

September 23-29  
New Testament Lesson # 38  
“Walk in the Spirit”  
Galatians

- I. Early on, the apostles had to deal with apostasy. As it does today, it came in many different forms.
  - A. In Galatians, Paul still struggled with those who wanted to put the New Christianity under the Old Mosaic Law. So Paul stressed the difference between living under the old Mosaic Law, and living a life patterned after Christ with help of the Spirit. He urges the saints to stay with Christ’s True Gospel.
  - B. In doing so he showed the true purpose of the old Mosaic Law.
    1. First, he reminded us Abraham received the promises of the covenants *before* the Mosaic Law was given (Galatians 3:1-23), so the covenants are not tied to it.
    - B. He taught the Mosaic Law was not an end in itself, but was given to be as a schoolmaster. This does not mean, as many assume, it was given just to teach obedience. Rather, **it was meant to lead men to Christ as its rituals taught of Christ and His *greater covenant*** (Galatians 3:24-25).
  - D. It was set up so most of the elements of the Law taught of Jesus Christ:
    1. Animal and all other sacrifices taught of Jesus’ Great and Last Sacrifice.
    2. Israel’s spring Holy Days pointed to Jesus’ Crucifixion, His Resurrection and His harvest of souls at the Feast of First fruits. [See my New Testament Lessons 26, 27 and 28 for details]. Its final Holy Days pointed to His Second Coming.
- II. Paul showed why it was no longer necessary to observe the Mosaic Laws.
  - A. Obviously, animal sacrifice had been done away with. The Jews had not been observing this anyway after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.
  - B. The Holy “days, and months, and times, and years” (Gal. 4:9-11) were fulfilled or would be fulfilled by Jesus. This is why Christians no longer observe them.
  - C. Circumcision was a token of God’s covenant offered to man. But baptism and new temple ordinances had now replaced the old token of circumcision.
  - D. What was desired now was a “circumcision of heart” which basically means a “broken heart and contrite spirit.”

III. Paul indicated the births of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael, born to the servant Hagar, and Isaac, born to the free wife Sarah, were witnesses of Jehovah's two covenants: the first given through Moses and the last brought through Christ (Galatians 4:22-31).

A. Paul says Ishmael represented the Mosaic Covenant, which was a covenant of bondage. That is, it was a very heavy law to live. Also it never could free men from sin.

1. In fact he later even refers to it now as a "curse." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13). I.e., Christ took this curse when He was crucified.
2. We should realize that Christ's atonement freed us from more than the bondage of the Mosaic Law. He took upon Himself *all* of our sins, and thus freed us (If we are repentant and have Faith in Him and become obedient to Him), from the burden of our own sins.

B. Then He said Isaac represented the Covenant under Christ, which freed men from the bondage of the Mosaic Law and Sin.

C. So Paul stressed repeatedly that now "ye are free" [from the bondage of the Mosaic Law and sin]. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the voice of bondage" (Gal 5:1).

D. Remember. while mostly focusing on freedom from the Mosaic Law, this statement does apply to us, as we too are freed from the bondage of sin, if we accept Christ's atoning sacrifice, repent and are faithful to His covenants.

E. Unfortunately today, far too many believe that when Paul spoke of being "free" and leaving behind "The Law," he meant *any* laws of God, rather than the Mosaic Law which was done away through Christ's fulfillment.

IV. When we look closely and honestly at Paul's writings, we see he stresses consistently men are still expected to be obedient to God's New laws of the New Covenant.

A. Scriptures show Paul never meant that men are free to live any way they desire, but are expected to live a righteous life, through the Spirit, in the pattern of Christ.

1. He states that no one will inherit the kingdom of God who does not avoid all evil works of the flesh: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings" ( Gal 5:19-21).

2. Furthermore, he taught blessings will come to those who seek the fruits of living by the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22-23).

3. He taught that which man soweth he will reap (Galatians 6:7-9).

4. Above all, he taught God is not mocked [by hypocrisy] (Gal 6:7). That means he does not accept those who claim to be religious, but who actually are unrepentant sinners.

VI. Paul testifies that he received the True Gospel through revelation or through the Spirit, which is the only sure way.

A. He stresses that after he had his vision, he did not confer “with flesh and blood,” but had received other knowledge through the spirit. And he shows he continued to act under the guidance of the spirit. “And I went up [to Jerusalem] by revelation.” (v. 2:2).

B. Above all, he indicates that he has given his whole life to Christ and to the guidance of His spirit.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

VII. Paul gives a soulful lament about those who have turned back from reliance on the Spirit.

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ [was crucified]....Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain?” (Gal 3:1-4).

While some of the Galatians had lost their way due to being unable to give up the Mosaic Law, we too can refuse to give up old ways of thought, or get caught up in deviant side issues because we are not seeking the Spirit in our own lives. We do need to constantly evaluate ourselves, and seek the Spirit in all things.

Even today some think Paul taught that “being free” means being free from obedience.

But they do not read his words carefully enough. He further elaborated on the kinds of things that the saints should really be obedient to:

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom to satisfy your flesh, but to serve one another through love. For the entire Law is fulfilled in one word: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. If you bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.”

In essence he was saying to walk by the spirit and not live by desires of the flesh. Without doubt, the desires of the flesh are contrary to the Spirit. And Christ’s freedom does not let us do just what we want, but as the Spirit guides us to righteous acts” (Gal. 5:13-18).

It would be nice to say that everyone heeded Paul’s warnings. But unfortunately, apostasy was not overcome. And as he warned, eventually, “grievous wolves not sparing the flock” took over the whole Church of Christ (Acts 20:28).