40. In the Christian life, what does it mean to reap what you sow? Do we always consider the fact that we will reap what we sow when we commit sin? We do not have the option of choosing the consequences! Look at some biblical characters who illustrate this point. Compare Ananias (Acts 5:1-5); Judas (Luke 22:1-3); and Daniel (Daniel 1:8). While we do not have the privilege of choosing the consequences of our bad choices, we must always remember that God still loves us and still forgives us.
41. In Galatians 6:10, Paul essentially said that while Christians should be reaching out with Christian love to everyone in the world, this should especially be true toward other members in the family of faith. Is that discriminatory? Shouldn't we be reaching out to

others outside the church?

42. In our modern world, there is a great deal of effort and time put into investing financially to prepare for our futures. Are we doing as much investing in the gospel? The lives of sinners are far more important than any bank account or 401(k). Unfortunately, the church's efforts to reach out to sinners tend to be haphazard and not well-organized. How can we improve that record? What can we do as individuals to reach out to those who are in need?
43. How can we reach out to business associates, neighbors, and even strangers when the opportunity presents itself? Unfortunately, we often find that we are so busy carrying out our personal business and even the business of the church that there is little time to do the things which are really important.
44. God gives us freedom. That freedom can be exercised or abused. Daily, we can take steps in the right direction, becoming more and more like Jesus, reaching out to others around us, and helping to spread the gospel, and thus, finish the work that Jesus left us to do. Or, we can be caught up in the many, many busy activities of our world and allow our work, our entertainment, even our families to occupy us so completely that there is little opportunity to speak on God's behalf.

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, *Manuscript 126, 1901**; *6SDABC** 1112.5; *Sermons and Talks,** vol. 2, 183.4; *Christ Triumphant** 103.4.

45. How are we doing? If every church member was like you, would the gospel be finished sooner? Or, never? Think about it!

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