

UNIT 2: LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Lesson 8

July 26, 2026

Life in the Holy Spirit:

Holy Spirit-led living is Christlike living.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Paul underscores the importance of remaining faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through which the Galatians were saved, and warns against slipping back into spiritual bondage by attempting to mix works of the Law with grace. He encourages believers to walk in the Spirit, which helps us stay on the path of righteousness and resist the pull of the flesh toward sin. Living by the Spirit produces fruit that glorifies God and strengthens the church. Paul also stressed the value of supporting one another, gently restoring those who have stumbled, and being kind and generous within the church and the wider community.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Holy Spirit is emphasized throughout the Letter to the Galatians, with sixteen references to Him, ten of which are found in chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, Paul emphasized the transformative role of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives. He presented the Holy Spirit as both a guide and enabler of righteous living, empowering believers to resist sin and reflect Christlike character. These chapters portray the Holy Spirit as central to Christians' moral maturity, spiritual growth, and ultimate hope in Christ. Clearly, we must yield to the Holy Spirit in our walk of faith.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST: Galatians 5:1-15.

- A. Resist Going Back to Bondage, (1-10)
- B. Paul's Message Never Wavered, (11-15)

2. WALK AND LIVE IN THE SPIRIT: Galatians 5:16-26.

- A. Flesh Works Against the Spirit, (16-21)
- B. The Spirit and Righteousness, (22-26)

3. DO GOOD TO ALL: Galatians 6:1-10.

- A. Restoring Fallen Saints, (1-6)
- B. Sowing and Reaping Without Fainting, (7-10)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST: Galatians 5:1-15.

A. Resist Going Back to Bondage, Galatians 5:1-10.

Christ's followers have proud freedom in Him. So, Paul urged the Galatians, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (v. 1). This freedom is not merely a release from legalistic practices but a liberation of the soul, empowering a life lived in grace through faith. Paul warned against the danger of circumcision as a requirement for salvation because it symbolizes a return to reliance on the Law rather than the sufficiency of Christ's redemptive work. To embrace such legalism is to forfeit the grace that sets believers free, reducing the life-changing power of faith into a burdensome yoke. True freedom in Christ is marked by reliance on His finished work and the Spirit's guidance, not by external rituals or human efforts.

Paul emphasized the centrality of faith "expressing itself through love" (v. 6 NIV). However, after the Galatians had accepted Christ, some were failing to "run well" (v. 7) – they had not been faithful in following the Gospel. They had neglected their calling from God (v. 8) due to the "leaven," or heretical doctrine, of false teachers (v. 9). God does not take such teachings and behavior lightly, so a warning of "judgment" was declared (v. 10).

B. Paul's Message Never Wavered, Galatians 5:11-15.

Paul vigorously reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to the message of freedom in Christ, rejecting any notion of returning to the bondage of legalism. He addressed the accusation that he might still advocate circumcision, making it clear that such claims were false (v. 11). Paul said the message of Christ's cross was inherently offensive to those who cling to the Law because it invalidated the notion that human effort could produce righteousness. By standing firm on the truth that salvation is through faith in Christ alone. Paul emphasized that the Gospel is not about external rituals or works but about the life-changing freedom that comes from God's grace. His refusal to compromise on this point demonstrated his dedication to preserving the purity of the Gospel message, even in the face of opposition and misunderstanding.

Furthermore, Paul cautioned believers against using grace as an excuse for self-indulgence (v. 13). Instead, he called them to serve one another in love, fulfilling the spirit of the law through selfless actions (v. 14). By emphasizing love as the guiding principle of Christian freedom, Paul highlighted that true liberty in Christ does not lead to chaos or selfishness but to a life marked by mutual care and edification. His message remained consistent: Freedom in Christ is not about abandoning moral responsibility but about living in a way that reflects God's love and grace. Through his unwavering stance, Paul reminded the Galatians – and all Christians – that the Gospel is a call to both freedom and faithful service, rooted in the power of Christ.

Paul found it baffling that someone who had been set free from the burden of trying to earn salvation through the works of the Law would willingly return to that same bondage. To him, it seemed both irrational and unwise – why would anyone choose bondage over freedom, or works over grace? Yet, Paul observed that some of the "foolish Galatians" (3:1) had been misled

into doing just that. While his words may appear stern, they reflect the loving concern of a spiritual father urging his children to return to the path of grace, faith, and life in the Spirit. His message was a call to rediscover the beauty of freedom and the transformative power of faith.

2. WALK AND LIVE IN THE SPIRIT: Galatians 5:16-26.

A. Flesh Works Against the Spirit, Galatians 5:16-21.

Walking in the Holy Spirit is a means of aligning one's life with God's will and resisting the desires of the flesh. To "walk in the Spirit" (v. 16) is to live under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, allowing His presence to shape our thoughts, actions, and character. Paul contrasted this with "the works of the flesh" (v. 19), which are characterized by selfishness, immorality, and discord. The flesh represents the sinful tendencies inherent in human nature, which are in direct opposition to the Spirit. Indeed, "there are contrary to one another" (v. 17 NKJV), meaning they lead in opposing directions. By yielding to the Spirit, we are empowered to overcome our destructive desires and live in a way that reflects God's holiness and love. This passage reveals the Spirit's power to transform us, empowering us to pursue righteousness and bear spiritual fruit that glorifies God.

Verses 19-21 warn of the consequences of indulging in the works of the flesh, listing behaviors that lead to spiritual ruin and separation from God's kingdom. These acts not only harm individuals but also disrupt relationships and communities. Seventeen works of the flesh are given, which may be divided into four categories. The first category is sensual passions: "adultery" is sexual relations between a married person and someone other than their spouse. "Fornication" is a consensual sexual relationship between two people who are not married to each other. "Uncleanness" refers to moral impurity, while "lasciviousness" is a lewd lifestyle that throws off all restraints.

The second category is religious sins of "idolatry" and "witchcraft." The third category, sins against others, includes "hatred," "variance" (meaningless quarreling), "emulations" (jealousies), "wrath" (uncontrolled rage), "strife," "seditions" (dissensions that cause division), "heresies," and "envy" (NKJV). The fourth category is sins of intemperance "murders, drunkenness, revellings" (unbridled immorality). The phrase "and such like" (v. 21) means this is not an exhaustive list. No unrepentant sinners will "inherit the kingdom of God."

B. The Spirit and Righteousness, Galatians 5:22-26.

This passage highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the virtues that emerge when we walk in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. Verses 22 and 23 list "the fruit of the Spirit ...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (NKJV). The fruit of the Spirit is singular, not plural, meaning there is one fruit, not nine. This fruit has nine qualities. These qualities reflect the character of Christ and stand in stark contrast to the works of the flesh. These virtues are not merely moral goals; they are evidence of a life surrendered to the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ "have crucified the flesh with the

affections and lusts” (v. 24), signifying a decisive break from sinful tendencies and a commitment to live under the Spirit’s influence.

As Christians, we are urged to “walk in the Spirit” (v. 25), which is a call to active participation in cultivating the fruit of the Spirit through daily dependence on God’s power. This requires humility and focus, as we must avoid becoming “conceited, provoking and envying each other” (v. 26 NIV), which disrupts unity withing the body of Christ. The passage serves as both an encouragement and a challenge, reminding us that spiritual growth is a continuous journey marked by cooperation with the Spirit.

There is a clear distinction between a life driven by the desires of the flesh and one guided by the Spirit, leaving no room for compromise or ambiguity. It is a matter of choosing either to embrace grace and walk in the Spirit or to fall into fulfilling the cravings of the flesh. Paul likened the decision to follow the Spirit to crucifying the flesh, including its inherent appetites and desires (v. 24). this radical decision is possible only through wholehearted surrender to God, faith in His grace, and reliance on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

3. DO GOOD TO ALL: Galatians 6:1-10.

A. Restoring Fallen Saints, Galatians 6:1-6.

Restoring those who have stumbled in their walk with Christ is a delicate yet essential responsibility of the church. We are to approach such situations with gentleness, recognizing our own vulnerability to sin. This call to restoration is not one of harsh judgment or condemnation but of compassionate care, aligning with the humility and grace that Christ himself exemplified. Those who are “spiritual” – those who are in step with the Spirit – are called to bear the burdens of others (vv. 1-2), thereby fulfilling “the law of Christ,” which is rooted in love. This process requires wisdom and being self-aware. We must guard against pride or self-deception, examining our hearts and actions. Restoration, then, is the responsibility of the entire church, where the body of Christ works together to uphold one another in faith, always mindful of our mutual dependence on God’s grace.

Paul also points to the importance of personal responsibility in the life of every Christian. While the community plays a vital role in supporting and restoring the fallen, each individual must also carry their own load and take accountability for their actions (v. 5). This balance between mutual burden-bearing and personal responsibility reflects the dynamic nature of Christian fellowship. The instruction to “share in all good things with him who teaches” God’s Word (v. 6 NKJV) further emphasizes the interconnectedness in the body of Christ and the value of mutual edification. Galatians 6:1-6 calls Christ’s followers to embody a spirit of humility, love, and accountability as they seek to restore fallen saints, fostering a community that reflects the redemptive and restorative heart of God.

B. Sowing and Reaping Without Fainting, Galatians 6:7-10.

Paul invoked the principle of sowing and reaping to urge Christians to persist in doing good, particularly in evangelism and service to the Spirit (v. 8) expresses the necessity of consistent,

Spirit-led efforts to share the Gospel and live out the faith. Evangelism often requires patience and perseverance, as the results of our labor may not be immediately visible. Since “God is not mocked” (v. 7), the seeds we sow – whether for the flesh or the Spirit – will ultimately bear fruit in accordance with their nature. This serves as both a warning and an encouragement to remain steadfast in spreading the message of Christ, trusting that God’s timing and purposes will bring forth a harvest in due season.

As Christians, we must “not grow weary while doing good” (v. 9 NKJV), recognizing the fatigue that can arise from prolonged efforts without apparent success. Evangelism, like any spiritual endeavor, can be challenging and met with resistance; so, we must focus on the promise of reaping eternal rewards and not give up. Paul emphasized the importance of seizing every opportunity to do good, “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (v. 10). We must faithfully plant seeds of truth and love, trusting that God will bring growth. Let us endure with hope, knowing that our “labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58 NKJV).

The fruit of the Spirit is most evident in how we conduct ourselves in our various relationships. The way we treat and engage with others, particularly fellow believers in Christ, clearly indicates whether our actions stem from self-centered motives or are guided by the Spirit. The world declared our love for one another is the defining mark that demonstrates we are truly His disciples (John 13:35). By approaching others with a spirit of humility and a willingness to serve, we not only reflect the character of Christ but also strengthen the credibility and impact of our testimony.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Disciples are called to walk in the footsteps of the Master, Jesus. Human determination alone cannot do this; it can only be accomplished through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

A restoration ministry focused on identifying and reaching out to members who have been absent for an extended period would be consistent with the lesson’s emphasis.

Paul's Experience and Spirit-Filled Living.

The Scripture passage in Galatians 5:16-26 is well-known by Christians for its emphasis on living and walking in the Holy Spirit (v. 25). This emphasis on the Holy Spirit is typical of the Apostle Paul's letters in the New Testament.

Consider where this started for the Apostle Paul. Three days after Paul's conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, Ananias came to him, laid hands on him, and said, "The Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Being filled with the Holy Spirit was extremely important to Paul.

The Apostle Paul commanded, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). In the New Testament Greek text, this means, "be always being filled with the Spirit."

The Apostle Paul reminded the Galatians that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and witnessed miracles in their midst not because they observed Jewish customs, but because they believed in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:2,5).

In Paul's thirteen letters in the New Testament, he mentioned the Holy Spirit 96 times. In Romans, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 27 times, in First Corinthians 21 times, in Galatians 16 times, and in Ephesians 12 times.

The Apostle Paul gave us the magnificent Romans chapter 8, in which he describes and explains in detail the life in the Holy Spirit the believer in Christ has, mentioning the Holy Spirit 19 times in that one chapter.

The Apostle Paul gave us the most concise definition of "the kingdom of God" in the New Testament: it is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

The Apostle Paul gave us the Apostolic Benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

WORKSHEET

Life in the Holy Spirit

The temptation is always there to judge fellow churchgoers. Instead, the Bible says we should evaluate ourselves.

Based on Galatians 5 and 6, here are questions we can ask to judge ourselves:

1. How am I guarding against being confused by false teaching?
2. How am I striving to love my neighbor as myself?
3. Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to help me resist the desires of my sinful nature (5:19-21)?
4. Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to produce His good fruit in me (5:22-23)?
5. When a fellow believer is overcome by sin, how can I help them get back on the right path (6:1-2)?
6. Do I refuse to compare myself to others, and instead seek to follow God's will (6:4)?