

***We are reading from Galatians 5:13 all the way through Galatians 6:10.***

Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Gal 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

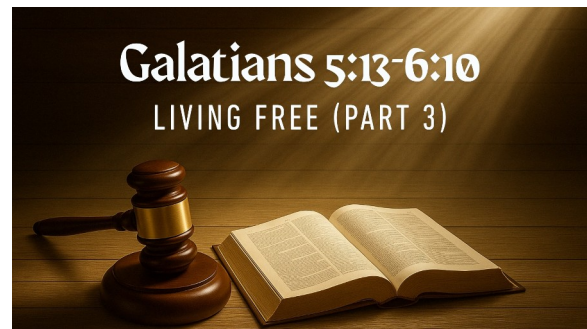
Gal 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.

Gal 6:4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else,

Gal 6:5 for each one should carry their own load.



Gal 6:6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Gal 6:8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

### ***Our focus this morning is on Galatians 5:19-21:***

Gal 5:19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Sobering list. But Paul presents similar lists of sins -- sins to avoid -- in many other epistles of his -- in

- **Romans 1:29-31**, in
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, in
- **Ephesians 5:3-5**, in
- **Colossians 3:5**, and in
- **2 Timothy 3:2-4**.
- Peter has a similar list in **1 Peter 4:3**.
- And John has a similar list in **Revelation 21:8**.

**The point is that this identification of obvious sins was a shared understanding within the church, inspired by the Holy Spirit.** It wasn't just like Paul came up with this and he said, "Let me see. What's an obvious sin? I think I'll pick this. And I don't like this, so I'll..." No. It was the Holy Spirit inspiring all of these authors of these books and epistles and so on, to say, here are a list of obvious sins. But it is clear from the context of the whole passage that we've read -- **Galatians 5:13** to all the way through **Galatians 6:10** -- it is **obvious that this list of sins is presented as a direct contrast to the list of attributes of the fruit of the Spirit.**

In fact, you can go down this list of sins and match each sinful action with a specific counteraction, such as self-control, or faithfulness, or patience, or one of the other attributes of the fruit of the Spirit. And we'll get to that in the coming weeks.

There is a similar contrast that Jesus pointed out in **Matthew 7:15-20** And he said -- Jesus said --

Mat 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Mat 7:16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

Mat 7:17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad (or what the ESV renders as diseased, what a diseased tree, what a bad) tree bears (is) bad fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad (or diseased) tree cannot bear good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

When you consider the list of sins, and the difference between good trees and bad trees, you may be thinking, “**Well, these are obviously the worst kinds of sins. Thank God I don’t do any of them.**” Thank God that I am a good tree that bears good fruit, because I don’t commit these obvious sins. I read my Bible and pray every day. I give generously. I attend church on Sundays -- at least on Sundays -- and I invite people to church. So thank God that this list doesn’t apply to me.”

**How did we determine that we deserve a passing grade after we tested ourselves?** Well, we compared ourselves to others. And we compared ourselves to others to determine our goodness by our self-righteousness. We said, “I’m pretty good.” We judged ourselves to be a better tree than those other trees.

### ***But Jesus didn’t describe a range between goodness and badness.***

He didn’t say, one to ten -- and if you’re eight or nine you’re okay, two or three not so great, four or five we got some work to do. He didn’t do that. He didn’t put a range. He described a good tree that bears good fruit or a bad tree that bears bad fruit.

**So how should we evaluate ourselves according to the word of God,** not according to our own test, not according to our own thinking? Well, we have to use the same measure that Samuel used when he told King Saul in **1 Samuel 15:23** that **a rebellious attitude against God was like divination or witchcraft.** And he said arrogance, pride, presumption -- **arrogance was like idolatry.**

**We must use the same measure as when Jesus taught in Matthew 5:21-22** that being angry with or hating your brother would result in a similar judgment as murdering your brother. And Jesus said, to look lustfully at a woman was like you had already committed adultery in your heart (**Matthew 5:27-28**).

Which means: we’re not trying to test whether we’ve crossed a self-determined threshold. If I’ve crossed this threshold then I may be a bad tree. If I’m under that threshold, I’m okay, I’m a good tree. We’re not trying to determine whether we’ve crossed a **self-determined threshold** after which we would consider ourselves sinful. “Yeah, I went a little too far. I did a little too much. I thought a little too badly. And so I must be a little sinful, at least.”

### ***We need to evaluate whether there is any trace even of these sins in us.***

**Not on a scale, but is there even just a speck?** Is there a trace of these things? And we need to examine the list of obvious sins, and determine if there’s even a related, **not-so-obvious sin that we have indulged in.**

And here’s what I mean by that. **When you look at the list of obvious sins, every one of those obvious sins has a not-so-obvious sin connected to it.** This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, and the lists in the Bible are not meant to be an exhaustive list. **They’re representative lists, and they’re meant to make us consider these things.**

But you look at this, and you understand, or you start to think about it, and you realize: sexual immorality -- that extreme of **sexual immorality starts out with lustful imagination.** Just a thought. Just an imagination. Just something else, maybe influenced by whatever you’re looking at as you scroll. But sexual immorality doesn’t begin there. It’s not about the extreme. It starts with lustful imagination.

**Impurity.** Impurity may show up in inappropriate humor and vulgarity. What do you joke about? What entertains you? It's not that you're at some extreme somewhere, but it just starts to affect something, starts to show up, and it's something inappropriate maybe.

**Debauchery,** which is excessive, unrestrained, unrestricted sensuality in public. Debauchery would imply a very public sort of expression, that may start with pornography in private.

**Our idols** may be our careers, our possessions, our pursuits. We're going after all these different things, and they've become our idols. I didn't put it up there, **but there may be people that have become our idols,** not just in the world but in the church. And we look to our American idols as **someone to emulate,** someone to be influenced by. But our idols may be our careers, our possessions, and our pursuits, even though we're not doing a whole lot that would be on the extreme of idolatry.

Obvious Sins	Not-So-Obvious Sins
Sexual immorality	Lustful imagination
Impurity	Inappropriate humor & vulgarity
Debauchery	Pornography
Idolatry	Careerism, Consumerism, Materialism.
Witchcraft	Superstition, Horoscopes, Manipulation.
Hatred	Contempt, Sarcasm, Indifference.
Discord	Gossip, Slander.
Jealousy	Constant comparison, Refusing to celebrate others.

**We may not be casting spells and practicing Wicca when we think of witchcraft.** "Oh, I'm not casting any spells. I'm not a Wiccan." But we may be **indulging simple superstitions.** We may be consulting horoscopes, just for fun. Just for fun. "I just read my daily horoscope." But there's a little influence. "Whoo! My horoscope said that today would be a good day." Of course it says that for everybody every day, but today will be a good day. And you go in, and you say, "Oh, I'm going to anticipate a good day."

### ***What's influencing you? What's affecting your thinking?***

So it's not witchcraft, but no -- just a little bit of this, or a little bit of that. Or maybe, because witchcraft is primarily focused on manipulating others, manipulating supernatural forces, to be able to affect natural things. And so maybe you're trying to manipulate others.... **Maybe there's something there that says I need to do something.**

Maybe you're not hating somebody. Maybe there isn't outright hatred. But we may treat that person, or people, with contempt, or be sarcastic, or indifferent. We're not really reaching out to them with love.

And in this idea of good fruit and bad fruit, and good tree and bad tree, you can't say, "Well, I don't really hate them."

### ***The question is, do you love them?***

And so our hatred... that may not be expressed in that way -- but there's contempt and sarcasm and indifference showing up.

And then we may not be intentionally trying to sow the seeds of discord. We're not trying to cause all sorts of discord, contentions. **But we may indulge in gossip or slander.** And all of a sudden there's people talking, and we've fed it. We've fed that kind of behavior.

So obvious sins, but some connected, not-so-obvious sins.

**Jealousy.** Jealousy may show up in the form of **constant comparisons with others or refusing to celebrate others.**

And then as we keep going, if you think about **fits of rage** -- we may not lose our temper, we may not throw a fit of rage, but **we're always a little irritable**. We justify our righteous anger. "I had a right to be angry about that. I had a right to be upset with this person. I had a right to demand my rights." And so it's not fits of rage. It's not out of control. We're not getting red in the face. But there is some irritability. There is some righteous anger. There's road rage -- justified, right? "They cut me off." And there's a **growing seed of bitterness** in us.

**Selfish ambition**. Maybe we're not at the extreme of selfish ambition where it's all about me. But we may be showing up right now with self-promotion. "Hey, look at me. Look at me." And "looking at me" starts to transcend into "look at all that I want to accomplish." And if I don't accomplish that, there's something wrong.

I had a person that I met in university one time who said to me, "The person who pumps gas in my car matters to me only because he pumps gas in my car." **Selfish ambition** will lead you to become very selfish. And so self-promotion -- it may just start with a little bit of self-promotion. "Look at me."

Obvious Sins	Not-So-Obvious Sins
Fits of rage	Irritability. "Righteous" anger. Bitterness.
Selfish Ambition	Self-promotion
Dissensions	Contrarianism. Refusing mutual submission.
Factions	Groupism
Envy	Withholding
Drunkenness	Self-indulgence
Orgies	Hookup culture. Sexting.
"And the like"	Desires of the flesh

**And then we may not be constantly disagreeing with others and causing dissensions**, but we're always expressing a **contrarian view**. Whatever they say, we disagree with. And we don't submit or yield to anyone else. It's always my opinion, my preference, my things that I want to accomplish -- that's what prevails. Whatever you say, I'm going to say something different. I'm going to say something contrarian.

And our dissensions may not have led to the creation of separate factions, groups. But we show **favoritism** to discrete groups of people. It's implicit sometimes, but we're preferring or showing favoritism. We're doing things that we really shouldn't.

**Envy** may show up in withholding from someone what they feel they already have -- what we feel they already have. Right? "They've got enough money. I don't need to give them anything. They've got enough of all of this. They can do this." And it's not really because there isn't a need, or that we shouldn't give, or that we weren't prompted. We just are a little envious of what they have that we don't. And so we say, "I don't think I need to really help." We withhold resources. We withhold love.

**We may not drink to excess and get drunk**. But we indulge ourselves in smaller, measured ways. "I'm not out of control. I'm not drunk. My dad used to get drunk. But me? No, I don't get drunk." **But we indulge**. We let ourselves go into certain things. Always feeling like we have it under control, but we indulge.

**We may never participate in an orgy**. But we may be starting to think that there's nothing wrong with **premarital sex**. Or that there's nothing wrong with **unbounded sexual expression** -- sexting, or whatever else it may be. "Everybody's doing it." **So you don't go to the extreme, but there's something that starts to pull you**.

And we may not be indulging in other similar obvious sins -- "and the like." **But we are driven by the insatiable desires of our flesh**.

Everybody needs to take a breath.

**They're listed -- obvious, not-so-obvious, and everything in between sins -- desecrate what God calls holy and good.**

***You see, the whole purpose of sin, or the whole end outcome of sin, is to somehow corrupt the good things of God.***

The impacts of the obvious sins are quite severe and **affect more people than just ourselves**. The impacts of the not-so-obvious sins are somewhat restricted, but they are affecting you, and they are affecting a whole bunch of other people.

**The obvious sins are generally committed in public. The not-so-obvious sins are generally private.** They're still the same -- **of the same nature**. The obvious sins are the ones that most everyone would condemn. Christian, non-Christian, everybody would say, "Oh, that's wrong." The obvious sins are the ones that most everyone would condemn.

**The not-so-obvious sins -- those are the sins that we tolerate**, that we tolerate in ourselves and in others. "It's okay, he gets a little angry from time to time. It's okay." The not-so-obvious things are **respectable sins**. We have reasons and explanations for why we commit them. "We don't commit orgies, but we do commit this kind of a sin. I can tell you why I do that. I can tell you. It just happens."

***And the not-so-obvious sins -- we have justifications for why they're not so bad. But sin is sin.***

The bottom line: The not-so-obvious catch-all sin associated with "**and the like**" captures it well.

- ★ When we give in to the desires of the flesh, those desires will grow and give birth to sin.
- ★ And sin, when it's full grown, will result in death -- eternal separation from a holy and good God.

So what should we do?

***Well, we must respond and apply the word of God that we have heard by relying on the Holy Spirit to avoid ALL sin -- both obvious and not-so-obvious sins.***

**Remember what we considered last week:** when we live by, walk by, and are led by the Spirit -- then, **Galatians 5:16** -- then we will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

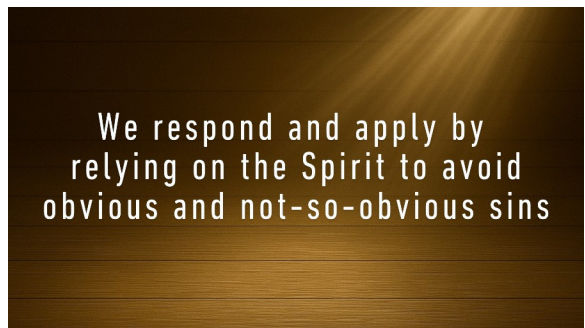
And here, especially as we go through this list, and it becomes -- you feel the weight of it, and that's necessary from time to time. We do need to feel the weight of our sin. We need to have the Holy Spirit convict us. We need to have the Holy Spirit speak to us.

**But what if we do sin?** What if you look at this list, and you look at the not-so-obvious sins, and you say, "Aah...Three, four, five, six -- oh, I'm ticking off a whole bunch of these in my life." **What happens? What if we do? What if we do sin?**

Is **Galatians 5:21**, which says,

Gal 5:21 ... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Is verse 21 telling us that we are doomed if there's even a trace of these obvious or not-so-obvious sins in us?**



Well, no. As we've seen repeatedly, **we are saved by the grace of God that cleanses us from our sins. The Lord, by his grace:**

- loves us unconditionally,
- redeems us from our slavery to sin,
- forgives our iniquities,
- adopts us as his children, and
- gives us the kingdom,
- gives us eternal life.

**So our focus is no longer on our sin, but on our Lord, on our Savior, on the one who takes care of the sin.**

- That's an incredible statement.
- And one that we should not move quickly past.
- One that we need to keep coming back to because, guess what?
- **Our not-so-obvious sins, and our obvious sins, are with us every single minute.**

They continue to be there, and tempt and entice and draw away, and all sorts of things are going on.

***So if we're not constantly coming back to the good news of what Jesus has done for us, we will be overwhelmed by our sin. We will despair of our sinful condition.***

But when we keep coming back to this, and we keep saying,

*"Oh Lord, thank you for what you have done. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your love. Thank you that you didn't withhold anything from me. And because you have done what you have done, I can come to you blameless, cleansed, made white as snow."*

**These are incredible statements.**

- These are truths that we cannot just say and then move past lightly.
- We need to rehearse them every single day.
- We need to speak them to ourselves.
- These are words of life.
- These are words of light.
- These are the words of The Way, that we are called to walk in.

**But here's the warning.** If we continue in our sin, knowing all of these things -- if we continue in our sin, if we continue to live like this, meaning **if we are unrepentant**, if we disdain the warnings and reject the truth, **if we will continue to rebel against God** -- God shows us our sin, and he shows us the way out (of sin). He doesn't let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He doesn't let us be crushed.

**He shows us how we may be rescued. And (if) we disdain all of that. If we live like that, then we keep ourselves out of the kingdom of God.**

**It's not that the Lord has to do anything else, then. We keep ourselves from the kingdom of God.**

Because nothing that is of this description, of this unholy nature, can exist, can come into the presence of a holy God. And so we have to be aware of these warnings.

So how do we keep, or how do we rely on the Holy Spirit to keep away from sin, so that we're not kept from the kingdom?

***It is important to remember that the grace of God is not opposed to effort.***

**It is opposed to earning.** It is not opposed -- the grace of God, as God has given us his grace and shown us his grace and called us to himself -- **the grace of God is not opposed to effort.** Which means -- but it is opposed to earning -- which means we don't earn our salvation. **But there is an obedient response on our part to God's initiative that requires effort and time.**

**We can't do anything to earn our salvation. We can't say,** "Oh, by my good works, I am deserving of this; by the fact that I've kept the law, I am deserving of this; by the fact that I have done all that the Lord has commanded, I am worthy of this."

**But when we come to the Lord in response to his grace and:**

- ▶ make the effort to obey,
- ▶ to be faithful,
- ▶ to do all that is necessary,

**we take time to do that --**

- ▶ to flee from youthful lust,
- ▶ to take thoughts captive,
- ▶ to meditate on the word of God,
- ▶ to pray without ceasing,
- ▶ to always give thanks,
- ▶ to contemplate the goodness of God,
- ▶ to fellowship with the saints,
- ▶ to serve others humbly in love,
- ▶ to live by the Spirit,
- ▶ to walk by the Spirit, and
- ▶ to be led by the Spirit.

***Oh, there is a response from within us, that the Lord is pleased by.***

**So there is all that we have to do in this way -- but thank God that he provides lists of obvious sins.** Because if he didn't, we will be left to judge on our own, and we will determine that our sins are not obvious or extreme enough or bad enough. But the Lord, the Holy Spirit, having spoken through the word of God, is saying, "Look, here are these lists of obvious sins," which means there's a list of not-so-obvious sins. There's a whole set of things that you are doing that leads you -- that progressively gets you from desire to extreme, to extreme action.

And so every time -- every time -- we have an opportunity to confront our sin, to be made aware of our sin, let's not be down. Let's not say, "Oh, too much." Let's rejoice.

***Let's rejoice in that opportunity to run to our Father and receive his grace.***

Let's say,

*"Oh Lord, thank you for convicting me. Thank you for opening my eyes. Thank you for making me aware that I've been holding on to this bitterness, that I've been holding on, or that I've been really envious. Thank you for showing me that I have allowed this temptation -- this lust of my eyes, the lust of the pride of life, the lust of the flesh -- I have allowed these things to influence what I spend time in, to influence what I give myself to, to influence who I spend time with. Thank you for convicting me. Thank you for making this obvious. Thank you, Lord, for showing me that there are things that I need to now make an effort to bring to you, that I need to sacrifice before you."*

In just a few minutes we'll be participating in the Lord's Supper.

Every time we have an opportunity to obey the Lord's command to remember his blood sacrifice on the cross, **let's rejoice**, that in that opportunity to be washed clean of our sins by the blood of the Lamb, we have been given **life**. These truths -- **these things in the Bible that convict us -- these are not to be avoided. These are to be actively engaged with**, that we would say...

*"Lord God, show me,"*

...even as David in the Psalms cries out, **"Show me, reveal to me if there is any wicked way in me."**

Psa 139:23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Psa 139:24 See if there is any offensive (wicked) way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

### ***Did he have wicked ways?***

**Absolutely he did.** And you can tell -- David, even though he has a heart for the Lord, and he's going after the Lord, and he did that from an early age, throughout his life there are things that are wicked ways. But he's able to pray and say,

*"Lord God, show me my wicked ways. Help me to come to you and to turn to you, so that I may be blameless."*

**"Blamelessness"** is to: not have a willful sin that you have accounted for -- willful sin, that which you have become convicted of, that which you have been made aware of, that which the Holy Spirit reveals to you -- that you quickly repent, that you will come to the Lord and you say,

*"Lord God, forgive me. Cleanse me. Wash me. Make me yours again, or make me white as snow, and so that I may enter again into your presence, into the Holy of Holies."*

### ***So let's rejoice. Let's rejoice indeed. That our God gives us life in this way.***

And when we receive the grace of God, when we are cleansed of our sins, when we are set free, **it's so that we will continue to live free -- by walking in the way of the Lord, by following Jesus, by growing as a disciple of Christ.**

Living free of sin isn't easy, but it is simple. **When we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh -- for the not-so-obvious sins, or the obvious sins.**

**Heavenly Father, we thank you that,** Lord, your word gives us such stark but necessary, Lord, reminders of our sinful nature -- what we can, Lord, what we are prone to and what we could easily, Lord, indulge in. Lord, when we look at others around us, we tend to compare ourselves to them, and we say, "We're much better. We're much better than that person." But Lord, our hearts are just as wicked. Our hearts, given the opportunity, can do all of those same things. And maybe our actions don't display the extremes that are here. But Lord, our hearts certainly are tending, are prone to, are given in to those desires.

And so, Lord, we pray that this morning you will work -- you will do your work in us. You will, Lord, pour out your grace to us, so that, Father, these desires, these sins, these tendencies in us, would be brought to you, would be yielded to you, would be brought under the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Jesus. **We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

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