

Galatians Bible Study: Lesson 5 Galatians 5:1-26

Welcome/Prayer

Objectives of Lesson:

- To recognize the ways in which we submit to the yoke of slavery.
- To understand the purpose of freedom/liberty and recognize the trap it can become if not governed by the Spirit.
- To appreciate the need to walk in the Spirit and the true evidence of one led by the Spirit.

Galatians 5 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

5:1-6

Summary (by Mark A. Copeland)

With verse one, Paul reaches the climax of this epistle, stating what can properly be called the theme of his letter. He follows with dire warnings about the consequences of seeking to be circumcised and justified by the Law. He then reminds them that the hope of righteousness is for those who through the Spirit eagerly wait for it with a faith working through love.

5 ¹For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

²Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. ⁴You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working^[a] through love.

Questions:

1. Why do you think the Galatians are having such a difficult time rejecting the notion of circumcision? Why is grace so hard to receive?

2. Describe the freedom/liberty the Galatians have? What are two consequences of becoming circumcised in order to be saved?
3. What is the hope of righteousness? How do we wait on it? What tools do we need?

5:7-15

Summary (by Mark A. Copeland)

These verses continue with warnings about allowing others to hinder their progress, with Paul's harshest words reserved for those trying to impose circumcision. Yet, Paul does not want anyone to think that liberty in Christ means license and encourages them to use their liberty in order to serve one another in love. The two-fold benefit of this proper use of liberty is that one actually fulfills the Law, and at the same time does not give the flesh an opportunity to cause them to bite and devour one another.

⁷You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? ⁸Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ¹⁰I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. ¹¹But my friends,^[b] why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹²I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters;^[c] only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence,^[d] but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Questions:

1. What does the Apostle Paul mean by, "a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough"?
2. What causes some people to start well, but finish poorly in matters of faith?

3. It is suggested, the reason Paul has been accused of preaching circumcision is because he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). Why was it different in Timothy's situation?
4. The whole law is summed up in a single commandment 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. What enables us to follow this commandment?

5:16-26

Summary (by Mark A. Copeland)

Paul then stresses the need for the Christian to walk in the Spirit so as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh. He describes the enmity between the flesh and the Spirit, explaining why we must bear the fruit of the Spirit instead of practicing the works of the flesh. Not only is there no inheritance in the kingdom of God for those engaging in the work of the flesh, but those in Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Having been made alive in the Spirit, they ought to walk in the Spirit so as not to be conceited, not provoking nor envying one another.

¹⁶Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy,^[e] 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. ²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between flesh and Spirit?
2. What does it mean to 'be led by the Spirit'?
3. What is one main distinction between works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit?

The Hope of Righteousness

W.F. Adeney

Galatians 5:5

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

I. WHAT IT IS. The hope of righteousness appears to be the hope of realizing righteousness, the hope of becoming righteous. In St. Paul's language a hope is not our subjective anticipation, but the thing for which we hope. Such a possession we as Christians anticipate.

1. **Righteousness is a great treasure.** It is a worthy object of desire. It is better than any rewards it may entail. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to feel the deepest and purest appetite for the best of all spiritual possessions.

2. **Righteousness is not yet enjoyed.** It is a hope. Even the Christian who has the faith that admits to it has not yet the full heritage. The longer we live the higher does the magnificent ideal tower above us until it is seen reaching up to heaven. Some righteousness we enter into with the first effort of faith, but the foretaste is only enough to make us yearn for more;

3. **We may confidently hope for righteousness.** It is a hope, not a mere surmise, that urges us forward. We are encouraged by the promises of the gospel. It is a grand inspiring thought that every Christian has the prospect of ultimate victory over all sin and ultimate attainment of pure and spotless goodness.

II. HOW WE ARE TO REGARD IT. We are to wait for it.

1. We must **exercise patience.** Sudden perfect holiness is impossible. The idea that it has been attained is one of the most awful delusions that have ever ensnared the minds of good men. Physically, of course, it is possible for us never to sin, and to be perfectly holy, as physically there is nothing to prevent us from drawing a mathematically straight line; but in experience the one is no more realized than the other, and morally both are equally impossible. The law of life is progress by gradual development.

2. Nevertheless, we must **earnestly anticipate** the future righteousness. We must wait for it as those who wait for the morning, **i.e.** we must watch. To be indifferent about it is not to wait for it. Indifference will disinherit us from the hope.