

## **Galatians 5:13-6:10: A Test For Faith:**

### **How Do You Know That You Are A Christian?<sup>1</sup>**

By Captain Michael Ramsay

Today we are looking at Galatians 5 and 6, specifically Galatians 5:13-6:10. And today we are going to take a test and this is a most serious test: This test is entitled 'How to know when you are a Christian.'

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians says that we can either serve Christ or we can serve the flesh: one or the other. So this is an important test. This is a self-test. This isn't a test for you to do for someone else; this is a test for you to do for yourself. And another important thing about this test is that if you don't score as well as you would like, it is easy to do your corrections for homework. Today we are all invited to take the test that Paul lays out for us in Galatians 5:13-6:10; so, let us begin. Paul says that you can either serve the Spirit or you can serve yourself, which he refers to as 'the flesh'.<sup>2</sup> Paul says "the acts of the flesh are obvious" so then let's take this test and see whether we have in us the acts of the Spirit or the acts of our self, the flesh. There are seven very important questions on Paul's test for faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Sermon. *Galatians 5:13-6:10: Test of Faith*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, 04 August 2013 by Captain Michael Ramsay.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Alan Cole, *Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989 (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 9), S. 211

## **Test For Faith**

### **Question 1. Do you ever fall victim to 'sexual immorality' (adultery / fornication)?**

The word translated sexual immorality in the NIV Bible is sometimes more accurately translated as 'adultery' (Strong's 3430). Deuteronomy 5:18 (Exodus 20:14) records, 'You shall not commit adultery'. Jesus says, Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman [person] lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Question 1: Have we ever committed adultery in our hearts?

### **Question 2. Do we ever fall prey to impurity (uncleanness) or debauchery (lasciviousness / fornication)?**

Impurity, which refers vaguely enough to ceremonial uncleanness (Strong's 167) and debauchery - variously translated as 'lasciviousness' or 'fornication' (Strong's 766) - can apparently mean any lustful longing or greed.<sup>3</sup> So then, do we ever display any lustful longing or greed? Do we ever wish we had our neighbour's car? Do we ever lament that we don't have a job as cushy or with as

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<sup>3</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, "Of uncleanness" in *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. 4 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 22.

big of a paycheque or with as many holidays as someone else's? A big part of the advertising that helps prop up our whole economic system in this country is the desire to have what someone else has; do we ever need to 'keep up to the Joneses?' Do we ever fall prey to that temptation? Do we ever covet someone else's life or someone else's possessions? Question 2: Do we ever fall prey to impurity and debauchery?

**Question 3. Do we ever fall into the traps of idolatry and witchcraft?**

We have previously spoken about local occult businesses, events, and practices even here in rural Saskatchewan – the Bible belt of Canada - and I don't imagine that anyone reading this is tempted by these but that is not all that is referred to by idolatry and witchcraft in the test for faith here. Also included in idolatry and witchcraft are horoscopes, fortune cookies, tarot cards, tea reading, a lot of yoga, spiritual readings, spirit guides, a lucky horseshoe or a lucky rabbit's foot – and idolatry also includes anyone or anything that you turn to instead of God in a crisis. So I ask us again, Question 3, do we ever fall into the traps of idolatry and witchcraft?

**Question 4. Are we ever caught up in hatred, discord, or jealousy?**

We have already spoken about coveting our neighbour's belongings. Do we ever get to the point where we hate someone? Do we ever say, 'if so-and-so is going to be involved with that then I won't come'? Do we ever threaten, 'well, if you want me to help with that, then so-and-so better not be there because I will leave'? This is hatred. This is discord. Do we ever gossip? Do we ever repeat things about people that we have no business repeating? I have heard people do just that and that causes so much discord. Hatred, discord and jealousy are very serious indeed. Matthew 5:21-22 records Jesus as saying, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Question 4, are we ever caught up in hatred, discord, jealousy?

**Question 5. Are we ever overtaken with fits of rage?**

Do we ever get to the point where we are so mad that – as they say – 'we can spit'? Do we ever get so mad that we punch a wall or swear at someone? Do we ever get so worked up that we yell at someone? Do we ever hear others -when they see us coming- cautiously ask people around what our mood is like? Do people ever 'walk on eggshells' around us? Question 5, are we ever overtaken with fits of rage?

**Question 6. Are we ever subject to our own selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy?**

We have already spoken about covetness, jealousy, and envy; we have already spoken about dissensions and factions as they relate to discord. Do we ever try to get people on ‘our side’? Do we ever play politics? Do we ever try to whip up support for our own selves or our own position at the expense of others? Do we ever talk to others about so-and-so and such-and-such instead of approaching the matter head-on? If so, we are guilty of dissensions and factions. And much of this – if not all – can be seen as a result of selfish ambition. If we don’t have the need to be right all the time, if we don’t have the need to be thanked every time we do something, if we don’t have the need for people to always tell us how much they appreciate what we do for them, then why would we fall prey to envy and the like? We probably wouldn’t. So, Question 6, are we ever subject to our own selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy?

**Question 7. The last question on the Apostle Paul’s test for faith: Do we engage in drunkenness, orgies, and the like?**

Do we spend our nights – or days for that matter – drunk, or involved in chaotic parties? I think this also applies to drugs as well as alcohol. I would say too that if you feel the same way about a piece of cake or a can of soda pop that an alcoholic feels about her

addiction then that is the same thing. If you immediately, when someone leaves the house, run and grab the chocolate chips that you have squirreled away or if there are times when you are incapacitated -not from a hangover- but because you were up all night playing video games, I think the same sentiment applies. Question 7, do we engage in drunkenness, orgies, and the like?

That concludes the test. Now let’s check our personal tests for faith. The correct answers are:

1. Do you ever fall victim to ‘sexual immorality’? No.
2. Do we ever fall prey to impurity or debauchery? No.
3. Do we ever fall into the traps of idolatry and witchcraft? No.
4. Are we ever caught up in hatred, discord, or jealousy? No.
5. Are we ever overtaken with fits of rage? No.
6. Are we ever subject to our own selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy? No.
7. Do we engage in drunkenness, orgies, and the like? No.

I imagine that everyone who just partook of the Apostle Paul’s test for faith aced the test. Now, just in case we didn’t; on the off chance that we didn’t pass this test, the Apostle Paul says, Galatians 5:21, “I warn you, as I did before, that [those who do not pass this test] those who live like this will NOT inherit the kingdom of God.” Now I know this probably doesn’t apply to any of us but, as you can tell, this is very serious stuff.

Let us think about this for a moment because I know that many of us have read the book of Galatians and, as recorded there, we know that Paul is quite upset with people's suggestion that new Christians become Jewish Christians and follow some elements of the old Jewish Law.<sup>4</sup> Paul says that the Kingdom of Heaven isn't like that and Paul says that we are under a curse if we place ourselves under the Law (Galatians 3:10). I have a question though and that is, 'by composing this test for faith that Paul did for the Galatians - by adding a list such as this - is that not exactly what Paul is doing?' Is not Paul saying that unless you avoid all of these things you will not enter the Kingdom of God? What is the difference between Paul's list and the old Jewish lists?

Professor Frank J. Matera answers correctly that, "Paul's answer is simple and direct. Those who are no longer under the Law are led by the Spirit which produces its fruit in their lives (5:22) so that their faith expresses itself in love (5:6). Consequently, even though believers are no longer under the law, they fulfil the law through the love commandment (5:14). This vision of the moral life, as life under the guidance of the Spirit, is probably the most optimistic statement of Paul's ethical teaching..."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Captain Michael Ramsay, *Galatians 4:8-11: Vs. Old Jewish Law* (Swift Current, SK: Sheepspeak.com, 28 July 2013), <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2013/07/galatians-3-4-vs-old-jewish-law.html>

<sup>5</sup> Frank J. Matera, "Galatians in Perspective: Cutting a New Path through Old Territory", *Interpretation*, (July 2000), 244

"...The fruit of the Spirit [Paul says, Galatians 5:22-24] is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Biblical Scholar, Richard B. Hays declares that, "in the summarizing sentences of this unit, Paul returns explicitly to the problem raised in vv.13 and 16, 'Those who belong to Christ' (cf. 3:29) will not...be overwhelmed by the impulses of the flesh, because they have 'crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.'<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice explains that 'Christians are delivered through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit from the necessity of serving sin in their lives.'<sup>7</sup>

Paul says that those of us who do actually belong to Christ Jesus have already crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. We don't need to go to a 12-step program to rid ourselves of these vices; Christ has already crucified them. Simply by our turning to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will replace the fruit of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Like it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23, when we have Christ, He will make us holy. We are now free to NOT sin<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Galatians*, in *NIB*, Vol. 11, ed. Leander E. Keck, et. al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 328.

<sup>7</sup> James Montgomery Boice *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Pradis CD-ROM: Galatians/Exposition of Galatians/III. The Call to Godly Living (5:1-6:10)/C. Life in the Spirit (5:13-26)/1. Liberty is not license (5:13-18), Book Version: 4.0.2

<sup>8</sup> J. Lewis Martyn, "The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians" *Interpretation*, (July 2000), 255.

So then as that is the case one might ask, ‘why do I sometimes give into those vices mentioned on the test instead of experiencing all the blessings of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, forbearance [perseverance], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and things such as these? Why, one might ask, according to this text and this test, do I have the fruit of self and the fruit of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit? Am I really in danger of the fires of hell? That can’t be, can it? I am involved with a church and/or a Christian organisation? I’m still reading this article, aren’t I? Doesn’t that prove that my name is written in the book of life (Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12)?’ No, it doesn’t.

I can’t tell you or anyone else whether your name is written in the book of life. I don’t have the ability to judge your salvation based on what I see and I’m not even going to try (Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37). That is between you and God. That being said, if you see some areas where I need to be encouraged to grow in holiness, you certainly do have a responsibility to let me know about that and to help me through it (Galatians 6:1-2). And - even more importantly - if we do not see the fruit of a relationship with Christ in our own lives, we may want to ask Jesus to come into our hearts. And if we have done that at some point but we are still struggling with the acts of self, the acts of the flesh, we may wish to come to the Lord in prayer both now and often (cf. TSA docs 9 and 10). We may wish to spend more time with Jesus; we may wish to pray and read our Bible everyday; we may wish to show our love to Jesus by actually spending some

time with Him because Jesus promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5; cf. Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:5), and Jesus promises that if we seek Him we will find Him (Matthew 7:7-12; cf. Deuteronomy 4:29, Proverbs 8:17, Jeremiah 29:13); and Jesus promises that as we find Him we will be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:3-25 cf. also Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:5-7; Psalm 89:35; Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 13; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Hebrews 11-12); and we are promised that we will experience love, joy, peace, forbearance [perseverance], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and things such as these. As we seek God, He promises that we will find Him. No matter how we scored on our tests today, let us take comfort in that and no matter how we scored on our tests today, let us commit to spend even more time getting to know our Lord and Saviour.

Let us pray. This prayer for us from 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify us through and through. May our whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls us is faithful and He will do it.