

Spirit-Filled Living Series

Where is Your Life Heading? (Gal. 6:7-10)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Where is Your Life Heading?

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: The Freedom of Skydiving

1. I'm going to present you with a scenario, and I want you to see if you can tell me how the scenario is going to play out. Imagine a person lines up and pays for the opportunity to go skydiving. This person is excited as they arrive on site.
2. After some brief instructions this person gets dressed in all the clothing and equipment that has been provided. The only piece of gear they ignored and refused to bring with them was the parachute. They were confident the backpack alone was enough.
3. As the person climbs into the small plane with the pilot, they can't wait to get airborne as they think of all the fun they will have as they are falling through the sky. It will be enjoyable and exciting. The person is thinking about all the years they have wanted to skydive, and they can't believe the time has arrived for them to be able to experience this life goal.
4. The plane reaches jumping height and the door opens. The pilot gives the person the green light to jump. This happy and excited person stands in the doorway with all their gear on—except the parachute. After taking a moment to absorb the view and experience, the person jumps.
5. As they are freefalling through the sky, they couldn't be happier. There is a sense of freedom and excitement they haven't felt before. The experience is thoroughly enjoyable. They are having fun. The exhilaration is overwhelming as the adrenaline flows freely.
6. How is this situation going to end?

- B. We don't have to be present to watch what happens to know what happens next. We understand how the world works. We know about gravity. We have a working knowledge of the human body. We know the dynamics that have been put into motion. Even though this person is having fun and enjoying themselves now, it won't be very long, and this experience will come to a disastrous end. How do we know all this? We understand the nature of reality along with the cause-and-effect relationships that relate to it.
- C. Did you know that the same principles are at work in the spiritual life when it comes to our soul and our relationship with God? There are "spiritual physics" or "spirics" (spiritual form of physics) that operate in the spiritual realm. There are cause-and-effect relationships in the Christian life. Specific outcomes can be predicted based on a person's actions. Spiritual consequences are not hard to predict or determine when we understand the spiritual arena of reality as God has revealed it.
- D. We can know where our life is heading by understanding the spiritual cause-and-effect relationships described in Galatians 6:7-10. The way we are living our life today will lead to what happens to us after this life is over. We can accurately predict how God is going to react to us when we stand before Him and are held accountable for how we lived our lives. The

direction our life is heading is an unmistakable indicator of which type of eternity awaits us. There is no guesswork or mystery. Those who are committed to Jesus are encouraged to follow the lifestyle that gives them confidence about their future.

II. Spiritual Investments

- A. In this final challenge in the letter of Galatians, Paul summarizes and applies all that he has been explaining about living a Holy Spirit filled life (Gal. 5:13-6:10). The bottom line of the genuine Christian life resulting from the true gospel message of Jesus is used to confront those in the churches of Galatia for the purpose of motivating them to faithfulness. This final challenge is just as relevant for us today as it was when Paul finished his letter. Paul confronts the Galatians with the spiritual reality that every person is making spiritual investments by the way they conduct themselves in life.
- B. Here is the principle related to spiritual cause-and-effect relationships Paul wants these disciples to understand:

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap. (Gal. 6:7)
- C. Whatever God says is what is going to happen (“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked”, v. 7).¹ This rhetorical device is used to introduce this final section of instruction and draw attention to what is about to be said.² It is impossible to pull the wool over God’s eyes—He’s too smart. A person cannot claim to accept the gospel and the obligations that come with it, and at the same time live in obedience to the flesh instead of the Spirit.³ A person can’t legitimately convince themselves they belong to God and are living for Him, all while aligning their actions around a lifestyle that is self-centered (which also results in doing wrong, from God’s perspective). God will not be treated with contempt and condescension in this way.⁴
- D. **Al**though a person may trick themselves into thinking they are right with God and will receive a warm welcome from Him, if their lifestyle doesn’t align with the will and commands of God written in the word of God, they will discover they are wrong. God will not agree with them. God will not be deceived as they are. Every person’s manner of life will demonstrate their standing with God. What our lives are focused on and oriented around will reflect the type of spiritual lifestyle we are living.
- E. Paul asserts without question the principle that operates in the spiritual realm in the life of every person (“for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap”, v. 7). With these words, Paul is presenting an ancient maxim: short saying that captures a truth about life and the way the world works.⁵ A modern day equivalent of this maxim would be, “You get what you give.” There are natural spiritual consequences that follow our actions and lifestyle. If we do wrong actions, we can’t expect positive spiritual results. If we do good actions, we can rightly expect

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

² Douglas J. Moo, [Galatians](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 384.

³ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [The Epistle to the Galatians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 294.

⁴ To “mock” literally means to “lift your nose at” in the sense of being scoffed at as ridiculous. Logos 10 Bible Study Exegetical Guide on Galatians 6:7 “mocked” Think of a teenager rolling their eyes and throwing their head back.

⁵ Pr. 22:8, Job 4:8, Ps. 126:5, Hos. 8:7, 10:12-13, Mt. 6:26, 25:24, 24:26

productive spiritual results. The actions we put into our spiritual lives will determine the results we get from God. This direct cause-and-effect spiritual dynamic is unavoidable.

- F. The principle of sowing and reaping confronts us with a fundamental principle of the Christian life.⁶ Every person is making spiritual investments that will determine how God responds to them when they are held accountable for their life when their life is over. Some people are making bad spiritual investments because they are following a course of life that is motivated and operates by default human nature, which is both spiritually and morally broken. They live for themselves, apart from the influence of God. Others are making good spiritual investments by allowing the influence of God to motivate and operate in their life as they focus on the Holy Spirit's work in them. In the life of every person, the spiritual results they are getting are directly determined by what spiritual investments they are making through their actions.
- G. Contrary to the thinking of many and the assumptions of our culture, spiritual health and a good relationship with God can't be pursued any way we choose—at least not in a way that is effective and productive. While there is a pervasive assumption that there is no truth connected to spiritual matters and every person can pursue God in whatever way works for them, this is not how spiritual cause-and-effect relationships work. If we want our soul to be spiritually healthy and have a favorable relationship with God, we must learn the actions that make good spiritual investments and align what we do with the way God designed the spiritual realm to function.
- H. Our culture lies to us by telling us we can live however we want and there are no consequences for doing so (or only positive consequences if we are doing what we want and what we think will make us happy). While we can choose to live and act however we want, we are not free from the consequences of our actions. You can worship God independently out in the woods all you want, but this will not help you progress to become the type of person God requires you to be. It doesn't mean this course of action will move you forward productively. It doesn't mean all spiritual practices result in a person becoming spiritually healthy and strong. If we want to be spiritually healthy, we must do good spiritual actions. Bad spiritual investments result in bad and unhealthy outcomes. Some spiritual courses people choose to pursue are harmful to their spiritual wellbeing and lead to shame, depression, confusion, and oppression. Perhaps you've met someone who has made bad spiritual investments and put lots of intentional actions into the wrong spiritual system and have been harmed as a result. As one person testified after decades of following New Age practices, "I was always chasing the next opportunity for self-healing, but I eventually realized I just kept getting worse."
- I. Some of us made need to change the way we think and adopt this Biblical conviction. There is an order and structure to the spiritual realm, including the way our soul functions and how a relationship with God works. Get any of these wrong and we will experience negative consequences. Getting these right leads to growth and greater spiritual health. Wholeheartedly and energetically engaging the wrong spiritual lifestyle will not produce the desired effects in our lives. Our spiritual engagement with God must be aligned with the cause-and-effect

⁶ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [*The Epistle to the Galatians*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 294.

relationships consistent with the structure of spiritual realities. Otherwise, we are jumping out of a plane without a parachute spiritually.

- J. People wonder why they aren't growing as much as they want spiritually. They've been attending church and following Jesus for a while, but they aren't making the type of progress that they were hoping for. While all of us experience this to some extent, something else is going on with a significant number of people—I know because I was a person like this and I experienced being in this position. At the same time, these people are dismissive of thinking more deeply about spiritual things and don't want to study the Bible. Apparently, they can't see the connection between their lack of spiritual progress and their need to understand how spiritual realities work. Ignorant and uninformed disciples will not make a lot of spiritual progress. A significant factor in being transformed is the renewing of our mind (Rm. 12:2). This was one of the main missing ingredients in my Christian life for a long time. The more we understand how the spiritual world functions, the more capacity we will have for spiritual growth. As Jesus said, people are mistaken because they don't understand Scripture (Mt. 22:29).

III. Develop a Lifestyle of Pursuing the Spirit

- A. Now that the foundational principle has been identified, the instructions advance to explain how this principle plays out in people's lives. There are two types of lifestyles available to us. One lifestyle makes good spiritual investments by focusing on a specific goal. The other lifestyle makes bad spiritual investments by focusing on another specific goal. Every person, either by default and natural inertia or intentional and purposeful action, will choose one of these two spiritual lifestyles.
- B. The spiritual cause-and effect principle will play out and is further explained this way:
 - ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. (Gal. 6:8)
- C. Some people will make bad spiritual investments throughout their lives by living for themselves and their own desires ("the one who sows to his own flesh", v. 8).⁷ Other people will make good spiritual investments throughout their lives by doing what the Spirit wants them to do ("the one who sows to the Spirit", v. 8). To "sow" includes actions in the present that influence who we become in the future (Gal. 5:22-23). Sowing and reaping refers to the conduct we do and the consequences of those actions that will come about on the day of judgment.⁸ Continuing the contrast from chapter five, the flesh is set in incompatible opposition to the Holy Spirit. Every person will make a choice to be motivated by and focused on either their own morally corrupted desires or the desires produced by the activity of the Holy Spirit. We will either do life independently from God or connected to the influence of God through the Spirit. Every person, whether they know it or not, makes this choice, which results in good or bad spiritual investments.

⁷Not the physical body but humanity's sin corrupted nature —spiritually and morally broken. Robert Stutzman, [*An Exegetical Summary of Galatians*](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 246.

⁸ Douglas J. Moo, [*Galatians*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 386.

- D. Immediately a question might come up: is Paul contradicting everything he has been defending throughout the rest of this letter? If our actions are so important in determining the spiritual outcome of our lives, isn't this a works-based salvation that is contrary to grace? These questions are understandable but misguided. We can't forget that the Christian life plays out in a specific way. When a person accepts the grace of God through trust in Jesus, that attitude of trust in Jesus results in and naturally produces a change in the person. A person can't encounter Jesus and the forgiveness/benefits He offers and not be changed as a result. As Paul put it early, faith does not earn God favor, but once God's favor is received, we respond to that favor in specific ways. Our trust in Jesus works itself out in our lives ("faith working through love", Gal. 5:6).⁹ Those who have accepted the grace of God will respond by living a life of loving service to others—this is how our new freedom from Jesus is used (Gal. 5:13). Our actions aren't prior to grace; they happen after we have received grace. Our actions aren't the cause of grace and thereby the ground of earning grace. Grace is the cause of our actions. The order makes all the difference.
- E. Paul further explains what he means in another text:
- ¹² So then, brothers *and sisters*, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³ for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons *and daughters* of God. (Rm. 8:12-14)
- F. Those who have received benefits from God through Jesus are obligated to follow a lifestyle of submission to the Spirit because of what God has done for them ("living in accord...by the Spirit", v. 13). We are under obligation not because we must live this way to earn the favor of God, but because this is the morally correct response considering what God has already done for us. If a person paid for our meal at a restaurant, slapping them in the face would not be the appropriate response. We love because He first loved us (1 Jn, 4:19). To be led by the Spirit means to become a morally good person from God's perspective ("if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body", v. 13 is equivalent to, "are being led by the Spirit", v. 14).
- G. The question remains, how does a person "sow to the Spirit"? The immediate context of Galatians provides a list of five actions that result in positive spiritual investments.¹⁰ We walk (live by), are led by, follow, are filled with, and sow to the Holy Spirit when we rely on the Holy Spirit's power to resist and overcome wrongdoing (Gal. 5:16), when we intervene and actively restore a person who is doing wrong (Gal. 6:1), when we endure the difficulties of helping others (Gal. 6:2), when we financially contribute to the support of Bible teachers (Gal. 6:6), and when we do good for others—especially our spiritual family the church (Gal. 6:9-10).¹¹ Essentially, to sow to the Spirit means to be giving oneself over more and more to the other-

⁹ Titus 2:11-12

¹⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, [Galatians](#), vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 284.

¹¹ Galatians 5:16, 5:18, 5:25, 6:8

centered, self-giving love that characterized Jesus.¹² We become the type of person that embodies and consistently acts from the specific character qualities listed in the fruit of the Spirit. We appropriately use the freedom provided by God to act in God honoring ways.

- H. Sowing to the Spirit also occurs when a person stops living for themselves by developing an attitude of love which comes from God and increases (Rm. 5:5, Col. 1:8), serving God in newness of the Spirit (Rm. 7:6), setting their mind on the things of the Spirit (Rm. 8:5-6, Col. 3:1, Phil. 4:8), striving to stop wrong behaviors by not giving into bad desires (Rm. 8:13-14), not giving opportunities to sinful impulses (Rm. 13:14), pursuing righteousness, peace, joy, and hope (Rm. 14:17, 15:13), putting time and effort into their growth and sanctification (Rm. 15:16, Phil. 2:12-13, 2 Thess. 2:13), learning the thoughts of God through the word of God (1 Cor. 2:11-12), using their spiritual gifts for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7), encourage and promote healthy relationships (Eph. 4:1-3, Phil. 2:1-4), learn what is pleasing to God including goodness, righteousness, truth (Eph. 5:7-10), praying at all times (Eph. 6:18), fighting for sexual purity and sexual morality (1 Thess. 4:6-8), not rejecting those with the gift of prophecy (1 Thess. 5:16-22), and maintaining sound doctrine for the purpose of spiritual nourishment (1 Tim. 4:1-6). Spending time, energy, and resources on these activities is a lifestyle that sows to the Spirit.
- I. The spiritual lifestyle a person lives will naturally and unalterably lead to specific spiritual outcomes at the judgement of God (“will reap destruction” and “will reap eternal life”, v. 8). The consequence of destruction is contrasted from the consequence of eternal life, all in connection with the final judgment of God. Those who live for their own desires independently from God will experience destruction—punishment away from the presence of God outside of the kingdom of God.¹³ Those who live for Jesus and the desires of God dependent on the Holy Spirit will experience eternal life with God and will live in the kingdom of God.¹⁴ The eternal fate of every person can be confidently assessed by observing a person’s lifestyle—although some cases are more difficult to determine than others. Paul is encouraging informed and accurate self-reflection to test whether we have genuine saving trust in Jesus or not.¹⁵ If we pay careful attention to our actions and our desires, we can know whether we will experience the kingdom of God after death or not. That is the point being made here, and we should not minimize or contradict it by saying a person can’t know for certain if they belong to Jesus and are saved or not. That perspective is incompatible with the point Paul is making.

IV. Living in the Spirit

- A. The foundational spiritual principle was identified, then it was explained as to how it works in people’s lives. Now, the discussion moves to what to do with the spiritual principle—life application. There are two slightly different, yet strongly connected, applications encouraged as a way to act on and implement what has been taught into our lives. Paul is now answering the question of how to live in the Spirit in a concrete and practical way. \

¹² David A. deSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 494.

¹³ Galatians 5:21, 2 Thessalonians 1:9

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:11

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

B. The first application of how a person can live in the Spirit is:

⁹ Let's not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary. (Gal. 6:9)

- C. We can implement a Spirit filled life by not giving up and quitting the actions God wants us to do. The application can be essentially summarized as: never give up. The first scenario where we might be tempted to give up is discouragement ("Let's not become discouraged", v. 9). Disciples, as they are living a Spirit filled lifestyle, may cease doing so because they run out of willpower, commitment, or determination. To be discouraged is to become disheartened and lose our enthusiasm.¹⁶ The Christian life and lovingly serving others is difficult and painful. There are setbacks and frustrations. Challenges will need to be overcome. There are seasons that seem dry through a lack of fruitfulness. For these reasons and more, we can get discouraged, even when we are living a Spirit filled faithful life of service to others. Our soul can reach the point of exhaustion, and we no longer have the determination to continue.
- D. Another related scenario that may motivate us to throw in the towel is by growing tired and running out of energy ("if we do not become weary", v. 9). We simply get burned out from exhaustion. To become weary is to be or become exhausted from physical activity.¹⁷ Instead of exhaustion of soul, becoming weary is exhaustion of the physical body. Here a person has been doing what God wants for a time, and they just don't have the physical strength to continue to do so. It is important for us to find healthy patterns of living for and serving God that are maintainable and sustainable long term. If we are doing too much, we will burn out. Times of rest are necessary and critical.
- E. No matter the scenario that leads to us quitting, the motivation for perseverance is the same ("for in due time we will reap", v. 9). Whether we are tired from a lack of soul resources or tired from a lack of physical resources, we can remain motivated to continue living a Spirit filled lifestyle. Anything we do for God will receive an appropriate reward; therefore, it is not pointless or wasted (1 Cor. 15:58, Mt. 10:42). Disciples can be motivated to always act faithfully and give themselves fully to the work of God by understanding that God promises to provide an appropriate reward for all that we do, and He doesn't miss anything. We have to be patient and wait to experience the full benefit of what we do for God, but it is worth the wait. Paul once again has the final judgment in mind (or in this case Bema Seat judgment of reward for disciples).¹⁸ Instead of appearing before God for assessment of punishment, disciples will appear for assessment of reward. Disciples are generously rewarded for the type of service and lifestyle they lived before God.
- F. The second application is:
- ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let's do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Gal. 6:10)
- G. Take advantage of the opportunities we are given ("while we have opportunity", v. 10). Use your opportunities. God is the One who determines what opportunities we have and how many

¹⁶ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 6:9 "become discouraged"

¹⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 6:10 "become weary"

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, [Galatians](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 388.

opportunities we get (1 Cor. 3:5). We aren't supposed to get tired and give up. Disciples are also supposed to actively use every opportunity for serving others in love by doing them good. We are told to seek out, act on, and carry out actions that are good for others as we have time and opportunity. All disciples will be provided with opportunities to live a Spirit filled life by doing good for others for as long as this earthly life lasts. Knowing this, we should be attentive and on the lookout for the specific situations in which these opportunities are given to us. This application was emphasized in other situations, as well, and explained as living in a wise way by understanding the will of God (Eph. 5:15-16) and by telling others about Jesus (Col. 4:5-6).

- H. In both applications, doing good for others is highlighted ("in doing good", v. 9 and "let's do good", v. 10). When good is used generally by Paul, it refers to another person's spiritual well-being—their growth, edification, and advancement in sanctification (Rm. 15:2). As a rule, disciples act in ways that promote the genuine good of others. Good is defined specifically in this context as that which is morally excellent and admirable—beneficial and useful.¹⁹ When we have time, resources, ability, and opportunity, a Spirit influenced life will serve others in love by acting in their best interests. Disciples do this frequently, consistently, and without ceasing.

V. Conclusion

- A. The true gospel of Jesus leads to a genuine Christian life of Holy Spirit filled living. This is a summary of real Christianity. Any message that rejects, disagrees with, or is contrary to these truths is not from Jesus, and it is not the true message coming from God. Any person that promotes ideas contrary to the instructions of Galatians is a false teacher.
- B. The genuine Christian life is a life oriented around and focused on the activity, desires, and values of the Holy Spirit. In this spiritual lifestyle, Jesus comes to life within us and grows to dominate and completely influence our actions. The genuine Christian life is a life of love and devotion to Jesus, not a set of rules and commands to follow. It is a life of grace and Spirit, not a list of requirements and Law.

¹⁹ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 6:9 and 6:10 "good"