



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Galatians 5:18-6:10

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 26, 2017**, is from **Galatians 5:18-6:10**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Galatians 5:18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

Paul warns Christians not to focus on laws or rules in an effort to be right with God; not to focus on measuring their performance and acceptability to God on the basis of religious requirements, including paganism and Judaism. Instead, Christians learn the Word of God and focus on being led by the Holy Spirit, Who will give them the right understanding of the Bible and the Bible's application to their daily decisions.

(Galatians 5:19) Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,

From the Scriptures, Christians learn what not to do as Christians or even as human beings, for human beings were not designed by God to find happiness and health in certain types of behaviors; such as those listed in these verses that are obvious to a reasonable mind. When Christians feel unholy desires, or are tempted by the world in which we live or by evil powers that seek to stimulate them to do these things, they know these desires and feelings are contrary to being led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never lead anyone into any of these practices or variations of them. Our bodies are

the temple of God, and we are not to use our bodies in these ways (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit will help us avoid destructive choices so we can live for God.

(Galatians 5:20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions,

In addition to sins committed through a person's body with others, Paul lists sins of the mind and spirit. As the Bible reveals, enemy powers affiliated with idolatry and witchcraft can lead people to turn away from God and the truth. Paul also warns that wrong thinking, falsehoods, and deceptions of various kinds can lead to conflicts and the loss of self-control.

(Galatians 5:21) envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

To live in the ways Paul describes here is contrary to the will of God, the teaching of Jesus, the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and commonsense. In Romans 14:17, Paul defined the Kingdom of God: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." A sinful way of life is the very opposite of life in the Kingdom of God. Living in the sinful ways Paul describes in Galatians is the opposite of living in the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit that the Bible promises as a way of life for the children of God. The children of God are the ones who will inherit the Kingdom of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

(Galatians 5:22) By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

As believers look for guidance from and cooperate with the Holy Spirit, Who lives within them, they will begin to develop the pure moral character of God their Father and their Lord Jesus Christ. Under a variety of temptations and sufferings, Jesus Christ demonstrated all the fruits (or fruit) of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will help believers show forth all of these character traits of Jesus (which Paul lists here) in all situations. As believers draw closer to God, they will ask the Holy Spirit to help them in every situation. They will live differently from the way those of this world live.

(Galatians 5:23) gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

The fruits (or fruit) of the Holy Spirit are not laws to follow, but good habits that the Spirit of God helps us develop for any situation as we trust in His leading and empowerment. The Holy Spirit will help believers in Jesus Christ take all of the godly, positive actions that God's law of love requires no matter what the situation. He guides and empowers believers to love God and others without their needing a book of rules to cover every possible temptation or situation. People without the Holy Spirit usually look for ways to avoid obeying (without actually "breaking") rules and laws that conflict with their selfish self-interests. For this reason, we see the ineffectiveness of governments enacting more and more laws to try to curb the lawless behavior of those who try to work around the laws by finding loopholes in every law that would restrict their selfish desires.

(Galatians 5:24) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Crucifixion is painful and death does not immediately follow crucifixion. If we belong to Christ Jesus, we will begin the sometimes painful process of changing from destructive habits to living as Jesus Christ lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our emotions (formerly enslaved to the elemental spirits, the passions and desires that the world inflames in every way it can to mislead people) need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit as we consciously "nail" our former evil habits and temptations to the cross of Jesus Christ. While breaking bad habits in the power of the Holy Spirit, believers also pray for the Holy Spirit to help them follow and obey Jesus Christ under the most trying temptations.

(Galatians 5:25) If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Having turned from living for the pleasures of sin and the world, having turned from the guilt and suffering that naturally follow sinning, believers have turned to Jesus Christ for salvation and to serving Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Salvation involves both turning from sin and turning to Jesus. When the Holy Spirit comes to live within believers, believers need to choose to live by following and being guided by the Holy Spirit in all of their choices. Bible study, prayerful Bible study, helps believers discern the leading of the Holy Spirit and distinguish His leading from the leading of deceptive spirits. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

(Galatians 5:26) Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

As a free gift, God has given us everything that we enjoy in the spiritual realm, along with many natural or physical blessings. All believers have been adopted into the family of God by God's gracious gift through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Believers are not adopted into God's family on the basis of any works they have performed; therefore, no believer should think he is spiritually superior to any other believer. Nor should believers use their natural or spiritual gifts or talents to compete spiritually with others who also have natural and spiritual gifts that God has given on purpose so they can serve Him and others. Believers should not envy those whose gifts differ from their gifts. Of course, Paul is not saying that believers cannot be involved in competitions, games, or competitive sports.

(Galatians 6:1) My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

Having begun his letter with strong words toward the "foolish Galatians," Paul still considered them his friends. He had detected them in a transgression. They had turned to a different gospel. His letter was his attempt to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. When they corrected others, he wanted them to do as he had done with them. Some who condemn or correct others harshly have been tempted and have fallen into doing what they have harshly condemned others for doing.

(Galatians 6:2) Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Some believers still carry the burdens of guilt from previous sins and other believers need to encourage them with the loving promises of Jesus Christ and the Bible, that God the Father and Jesus Christ have forgiven them through Christ's death on the cross and their faith in Him. Some struggle with the burden of destructive habits and passions that they have nailed to the cross of Christ, but habits and passions that have not yet died. Other believers can encourage them as the Holy Spirit helps them with the right words, and as believers pray for one another and work together to find ways of escaping temptations when they come.

(Galatians 6:3) For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.

Apart from the salvation we enjoy as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ, and apart from the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are basically people created in the image of God who have sinned and deserve eternal punishment. If we

think we are someone or something important apart from or beyond the work of Jesus Christ for us and in us, then we deceive ourselves.

(Galatians 6:4) All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride.

How well we follow the Bible's teachings, how well we demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit, how well we show forth the loving character of Jesus Christ, are the standards by which we can test ourselves in our daily walk. Praying for God to guide us and help us live according to His standards are sufficient challenges for us. As Christians, we should not compare our performance to our neighbors' performance as a standard by which we can measure our performance in order to feel superior to others. As we grow spiritually according to God's standards, we need to give thanks to God and the Holy Spirit at work within us.

(Galatians 6:5) For all must carry their own loads.

With respect to our living according to what Paul called the "law of Christ," Who taught, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34), we need to carry our own load of following the Holy Spirit and not depend on the Holy Spirit in others to lead them to forgive us or not be hurt if we sin against them. Every believer is responsible to develop the character of Christ within them, and not expect other believers to put up with their misbehavior. God expects every Christian to live responsibly and not take advantage of the good will of others.

(Galatians 6:6) Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Bible teachers have a major responsibility to teach the Bible, the Word of God, accurately and truly, which involves prayer, intense study, and time. Many cannot also support their families (or themselves as Paul did) by also having enough time to work full time jobs. Therefore, Paul encouraged believers to care for their teachers by sharing "all good things" or money from the jobs that God had given them.

(Galatians 6:7) Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.

The Bible teaches that if we sow evil deeds we will reap evil. If we sow good deeds, we will reap good; if not from others, then from God, for God will not be mocked [treated

with contempt or ridiculed]. We know that if we sow corn, we will reap corn and not beans. The same principle is true in the spiritual realm.

(Galatians 6:8) If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

If we follow our emotions, our passions, our unholy desires, instead of following the Holy Spirit and the Bible's teachings [the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)] we will suffer the consequences in our own bodies ["He said, 'If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you'" (Exodus 15:26) and "If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, fearing this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies. He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you" (Deuteronomy 28:58-60)]. If we seek to follow the Holy Spirit and the Bible's teachings, we will bear the fruit of the Spirit and we will reap life eternal with God even if our bodies die before Christ comes again: not all of the diseases we suffer are a direct consequence of our sins. Paul is not teaching here or elsewhere that believers are saved by their works; rather, he is teaching that the behavior of believers has consequences, eternal consequences. True believers will sow to the Spirit and fight to overcome sin and temptations.

(Galatians 6:9) So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

Paul preached against adding the works of the law as works we must do in order to be saved. He did not mean that we do not need to strive to do right and avoid doing wrong. Because the Holy Spirit lives within believers, believers need to pray for His strength when they grow weary of doing what is good and right, and then they need to keep on doing the right even when they grow tired or discouraged. God will bless believers in special ways when they do not give up.

(Galatians 6:10) So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Doing right includes working for the good of all people. In our business dealings, we are never to cheat anyone or tell a lie to anyone, but do what is best and right for everyone (seller and buyer, employer and employee). Our job as believers is to try to promote what is good in our world. Our primary focus is to promote what is right and good for all of God's children, all those in the family of faith.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Paul lists “love” as the first fruit of the Spirit? How might love influence each fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists?
2. How can believers be guided by the Spirit and not deceived by evil spirits?
3. What are some thoughts and actions that can help believers restore “in a spirit of gentleness” one who has transgressed?
4. Explain what Paul means when he talks about sowing and reaping?
5. In these verses, what are some actions that Paul tells believers to take? From your observation or experience, which of these actions do people in the church most need to take today?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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