

Walking In The Spirit

*A Thirteen Lesson
Bible Class Study*



*a study of the distinction made in Galatians 5
by the Holy Spirit*

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Introduction

The children of God are distinct from the children of the devil as regards the way they live their lives, according to faith or the flesh. Galatians 5 records several matters in which the two can be distinguished by works of the flesh or fruits of the Spirit.

The list of works of the flesh is surprising to many. While it contains sins that cause us to recoil in disgust, it also includes subjects that the mild Christian would label as minor. The reader is thus reminded that every transgression against God's law is a serious matter and that every sin should be disgusting to us.

The fruits of the Spirit provide a timeless lesson on the positive growth of the Christian. We must spend our lives tending the garden of our faith so that we may bear such good fruits as these all around us.

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Lesson 1: *Works of the Flesh: Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness and Lewdness*

Paul begins his list in Galatians 5:19 by contending that the works of the flesh are evident. There are no gray areas or situation ethics involved in things that are sinful and indulgent of unhealthy fleshly appetites. He lists four of them in verse 19.

The first two, adultery and fornication, are obviously very closely related. Both involve sexual activity outside the normal marriage bed of a man and his wife. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

Adultery comes to us from the Greek word *moichaiia*, defined by Thayer as "to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife." The most famous Bible example of adultery is found in the relationship between Israel's King David and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11). David had unlawful intercourse with that man's wife and was punished by God.

Adultery was condemned from the inception of marriage in the Garden of Eden and this prohibition was codified in the ten commandments of Exodus 20. Adultery was punishable by death under Moses.

Adultery figures prominently in the rebukes by Jesus. He expanded the teaching from Moses to include adultery contemplated in the eyes and heart. The word is also used metaphorically in the New Testament to describe unfaithfulness to the Christian's first love, the Lord.

Fornication is from the Greek word *porneia*, defined as "illicit sexual intercourse in general." Thus, fornication would include every form of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, harlotry, bestiality and incest.

The Lord God issued His opinion on sexual experimentation outside the marriage bed in Leviticus 18, listing various perversions and condemning them boldly. Fornication is also used throughout the book of Revelation to symbolize spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry committed against God.

Uncleaness is from the Greek word *akatharia*, meaning "the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living." The former sins might occur just once, which is enough to condemn the soul, but uncleaness is a way of life marked by sexual impurity. This may include anything that feeds the appetite for illicit sexual indulgence (that is, sex outside the marriage bed). A life of uncleaness would possess pornography, ribald jokes and stories and public nudity. Such a life is shameless and hardened against rebuke or guilt.

Lewdness or licentiousness is from the Greek word *aselgeia*, meaning "wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." Lewd behavior is suggestive of the sex act, whether by verbal description or physical mimicry. The alternate word, licentiousness, describes a life of vice and license to engage in dubious behavior. Lewdness is threefold, including sexual comments and jokes, such as those popular on many television programs; indecent bodily movement like that of modern dancing which imitates the sex act and accentuates the body for the purpose of creating lust; and the unchaste handling of males and females, which includes heavy petting outside marriage and most intimate dancing.

The last of these vices is remarkable in that it will often lead to the first three. Many a marriage has been wrecked by these subtle incursions on the marriage bed and a mind that becomes addicted to the partial indulgence of an illicit appetite.

While Christians are in the minority in opposition to racy stories, modern dancing, immodest attire and mixed bathing, it is evident why God cautions us against falling into these "lesser evils" by the world's standard. Such things create a yearning in the heart that poisons it against faithfulness and piety. Eventually, the addiction will require more and more of the sexual narcotic and the Christian will be enslaved to the devil again.



1. Define each of the works of the flesh discussed in this lesson:
 - a. adultery:
 - b. fornication:
 - c. uncleanness:
 - d. lewdness (licentiousness):
2. What does the Hebrew writer intend with the phrase “the marriage bed”?
3. What event led to David’s adultery to Bathsheba? What did his adultery cause him to do?
4. What did Joseph do when Potiphar’s wife enticed him to commit adultery (Gen. 39)?
5. What is the difference between adultery and fornication?
6. Why was sexual immorality condemned so strongly in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20?
7. Why is it significant that sexual immorality is the only reason for a scriptural divorce (Matt. 19:3-9)?
8. Name a Bible character who lived a life of uncleanness at some point.
9. What are the three types of lewdness or licentiousness, by definition?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. Are the following acts examples of lewdness?

a. mixed swimming	d. “clean” jokes
b. husband and wife swimming privately	e. modern dancing
c. sexual innuendo	
11. Why is mixed swimming an example of lewdness?
12. What happened when Herodias’s daughter danced for Herod (Matt. 14:1-11)?

Lesson 2: *Works of the Flesh: Idolatry and Sorcery*

Paul's list of the works of the flesh continues in verse 20 with idolatry and sorcery, both of which depend upon human ignorance and fascination with the unknown.

Idolatry is from the Greek word *idololatreia*, defined by Thayer as "the worship of false gods." Again, the prohibition against idolatry dates as far back as the ten commandments in Exodus 20:2-5: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God ..."

God was sending his people into a land filled with the worship of fake gods and wanted to protect them from falling into that trap. Sadly, before He was even done giving the law, they had created a golden calf to worship (Exod. 32). Their punishment was bitter, but not as bitter as eternal destruction.

It is evident that man has a natural desire to worship, but an unnatural weakness for choosing the creature rather than the Creator as its object.

The nation of Israel was continually falling into idolatry, with the likes of Molech, a god to whom adherents offered their children in a fiery sacrifice. The people built places to worship their idols all over the landscape of Canaan, defiling Abraham's heritage with disloyalty.

In New Testament times, the idolatry was just as clearly condemned. "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things ... and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:22-23, 25). But the most clearly condemned false god in the New Testament is material wealth. Paul calls covetousness "idolatry" twice in his epistles (Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5). Jesus compares it clearly to worshiping a false god in his sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:19-24) and the apostle devoted much of his writing in 1 Timothy to exposing the folly of trusting in riches (1 Tim. 6).

Jehovah was making a claim of exclusivity regarding man's worship and would no longer wink at idolatry at all (Acts 17:19-31). Diana's days were numbered in the hearts of the Ephesians.

Secondly, Paul identifies sorcery as a work of the flesh. Sorcery is from the Greek word *pharmakeia*, meaning "the use or the administering of drugs, poisoning, magical arts." Although, we get the word pharmacy from this root, the legitimate use of medicine is not prohibited. Rather, the use of mind-altering and deceptive practices is here condemned.

Sorcery was condemned throughout the Old Testament, in part, because it usually accompanied idolatry as a means of fooling and addicting people to the false God. Sorcerers were grouped with astrologers, mediums and soothsayers as sinning against God and his chosen prophets who worked genuine miracles and not illusions.

Philip the evangelist was able to convert one such magician in Samaria, who recognized genuine miracles when he saw them. Simon had created quite a following when he obeyed the gospel and quit his evil trade (Acts 8:9-13). When the gospel hit Ephesus, a good number of illusionists were converted there also. They responded to the call to repentance by burning their magic books, although they were costly (Acts 19:18-20).

In many generations, proponents of false gods were known to conceal a person in a carved image to make it seem as if the image was shaking, walking and talking. Magic tricks were performed to give the illusion of life and power to the image. In our day, we are concerned most about the illusion cast by trusting in uncertain riches, our most powerful false god.



1. Define idolatry.

2. To what event did God point when he began to instruct the people not to engage in idolatry in the ten commandments?

3. What does it mean that God is jealous (cf. James 4:4-5)?

4. How did the people who were waiting on Moses to come down from the mountain fall into idolatry? How did Moses punish them?

5. What idol is exposed most often by the New Testament? How is this idol worshiped?

6. Is it possible to serve successfully both God and money at the same time (Matt. 6)?

7. Is a pharmacist a “sorcerer”? What three things are prohibited in the word *pharmakeia*?

8. What was the name of the sorcerer converted by Philip? Was he good at what he did? Did he recognize the preachers’ power was different from his? How was it different?

9. What did the illusionists of Ephesus do when they were converted?

10. Give one example of a person who could not give up his riches or position for the gospel.

11. Give one example of a person who gave up riches for the gospel.

Lesson 3: *Works of the Flesh: Hatred, Contentions, Jealousies, Outbursts of Wrath*

Hatred is one of the strongest emotions known to man. It results from or can lead to the other three works of the flesh Paul describes in the middle of Galatians 5:20.

Hatred is from the Greek word *exthrai*, defined by Thayer as enmity, hostility and hatred. While the Bible commands us to hate sin and wicked things, it demands that we never allow ourselves to hate people. Paul tells Titus that hatred is a symptom of an unregenerated soul (3:3-5). No matter how great the temptation to hate a person, we must fight it to save our souls.

John had the most to say in the New Testament about hatred, using it to quote Jesus's teaching throughout his gospel account and to illustrate his own teaching in his first epistle.

He writes, "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now" (1 John 2:9). Many things may cause one to dislike his brother, a neighbor or even a stranger, but we are cautioned strongly against allowing that personal feeling to become hatred.

Hatred can often lead to or result from contentions. A contention is a situation in which two people or groups are each contending for their own opinion with extreme boldness and inconsideration of the other. Paul does not condemn contending earnestly for the faith (Jude 3), but living a contentious, or unscripturally divisive, lifestyle.

There were grave contentions in the early Corinthian church of Christ over human preferences. The church was splitting into factions based upon favored teachers (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Paul commanded them to eliminate their faulty reasoning and arguing over opinion and settle on carrying out God's will. Their contentions resulted completely from opinion. Even as he was writing his third letter to them later that year, he still feared the church would be crippled by contentious brethren (2 Cor. 12:20). Such behavior was not to be customary in the church of God (1 Cor. 11:16).

The Proverbs had even more to say about contentious people. They ruin marriages (21:9, 19; 25:24), stir up strife (26:21) and seem unstoppable (27:15).

Jealousies is also prohibited by the Holy Spirit as a work of the flesh. From the Greek word *zelos*, Thayer defines this as "an envious and contentious rivalry." It is not wrong to be jealous over something that exclusively belongs to you. God is jealous for our devotion and worship for there are no other true gods who can share that. A husband is jealous for a wife's romantic affinity, for it is not permissible to share with anyone else under heaven (James 4:1-4).

The jealousy Paul condemns is the rivalry two people feel for the same thing as they compete with one another and sometimes come to hatred or to blows over it. The word envy is probably more descriptive for envy is "rottenness to the bones" (Prov. 14:30). Envy causes a person to wish his brother would lose what he has. It also may cause him to wish he could take away what his brother has earned. Envy is most unhealthy for it emphasizes the physical, the fleshly and does nothing but erode the spirit.

Finally, Paul lists outbursts of wrath as a work of the flesh. From the Greek word *thumoi*, Thayer defines this as "anger boiling up and soon subsiding again." An outburst of wrath is like a kettle of boiling water that suddenly rushes up and then dies back down when the heat is removed. An outburst of wrath may include violence, profanity or angry words. Many things may lead to this sinful expression of anger, but an outburst like this is done without much thought and is often regretted later. When Jesus cleansed the temple, he acted from his anger at the sinners, but it was not an uncontrolled outburst of wrath.

A person who gives into any of these fleshly works is not exercising full self-control and is in danger of losing his soul.



1. Is hatred ever permissible in Christians, under some circumstances?

2. Where does John say a Christian is spiritually located if he hates his brother? What does this mean?

3. What could possibly cause a Christian to hate his brother?

4. Whom does hatred hurt more, the hater or the hated? Why?

5. If contentiousness is condemned, how can we earnestly *contend* for the faith?

6. Why did the Corinthian church have contentions? Can this happen today?

7. What do the Proverbs say about a contentious woman?

8. Is it wrong for God to be jealous for our worship? Is it wrong for me to be jealous for my neighbor's new car?

9. To what can envy lead?

10. What are some ways in which an outburst of wrath is executed? What does one need to overcome this problem?

Lesson 4: *Works of the Flesh: Selfish Ambitions, Dissensions, Heresies*

The apostle Paul used the sacrifice of Jesus to teach the Lord's disciples about selflessness and humility. The works of the flesh in this lesson (Gal. 5:20) are in violent opposition to this attitude and often cause the body of Christ to suffer pain and loss.

The Holy Spirit cautions us first against maintaining selfish ambitions. Thayer defines this term from the Greek word, *eritheia*, meaning "intriguing for office, courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts."

A selfish ambition is one that seeks to elevate self at the expense, detriment or inconsideration of others. Sometimes men and women have selfish ambitions to become the rulers of local churches, intriguing to attain high office or prominence by sordid means. They thrust themselves forward and others to the back.

Zebedee's sons, the apostles James and John, did just this with Jesus: "Grant us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in your glory" (Mark 10:37). They were intriguing for high positions in the Lord's kingdom, but Jesus rebuked their selfish ambition, which negatively impacted their relationship with the other apostles as well.

No passage of scripture in the New Testament prohibits selfish ambition more clearly than Paul's words to the Philippians in the second chapter of his letter to them: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (2:3).

Selfish ambition includes the desire of many men and women to attain a clergy distinction from the rest of the members of a church, by wearing special vestments and titles. A man like Diotrophes (3 John) is a prime example of a selfishly ambition man.

Dissensions is the second work of the flesh here exposed. From the Greek word, *dixostasiai*, Thayer defines this and its root as "division," "to set at variance with, to cut into two parts, cleave asunder, dissever." Obviously, Christ's church has been plagued by dissensions from the beginning.

The writer of Proverbs six included "one who sows discord among brethren" among the seven abominable things that the Lord hates (verse 16-19). Those who contribute to needless division among the saints are branded as fleshly and dangerous to the body. "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly" (Rom. 16:16-17).

Selfish ambition is often part of a divisive attitude. The Corinthian church was terribly fraught with dissensions, over communion, lawsuits, parties and the like. Paul encouraged them to speak the same thing and prevent such division. So dangerous is a divisive attitude that the apostle told Titus to reject such a man after two admonitions because he is warped, sinning and self-condemned (3:9-11).

Finally, we notice heresies among these works of the flesh. Thayer defines heresy from the Greek word, *airesies*, as "dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims" or "an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith, a body of men separating themselves from others and following their own tenets." Heresy is the mother of denominationalism and creedalism.

In the first century, the Judaizing teachers, Gnostics, Sadducees and Pharisees created sects of Christianity and Judaism based on their heretical beliefs. Paul saw fit to condemn all denominationalism in his initial letter to the Corinthians (1:10). He had no tolerance for the Judaizing heresy (Gal. 2:1-5), nor the Gnostic (Col. 2:20-23), nor the Sadducee (2 Tim. 2:16-18), nor the Pharisee (Eph. 2:9-10).



1. In your own words, what is “selfish ambition”?
2. What did Christ do that gives us an example against selfish ambition?
3. Name some New Testament characters who were guilty of selfish ambition.
4. To what can selfish ambition lead?
5. How can selfish ambition infect a local church?
6. Is it necessarily selfish ambition to aspire to the eldership or to be a preacher?
7. In your own words, define “dissension.”
8. How must the church handle a man or woman who presents himself or herself as divisive?
9. Why is this language so strong?
10. What is “heresy”? To what can a single heresy lead?
11. Did Paul turn the other way when a heresy arose? Was he guilty of dissension?

Lesson 5: *Works of the Flesh: Envy, Murders and Conceit*

Attitude problems can sometimes lead to bigger problems and uncontrolled passions. Paul warns us about provocative speech and actions in these works of the flesh (Gal. 5:21, 26).

Envy is from the Greek word *phthonos*, defined by Thayer as “prompted by envy.” This word is quite similar to the idea of jealousy discussed in lesson three. Envy is borne of a covetous spirit, the attitude rebuked in the tenth commandment. God cautioned His people against envying his neighbor’s possessions because little good can come from such deep desire for the belongings of another. Resentment, bitterness, theft and even murder can result if envy grows too great.

Was it envy that moved Cain when he saw God preferred Abel’s offering? Were Joseph’s brothers not envious and resentful when they conspired to sell their father’s favorite? “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”

Envy can be a special plague to a church. The saints in Corinth were boasting of and envying spiritual gifts. It was this rivalry that led the apostle to remind the saints there that they were all members of the same body and cause and that there should be no schism between them over such matters (1 Cor. 12). From this platform, he issued his directive on love and the expiration of miraculous gifts, arguing the former would outlast the latter. The controversy had been taken to such an extreme that the worship of the church became confused as people jockeyed for prominence in exercising their gifts publicly. Their envy had created confusion when such things could be done decently and in order had they preferred one another (1 Cor. 14:33, 41).

Envy is often created in the heart of one man by the conceit of his neighbor. A person who brags about his good fortune is likely to cause his neighbor to envy him his position. Some people enjoy bringing envy to others, but this is a fleshly work of materialism.

Conceit is from the Greek word, *kenodoxia*, meaning “vain-glory, groundless self-esteem, empty pride.” People become conceited for many reasons, including education, wealth, possessions, position, power, intelligence, and even luck. Conceit is an exercise in the pride of life, the opposite of godly humility. A conceited person thinks himself better than he is and better than others. We think of Goliath who was conceited regarding his physical prowess before the humble shepherd felled him with a single stone.

And then there is Herod, who “arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:21-23). Herod defined conceit and perished because of it. A conceited Christian thinks he has many friends in the church, but in reality, most are simply trying to overlook a brother’s fault. He is always trying to look like the smartest one in the Bible class, sound like the best singer in the pews and appear to be the biggest giver to the collection. All of these may be true, but the gospel gives no room for such boasting (Rom. 3:27). Paul told the Galatians that conceit provokes envy and trouble in the church.

Finally, Paul takes on murders, easily defined from the Greek word, *phonos*. Murder was certainly on Cain’s mind when he envied Abel. Murder was the ruse used by Joseph’s brothers when his apparent conceit provoked them to envy. The New Testament reminds us that we must stop far short of the crime of homicide to avoid sin when dealing with a brother. Being angry with a brother without cause brings us into danger of judgment, just as the extreme of murder does (Matt. 5:21-26). Gossip, slander and destructive criticism can be lethal weapons.



1. What kind of spirit often leads to envy? What did the tenth commandment specifically prohibit (Exod. 20:17)?

2. What are some means a person might use to get the things he covets?

3. What did Cain envy that made him want to kill his own brother (Gen. 4:1-8)? How could Cain have righteously attained what his brother possessed (Heb. 11:4)?

4. What did Joseph's brother envy (Gen. 37)? What did the coat of many colors represent to his brothers?

5. What is present where envy and self-seeking exist (James 3)? What source of envy is called the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10)?

6. What caused the saints in Corinth to become envious of one another? How could this be similarly repeated in a church today?

7. How do you generally react to a conceited person?

8. Why do some people become conceited? What made Goliath conceited? Herod?

9. What sins did Jesus attach to murder in the sermon on the mount? What devices are used to execute this type of destruction?

Lesson 6: *Works of the Flesh: Drunkenness, Revelries and the Like*

Among the works of the flesh, Paul condemns drunkenness, revelries and the like. Each of these has to do with riotous living, a lifestyle the Bible has condemned since the beginning.

Drunkenness is from the Greek word *methai*, defined by Thayer as “intoxication, drunkenness” and perhaps any intoxicating drink.

Revelries is from the Greek word *komoi*, meaning “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows ... used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry.”

From the definitions of these two terms, it becomes evident that a revelry could be the half-way point to drunkenness. God condemns the extreme as well as the route. But Paul uses the phrase “and the like” to remind us that any pursuit similar to these is damnable as well. His compatriot, Peter, wrote similarly: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in ... drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties” (1 Peter 4:3). These three prohibitions fit nicely with Paul’s, touching on steps along the path to total intoxication, including social drinking, a “buzz” and drunkenness. There are at least five reasons why drunkenness, revelries and the like are condemned here.

First, using intoxicants is an intentional abuse and destruction of the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6:19-20, 10:31). The alcohol contained in wine and beer is so strong that upon touching the tongue, some is immediately absorbed into the tissue of the body there. Along its journey, it is absorbed by the stomach lining and intestines and does incremental damage to the liver and circulatory system. It is undeniable that alcohol is addictive in many people and we are not to be brought under the power of anything (1 Cor. 6:12). Alcohol possesses the same power of narcotics to break down conscientious inhibitions by clouding the brain, thus permitting the unallowable and regrettable. Alcohol use leads to fornication, unwanted pregnancy, drowning, poisoning, abuse, murder and suicide.

Second, intoxicants contribute to a loss of moral and physical judgment (Isa. 28:7-8). When Christians begin flirting with alcohol, there is a deep spiritual problem afoot. Discipleship demands a concern for the precautionary nature of the creed of Christ—vigilance and sobriety regarding the wiles and offensives of the adversary.

Third, drunkenness is openly condemned (Rom. 13:11-14). But what about drinking in moderation, drinking up to, but stopping just short of, intoxication? Is not the first drink a fraction of drunkenness? Is not the first drink instrumental in the second and third? Is not the first drink the seeds of alcoholism in the unsuspecting? Is not the first drink still damaging to the body? Does the rule of moderation apply to other things—a little adultery, maybe?

Fourth, all use of intoxicants is condemned (Prov. 23:29-35). The Bible tells us to stop the enticement of alcohol long before even the first drink, before it can lure us at all. Intoxicants are condemned for they lead to impairment of judgment (verse 33), the indulgence of perversity (verse 33), dulling of senses (verse 34) and dependence (verse 35).

Fifth, any association with intoxicants is condemned (Isa. 5:22), as is clear from 1 Peter 4:3. Alcohol tends to affect even those who are not drinking. Therefore, we are wise to avoid it everywhere.

But what of Paul’s permission for Timothy to take a little wine in 1 Timothy 5:23? First, it is clear Timothy was a teetotaler before this. Second, this is obviously a medicinal use of wine. Third, it must still be proven that this was an intoxicant used for recreational purpose to grant authority for social drinking. The Bible uses the word “wine” to describe all liquid products of the grape, including common juice and the intoxicant. Jesus would never have created the intoxicating version by miracle at the Cana wedding.



1. Which is the more advanced of sins, revelries or drunkenness?

2. As is evident from Peter's commentary (1 Peter 4:3), what might Paul include in his phrase "and the like"?

3. What happened when Noah got drunk (Gen. 9:20-27)? How could this have been easily prevented?

4. What happened when Lot got drunk (Gen. 19:30-38)?

5. Why do people use intoxicating beverages and substances?

6. Should Christians be concerned with how they treat their bodies? Why?

7. Would a person ever become an alcoholic if he never took the first drink?

8. How do intoxicants affect our ability to discern good from evil?

9. Should the so-called "rule of moderation" teach us that a little drinking is permissible?

10. What power does wine have while still in the cup to a person tempted to drink?

11. Did Paul condone social drinking for Timothy? Did Jesus condone social drinking at wedding receptions?

Lesson 7: *Fruits of the Spirit:* *Love and Joy*

The apostle also gives part of this passage to the fruits of the Spirit, those attributes and emotions that are a product of a Spirit-filled life, an existence guided by the word He delivered to the apostles and prophets of Bible times. Simply put, if you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you will eschew the works of the flesh while exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit.

The first of these good fruits is love. From the Greek word *agape*, Thayer defines this fruit as “affection, good-will, love, benevolence.” This fruit has to do with our consideration of other people. No single word could better summarize the point of the written revelation in the Bible or the physical revelation of Christ in the flesh. It appears hundreds of times in the Bible. Most notably, it is found in John 3:16 where we learn that Christ’s mission on earth was borne out of God’s love for mankind and desire that none should perish without hope.

Jesus taught us to love God with all of our being and energy and to apply our love to our neighbors as we would desire good for ourselves (Luke 10:27). We must love our brethren most deeply (1 Peter 1:22).

In the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, the apostle Paul does what many have attempted unsuccessfully in history: define and describe love. Where men have failed, the apostle succeeds with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

He begins by remarking that miracles, faith and acts of charity, if not mixed with love, are pointless (1 Cor. 13:1-3). When God looks down upon mankind and witnesses our good deeds, He sees also our motivations. Without love behind the good that we do, these good deeds will not arise as a pleasant aroma to His nostrils. Further, these good deeds will profit the doer nothing, if not mixed with love.

His description of real love includes both positive and negative statements (verses 4-7). Some things make up love while others diminish it. Positively, love is longsuffering and kind. It bears, believes, hopes and endures all things. Love is pleased in the truth. Negatively, love is not envious, parading, puffed up, rude, self-seeking, easily provoked, evil-thinking or pleased by iniquity.

In closing this treatise, Paul reminds us that true love never fails (verse 8) and that love is the greatest among faith, hope and charity (verse 13). No matter the temptations and pressures, the love of a Christian for Jesus and for his fellow man should endure.

Love is ultimately more than just a warm emotion. It must be lent to practice (1 John 3:16-17). It is neither love nor faith that causes a saint to dismiss his needy brother by saying, “Depart, be warmed and filled by somebody else.”

Next, we come to the matter of joy. From the Greek word, *kara*, Thayer defines this word as “joy or gladness.” For what reason should a Christian produce joy as a fruit of the Spirit? For every reason. He has access to the atoning blood of Christ and all the spiritual blessings God has prepared for those who love Him (Eph. 1:3). Paul repeatedly used the word “joy” to describe his spiritual condition to his brethren. Christians should be a happy people, not laden down with worry (Matt. 6:25-34) or guilt (James 4:8-10). Even our trials should be considered occasion for joy (James 1:2-3), that we are worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake. After all, it was for joy before him that Jesus endured the cross (Heb. 11:1-2).

Christians should not be known as dark and gloomy. When worldly people see us moping around, they assume it is because we are repressed and depressed about our sacrifices. Nothing should be further from the truth. We dim our light with a perpetual frown.

Often it is difficult to explain the joy that we possess in Christ. We “rejoice with joy inexpressible” (1 Peter 1:8) in the hope of heaven and relief of redemption.



1. What do we need to produce the fruits of the Spirit?

2. Love of our fellow man begins with a love of God. What four parts of us must be fully dedicated to loving God, according to Luke 10:25-28?

3. How must we love our neighbors? What does this mean?

4. How did the Good Samaritan exemplify this love in Jesus' parable?

5. Is God impressed by a million dollar donation to a charity if the gift was made solely for publicity and a tax break? Why or why not?

6. Is it possible for someone who calls himself a Christian not to have love (James 2:14-17)?

7. Choose one phrase from both the positive and negative descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13 and explain what it means.

8. About what do Christians have to be joyous?

9. What things can sometimes take away a Christian's joy?

10. What message does an always gloomy Christian give the world?

Lesson 8: *Fruits of the Spirit: Peace and Faithfulness*

We are taught in this passage that both peace and faithfulness are fruits of the spirit. It is sometimes difficult to have them both at the same time, though. Often, unfaithfulness, in the form of unscriptural compromise, is put forth as the route to peace. How can we exhibit both fruits—peace and faithfulness—simultaneously?

Peace is from the Greek word *eirany*, defined by Thayer as “peace between individuals, harmony, concord.” Paul commands us in Romans 14:19 to “pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” Simple enough? Why, then, is Romans 14 the premier battleground of our day?

It is because the Holy Spirit only tells us what to do in this passage; he tells us how to do it elsewhere. It must be observed that peace attained through compromising one’s faith is false, futile and worthless. While you may attain peace in this lifetime, such apostasy puts you at odds with God going into judgment.

Many things only seem to produce the fruit of peace. In scriptural debates, the easiest thing to do is to compromise. Our politicians do it all the time to hammer out laws that everyone can approve of in some little way. But God is the sole lawgiver for the church (Heb. 4:12, Matt. 28:18); we cannot compromise his will save at our own expense. Paul related an experience of his to the Christians in Galatia, revealing that he would not compromise the word of God at all for those who were in error and pressed him to yield (Gal. 2:1-5, 11-14). Peace attained by compromising God’s will inevitably leads to apostasy and loss of souls.

Neither will ignoring problems, coveting vengeance or silently holding grudges produce real, Biblical peace. The problem is simply left beneath the surface to fester until it boils over and destroys our peace.

Perhaps we could assemble five or six attitudes that truly make for real peace. Consider humility (1 Peter 5:5-6), love (1 John 4:20-21), seasoned speech (Eph. 4:29-31, James 1:19-20), selflessness (Phil. 2:3-4), forgiveness (Eph. 4:32) and truth (Eph. 4:15-16).

Paul wrote, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). Do all that you can, in the Lord, to live at peace with all. Some will hate you for your faithfulness (1 John 3:13), but that is beyond your control.

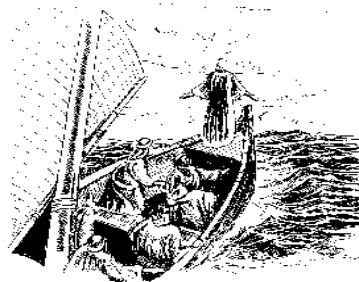
“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). This verse serves as a commentary to the discussion on Romans 14, which chapter some want to apply to matters of doctrine and morality to allow for error and sin to be tolerated and excused. Supposedly, this tolerant attitude will lead to peace (1 Cor. 5:1-2). Without holiness, or faithfulness, such peace is nothing more than fancy.

Faithfulness is a product of a Spirit-led life because such a person meditates upon the word of God and practices it. He is faithful to the word the Spirit inspired. Although he will compromise in matters of opinion, he will hold fast to matters of the faith.

Paul called himself and those like him stewards of God’s word. “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). We can look to Hebrews 11 to find a list of faithful people. They were not perfect people by any means, but they strove in life to follow the path of faith and trust in God.

A faithful life avoids sin and seeks good. It puts into practice the discipleship of Christ in every way. It is true to God, as a husband must be faithful to his wife. Faithfulness requires self-sacrifice and sanctification.

A faithful life is destined for reward (Matt. 25:23). “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). An unfaithful Christian is apostate and due punishment (Heb. 6:4-6, 2 Peter 2:18-25).



1. The Roman Catholic church and the Protestant denominations are currently engaged in a project to smooth over their differences by compromising their beliefs. This movement is called ecumenism and some very liberal churches of Christ have joined it. Will this project ultimately lead to the peace of the Bible?

2. Why should we refrain from compromising on matters of faith?

3. Should we also hold fast and refuse ever to compromise matters of personal opinion?

4. Was Paul seeking peace when he refused to compromise with the Judaizing teachers and with Peter?

5. How can rebuke and reproof be tools of attaining peace?

6. How will each of the following attitudes foster peace?

- humility:
- love:
- seasoned speech:
- selflessness:

- forgiveness:
- truth:

7. Why is it impossible to be at peace with some people?

8. It is right to use Romans 14 as an excuse to tolerate error and sin? Why?

9. Are there any examples in Hebrews 11 of people who believed in God, but did nothing more? Verse 6 of that chapter helps to define faithfulness. Using this as a guide, but in your words, what is "faithfulness"?

10. What is the reward for faithfulness?

Lesson 9: *Fruits of the Spirit: Longsuffering, Kindness and Goodness*

Galatians 5:22 lists three more fruits of the Spirit, attributes a Christian will possess if he is truly led by the Holy Spirit's influence through the Bible. The saint will be longsuffering, kind and good.

Longsuffering is from the Greek word *makrothumia*, defined by Thayer as "patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs." In dealing with life's everyday trials, the Christian must learn to endure the little things with a pleasant disposition. Encounters in traffic, at the supermarket or the workplace can sometimes try the faithfulness of a Christian, but a longsuffering nature will enable the Christian to endure them without sin.

We must look to the longsuffering nature of Jehovah for our best example of this fruit. Everyday, He endures the rejection of infidels and even the insult of the redeemed who apostatize. It is only longsuffering that prevents him from turning the world into Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 3:9).

We would also consider Job, the man best known for exhibiting patience, as his life was ruined by the devil and rebuilt over time by God who witnessed his faithfulness and longsuffering nature. Job lost his family and possessions to the tempter and then had to put up with a wife and friends who sought to mislead him about his loss. "Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

In order to secure that mercy and reward, one must learn and practice patience. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2-3). It is said that if life hands you a lemon, make lemonade. The Bible teaches that if life hands you trials, produce patience from them. When you emerge from the difficult time, you will find your faith strengthened by the confidence that you can succeed, no matter what the world throws at you.

Forbearance plays a large role in longsuffering (Eph. 4:1-2, Col. 3:13). This is the attitude that compels us to overlook someone's personality flaws so that we can live peaceably with them. We allow them time and room to grow without bearing down our will upon them. It is not that we permit sin to go without reproof, but that we become understanding of another person's trials and weaknesses.

Kindness is an attitude that many seem to be lacking these days. The common acts and words of courtesy seem to be disappearing from our vocabulary as selfishness and profanity take over. From the Greek, *krestotes*, Paul describes an attitude that is marked by "benignity, kindness." Kindness must be something that describes our everyday lives. It may be expressed in holding a door for someone with many packages, greeting a neighbor on the street, or showing hospitality to a brother and sister in Christ (1 Peter 4:9). Kindness is the obedience to the golden rule (Matt. 7:12), doing for others as you would hope they would do for you. Kindness is done without grumbling and complaining because it is pleasurable to help others.

Goodness is such a simple concept that it may ironically defy easy definition. Paul employs the Greek word, *agathosune*, to denote "uprightness of heart and life ... kindness, beneficence." Goodness is a simple appellation that defines the character of man in general, yet complete terms. Goodness describes a person who is generally concerned with helping others and never hindering them. It is evidenced in a person's good works. Christians are a special people that should be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14).

We have Christ as an example of all three of these fruits. Although worldly minded people accused him of violating the law and although he openly rebuked friend and foe alike, all he did was marked by longsuffering, kindness and goodness.



1. What kinds of things can be a test of a Christian's longsuffering?
2. What sins are committed when a person loses all patience?
3. James gives advice on maintaining patience. What is it (James 1:19-20)?
4. How did Job become our great example of longsuffering?
5. James said that the Lord gives two things to those who are patient like Job in adversity (James 5:11). What are they?
6. What part of life can produce patience? Give some examples.
7. What does it mean to be forbearing with a brother?
8. What are some common acts of kindness that we can practice most days?
9. Is God satisfied when we do acts of kindness, but with complaining?
10. What are some ways to show hospitality, an act of kindness?
11. How can we know if a person is good?
12. Can a good, kind and longsuffering person practice rebuke?

Lesson 10: *Fruits of the Spirit: Gentleness and Self Control*

The religion of humanism that has been taught in public schools since the early twentieth century deems gentleness and self-control to be excessively inhibitive and repressive. When one is taught to consider himself as god, it is only logical that every desire be indulged. Today, it is not surprising to hear of teenagers experimenting with alcohol, drugs, nicotine, fornication, homosexuality and Satan worship. When self-control was vilified, sin abounded.

Paul extols the virtue of gentleness, defined by Thayer from the Greek word, *praotes*, as "gentleness, mildness, meekness." "Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth," Jesus told the multitudes in Matthew 5:5. In seeking to be gentle, we have a prime example, for the Lord pronounced himself to be meek in Matthew 11:29.

Meekness is not synonymous with weakness, cowardice, or bashfulness, as some think. The proverbs instruct the disciple of Christ in a gentle attitude toward his fellow man. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding" (14:29). It is easy for those without a gentle spirit to lose their tempers and say and do things that are not right. It requires a gentle person with self-control to forbear the enticement to lose control and fall into unjust anger and sin. "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1). It is completely disarming when a gentle Christian responds politely to the angry words of a stranger on the street. While the rest suffer with ulcers and blood pressure, the meek quietly wait to inherit blessing.

Gentleness is inherently necessary to winning souls: "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-25). A meek person never rejoices in evil perpetrated upon anyone, even an enemy (Matt. 5:44).

One of the most difficult responsibilities a Christian has is to care for a brother that is falling away. This requires a special measure of meekness and tact: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). A humble and gentle person can win his brother back when a proud and belligerent man will fail.

A gentle man is someone with such strength that he does not feel compelled to call attention to himself by violence, outburst or ultimatum; rather he exudes a quiet confidence with an air of discipleship and courage.

Self-control comes from the word, *egkrateia*, meaning "self-discipline, self-denial." The apostle points out its necessity regarding the young and sexuality in 1 Corinthians 7:9. A great amount of self-control is required to keep oneself from feeding the sinful appetite for fornication and lewdness. A society that winks at teenage pregnancy and distributes prophylactics in high and junior high schools is teaching its young that self-control is too puritanical and unrealistic. Any society that believes people descend from monkeys and lower life forms is bound to believe its young cannot control their passions, but will concede their purity to them.

Though an apostle, Paul understood his self-control was necessary to his ultimate salvation. "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). Christianity is a faith which requires self-denial. That has never been a popular doctrine, but without it, sin abounds and the faith means absolutely nothing.

Jesus taught, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Anything that falls under the category of sinful requires a man to deny his desire in favor of his heavenly hope. A remarkable degree of self-control is needed in a world where sin is no further away than the television or the modem.



1. Does being gentle or meek mean that a Christian is a wimp who allows everyone to take advantage of him? What does it mean?
2. Is a gentle person a coward (cf. Rev. 21:8)?
3. What things try a person's gentleness?
4. How is rebuke—objecting to someone's ways—reconciled with the spirit of gentleness?
5. What is involved in restoring someone with a spirit of gentleness?
6. Is a gentle person lacking in self-confidence?
7. Is Christianity primarily governed by self-discipline or some other form (1 Cor. 9:27)?
8. What temptations do our young people face that require them to practice self-discipline?
9. How does Darwinistic evolution play a role in the lack of self-discipline seen today?
10. Can a Christian make it to heaven with faith only and no self-discipline?
11. How do the television and Internet play a role in self-denial?

Lesson II: *Crucifying the Flesh*

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25). Paul summarizes his contrast of the fruits of the Spirit and the works of the flesh by proving a change in mastery is under consideration. Is one submissive to the spirit or the flesh?

He asserts that the Christian has crucified, or broken, the domination of fleshly desires, by becoming a child of God. He took up the same theme in Romans chapter six. Grace requires that the recipient cease his sinning when he is baptized into Christ and the Lord’s own crucifixion (Rom. 6:1-4). He uses the figure of death, burial and resurrection to describe a person’s introduction to the grace of God. He dies to sin, is buried in the water of baptism and is raised from that watery grave to walk in newness of life.

The apostle’s language indicates that it is the old way of life that perishes in this act of obedience. One does away with his body of sinful deeds that he might break the shackles of slavery to the adversary of our souls. “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:11).

Dominion has been shifted in the heart of a Christian, from sin to righteousness. “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death” (Rom. 6:20-21). There was no fruit in obeying the works of flesh.

We are constantly reminded that faith without works is dead. That is, faith without spiritual production, is futile and lifeless. “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him” (James 2:14)? The implication is that faith alone, without obedience, cannot save a man (James 2:24). If one says that he has faith and yet lives like he is still of the world, his faith is futile. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

One must crucify the flesh and live after the spirit if he wants to see heaven. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:5-8).

Many so-called Christians attempt to have the “best” of both worlds: the dirty pleasures of sinful indulgence and the refreshing assurance of a heavenly reward. Such a one may have wounded the old man of sin, but he is hardly crucified. The old man of sin did not get completely buried and therefore, the stench troubles the spirit and leads it astray. Only by giving up lust can a man or woman find the best of God’s world. “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwell in us yearns jealously’” (James 4:4-5).

John was faced with this insidious notion as the Gnostic teachers grew in influence. They taught one could have sin and heaven. John protested: “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:7-9).



1. What two parts of a man are at odds, according to Galatians 5:24-25?

2. In your own words, what does it mean to “crucify the flesh”?

3. According to Romans 6, how are we united to Christ’s death?

4. Are these phrases basically equivalent: *walking in newness of life* and *walking in the spirit*? In your own words, what do they mean?

5. Is a Christian completely without a master?

6. We correctly apply the phrase “faith without works is dead” to the commands of repentance and baptism, but that concept goes far beyond these initial acts of obedience. How far reaching is the warning that “faith without works is dead” (Titus 3:8)?

7. How does one present to God his body as a living sacrifice?

8. How does one renew his mind so that he might be transformed from worldliness to godliness (Phil. 4:8)?

9. To what does a carnal mind lead? To what does a spiritual mind lead? How does crucifying the flesh play a role in this?

10. How do some Christians attempt to have the best of both worlds, sin and hope? Can a Christian *practice* sin and maintain a reasonable hope of heaven?

Lesson 12: *Bearing One Another's Burdens*

In the fight to produce the fruits of the spirit while weeding out the works of the flesh, the Christian will face many difficult battles. He is emboldened to persevere by the tight network of brothers and sisters in the faith who must help him bear his burdens. It is only natural that Paul moves from the discussion of works and fruits to the responsibility to help one another.

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2). The law of Christ requires a selflessness all too rare in today's world where the golden rule has been supplanted by selfishness.

Jesus taught that we should be willing to lay down our lives for each other. Although it is unlikely we would ever be in such an extreme situation, his use of the extreme demands every lesser self-sacrifice as well. We claim that we would die for a brother, but when given the opportunity to come to his aid in another way, we ignore him. The "faith without works" problem rears its head again. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17). This is hardly pure and undefiled religion (1:27).

But it is a spiritual burden that Paul has in mind in Galatians 6. A brother has begun drifting back into the devil's bone yard and the other members of that body are presented with a duty to come to his rescue. Many will decide to ignore him, as if he were the naked and hungry man in James's example. We hope things will turn out right for him eventually, but we will not lift a finger to help him ourselves. Those who ignore a brother's spiritual free fall are not truly spiritual people, according to the apostle. The law of Christ presents us with the obligation to help him gently correct himself. We offer reproof and exhortation in the hopes that he might confess his sin or try harder to conquer his weakness (James 5:16-20).

It is the law of Christ that we consider the welfare of others' souls. How does the love of God abide in someone who sees a dying brother but will not try to offer the remedy? "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Some actually seem to rejoice when a brother is overtaken by the works of the flesh, especially if it seemed unlikely from the start that he would remain faithful. Some feel they are elevated when another is debased. Far from trying to restore a falling brother, they use him as a stepping stone for their own pride. Instead, we should examine our own deeds and not compare them with others. When one strays, we should weep and mourn. Paul says that we will all bear our own load before God in the day of judgment. The day of reckoning will not be a beauty contest in which a comparison is made to find the least objectionable contestant. All of us will be judged on our own faith and obedience.

What are some ways that we can share the burdens of our brethren? We can be a comforting ear to one who is mourning the loss of a loved one. We can provide food to those in the house of mourning. We can help around the house for the elderly. We can give material or financial help to a brother having hard times. When someone is suffering, the rest of the body should be prepared simply to weep with it (1 Cor. 12:26).

Galatians 6:6 speaks of hearers sharing themselves with a teacher. Sharing is a concept we drill into our children's heads from the time before they can even talk. However, we occasionally forget this lesson as adults when materialism infect us. We must be willing to share our souls with our brethren. Christians should not live detached existences from their brethren, but should make themselves a full part of the body in both good times and hard. We do this by sharing our burdens and our abilities to bear those burdens.



1. How is the command to “bear one another’s burdens” related to the passage on the works of the flesh and the fruits of the spirit?

2. What is the “golden rule”? In what passage is it found?

3. How does it apply to the subject of bearing each others burdens?

4. Is Matthew 18:15-17 an example of bearing one another’s burdens?

5. Do we fulfill the law of Christ when we let brethren drift into apostasy without any attempt to correct their course? Are we spiritual when we do nothing to help?

6. What should be our methods and goal in attempting to help a brother who has fallen back into sin?

7. How are Christians sometimes guilty of loving in word, but not in deed?

8. Some burdens are not due to sin, but can lead a person astray anyway. What other kinds of burdens do brethren need help with? What are some ways that we can help a person bear that type of burden?

9. Why would some actually rejoice over a brother’s fall?

10. To what degree should we share ourselves with our brethren?

Lesson 13: *Sowing and Reaping*

Paul directs our minds to the fields where most anyone has some knowledge of the proceedings. His lesson is about sowing and reaping, not seeds in the soil, but the way we use our time and lives.

“Do not be deceived,” he says. It seems to be the greatest temptation in the world, but do not be fooled by the lying Satan. The devil’s powerful deception leads men to think they can get something for nothing. His deception leads them to think there is no penalty for doing the works of the flesh. The devil is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He used deception to fool Eve into disobeying God by promising there would be no repercussions (1 Tim. 2:14). Sometimes, the devil’s ploy is as simple as contradicting God’s commands. Do not be fooled.

The hope of so many is to have their cake and eat it, too. That is, they want all the blessings of religious hope, combined with all the pleasures of sinful indulgence. If only God had commanded lust, greed and selfishness. But those things are harmful to man and God’s legislation is inherently profitable to a man in both this life and the one to come (1 Tim. 4:8). God is not mocked; His laws are immutable and unalterable. As certainly as one cannot defy the natural laws of gravity and time, so man cannot defy the laws of works and judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

Paul applies this truth to the way we spend our lives. One who spends his time and capital solely or primarily on fleshly indulgence will reap only a harvest of corruption. Hosea wrote of Israel’s idolatry, “They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind” (8:7). If you plant weeds in your vegetable garden, your turnips and corn will be destroyed. If you sow the seeds of sin and worldliness, they will eat up any attempts at spirituality you make. Finally, those works of the flesh—those weeds, thorns and tares—choke the life out of a soul permanently. Corruption, temporal and eternal, results.

This passage goes beyond the one who is enslaved to sin to a person who is simply overwhelmed by material matters. Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Faith can be eaten up like aphids on a broad leaf if one worries himself into distraction over life’s necessities and luxuries. Such a one is susceptible to putting spiritual matters low among his priorities. Work can crowd out worship and meditation. Clothing the kids in the best finery can crowd out spiritual robes of Bible knowledge, faith and prayer. If one is primarily concerned with material sowing, he will not accidentally reap a spiritual bounty.

Paul reminds us about those fruits of the spirit and our duty to sow to the spirit. As we see our faith blossoming with love, peace, gentleness and the rest, we can also envision the ultimate produce taking form: eternal life.

What seeds do we sow in this life? We sow with our money, whether by showing charity to the poor, contributing to the work of the church, purchasing the implements of sin or wasting our inheritance. We sow with our words, whether by seasoned speech that imparts grace to the hearer or malicious language that tears down and causes stumbling. We sow with our time, whether engaged in redeeming acts of kindness and selflessness or futile deeds of self-indulgence and carelessness.

In what season are we now? It is not the harvest time, but the planting and tending season. It is spring and summer in our spiritual journeys. The autumn harvest is coming on and in due season, we shall reap eternal life if we stay the course. Should we lose heart in the long, hot summer of labor, we are bound to forfeit our harvest and dwell among the burning chaff throughout eternity.

We consider again the seeds of goodness that produce the fruits of the spirit and endeavor to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith.



1. What is one of Satan's most powerful ploys in entrapping men and women? How did he use this against Mother Eve?

2. How does the devil deceive people regarding the matter of sowing and reaping?

3. Why does God legislate against such pleasurable things as lust, greed and self-service?

4. What did Hosea mean when he described Israel's sin and hope as "They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind"? They rolled a pebble and started a landslide.

5. What is the law of God concerning works and judgment? Which of God's laws can we successfully mock?

6. What is the duration of God's punishment upon those who sow to the flesh (Matt. 25:46)?

7. What kinds of concerns was Jesus addressing in Matthew 6:25-34? Are these things *inherently* sinful? What was the purpose of his rebuke, then?

8. What is the ultimate fruit of the spirit? What is its duration (Matt. 25:46)?

9. Complete the chart:

SEED	HOW SOWN TO FLESH	HOW SOWN TO SPIRIT
• money		
words		
time		

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