

### Review Questions (Lesson #19)

#### Answer T for true, F for false

1. Everyone should decide for themselves what is good and what is bad.
2. Jesus demonstrated meekness by submitting Himself to the Father's will.
3. As long as we are faithful to the Lord in major things, the small things don't matter.
4. Self-control pertains more to our strengths than to our weaknesses.
5. Spiritual life comes when our spirit trusts and obeys Jesus.

#### Give short answers:

1. Briefly, what is "goodness"?
2. What does it mean to be "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10)?
3. When people in New Testament times used the word "self-control," they were usually referring to what three things?
4. What are some good synonyms for "faithful"?
5. Of what things did Jesus' enemies falsely accuse Him?

#### Fill in the blanks:

1. As Paul reasoned about \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ to come, Felix was afraid.
2. "Woe to those who are \_\_\_\_\_ in their own \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ in their own \_\_\_\_\_."
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ man of \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ at \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The new \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ is incompatible with the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. For I have come down from \_\_\_\_\_ not to do \_\_\_\_\_ will, but the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ Me.

## Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

### Lesson #19 The Fruit of the Spirit, #2 (Galatians 5:22-26)

What do you want engraved on your tombstone? Unless Jesus returns first, one day you will die. Other than your name and dates of birth and death, what words would you like to have on the stone marking your grave? If Barnabas had a gravestone, we might expect it to say: "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24). We're glad that Jesus doesn't have a gravestone since God raised Him from the dead. But what better words could anyone want than those that were written of Jesus: "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38)?

Paul listed "goodness" as the sixth of nine manifestations of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-26). Goodness may be defined with synonyms such as excellence and worthiness. Another useful definition is moral uprightness. Goodness, then, is the opposite of uncleanness and licentiousness/lewdness (works of the flesh).

Let us emphasize clearly and carefully that *God determines what is good*. We might think we are qualified to judge that for ourselves, but we have no basis for that decision except worldly wisdom. May we heed the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (5:20-21). Modern society celebrates things God's word calls detestable. Let us, by contrast, listen to God's grace, which teaches us that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12).

The next manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit is *faithfulness* (Galatians 5:22). Literally, it is the word faith; but it is used in the sense of faithfulness (i.e. trustworthiness, reliability). We see this same usage in Romans 3:3 – "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness (lit. "faith") of God without effect?" Paul's question deals not with what God believes, but whether He is reliable and trustworthy (faithful).

God has always been faithful. Moses wrote, "Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is the faithful God who keeps covenant . . ." (Deuteronomy 7:9). We need not wonder whether God will fulfill His promises. Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus saying, "Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist" (11:5). Jesus proved Himself

trustworthy by His perfect obedience to the Father's will. "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 6:38). "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

As children of God and disciples of Jesus, it behooves us to be faithful. Jesus Himself said, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). That doesn't mean merely until you die of old age, but be faithful even if you are put to death for it. However, martyrdom is not the only way to demonstrate faithfulness. Jesus told His disciples, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). If you won't obey the Lord in smaller ways, how likely is it that you would resist the pressure to renounce Him if your very life were at stake? Can Jesus rely on you?

Closely related to faithfulness meekness (Galatians 5:23). When people hear the term meekness, most think of weakness and timidity. Biblical meekness is quite the opposite! Strength fits well with meekness, but that strength is under control. The proverbial "bull in a china shop" is strong, but his strength is out of control and destructive. The gentleman cowboy, on the other hand, demonstrates meekness – he is polite, kind, and goes out of his way to avoid trouble; but when the villain threatens a lady, he will receive a dose of the gentleman cowboy's strength!

Meekness is the opposite of selfish ambitions (a work of the flesh, where one's strength is abused to further one's own selfish interests). W. E. Vine elaborates "Described negatively, meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity [composure, calmness] of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Volume 3, p. 56).

Jesus described Himself as being "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:30). He never sought the limelight, but submitted Himself to the will of the Father. Even when the cross loomed near and He wished to avoid it, He prayed to the Father: "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39, 42, 43). We, likewise, must submit our strength to God's control in humble obedience. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Even when correcting someone, we ought to display a spirit of meekness (Galatians 6:1). Remember, it isn't about you – it's about God and helping other people.

Since meekness is strength under control, we easily see how it relates to the final manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit: self-control. The late President Harry Truman said, "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves" (Longhand Notes, May 14, 1934). Many people have tremendous power and exercise control over cities, states, or nations – but they fall short of controlling themselves! Felix, for example, ruled Judea in 52-58 AD. When Paul "reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid" (Acts 24:25). Felix was grossly immoral and a cruel tyrant. No wonder Paul's teaching scared him! Unfortunately he didn't repent and obey the gospel.

Self-control differs slightly from meekness in that self-control pertains more to our weakness than to our strength. In areas where we are weak, we must control ourselves to keep from yielding to temptations. Self-control, then, is the opposite of such works of the flesh as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, drunkenness, and revelries. When Greek-speaking people in New Testament times used this word, they usually focused on three areas: food/drink, sex, and speech. Jesus was falsely accused of gluttony and drunkenness (Matthew 11:19) and blasphemy (Matthew 26:65), but not even His worst enemies accused Him of sexual sin. As disciples of Jesus, we must know our own weaknesses and restrain ourselves to avoid sin.

Both God and man have legislated against the works of the flesh. But Paul states that there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23b). Certainly God has no law against those qualities; in fact, His word teaches and even commands us to have them. But even man's laws do not oppose the fruit of the Spirit. Who can imagine receiving the "hard forty" for being too peaceful, longsuffering, and kind?

Flesh and spirit – which will win the tug-of-war? "Those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (5:24). To be "of Christ" is to belong to Him (see 3:29). The old man of sin was crucified with Christ at baptism (Romans 6:3-6). The new life in Christ is incompatible with the passions and lusts of the flesh. Spiritual life comes not from the flesh, nor even from the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:11), but from God's Spirit when our own spirit trusts and obeys Jesus. That being the case, we ought to continue living by the Spirit (5:25, see also 3:3). Doing so keeps us from becoming conceited, for all glory belongs to the Lord, not ourselves. Therefore we will not provoke (be combative toward) one another or envy one another (see 5:21, envy is a work of the flesh). Flesh versus spirit – you cast the deciding vote!