

Bible Study

October 28, 2020 (Lesson 4)

Instructions for Christian Living

Galatians 6:1-18

Unit Theme: The Gospel in Galatians

Central Truth: Christians are called to live for God and demonstrate His goodness.

Focus: Consider and follow Paul's instructions for Christian living.

Context: The apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians around AD 52.

Golden Text: "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

Study Outline:

I. About Burden Bearing (Gal. 6:1-6)

II. Persevere in Doing Good (Gal. 6:7-10)

III. Glory in the Cross (Gal. 6:11-18)

INTRODUCTION

In today's lesson, Paul is concluding his personal letter to the Galatians. In the previous chapters, the Holy Spirit inspired his powerful argument against the Judaizers. These false teachers from Jerusalem had followed Paul around in his ministry and discouraged his new converts by teaching that Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes through circumcision before they could become Christians. They had corrupted some of the believers in Galatia, and Paul's letter was written to help the church know how to deal with the situation.

In the first portion of chapter 6, Paul instructs the church how to care for fellow believers (vv. 1-6). In the second part, Paul explains how to do good to others both inside and outside the community of faith (vv. 7-10). And in the final portion of the chapter, the apostle tells the Galatians how to live as a new creation through faith and grace and not by works of the flesh (vv. 11-18).

I. ABOUT BURDEN BEARING (Gal. 6:1-6)

A. Restoring the Weak and Fallen (vv. 1-2)

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1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Someone has said, "The Christian army is the only army that shoots its wounded." Sadly, there is some truth in this sarcasm. In verse 1 of our text, Paul admonishes those who have not fallen prey to the false teaching of the Judaizers to help restore their fallen comrades in a spirit of meekness rather than a spirit of spiritual superiority.

Warren Wiersbe said the word restore here is used in a medical sense as if one were setting a broken bone (Expository Outlines of the New Testament). Using this analogy, one might conclude that the initial confrontation, or setting of the bone, would be painful and the recovery period might take weeks or months. During the recovery period, the spiritual (or stronger) ones among the Galatians were to help bear the burdens of the weaker (or recovering) ones, thus fulfilling the "law of Christ" (v. 2).

What is this "law of Christ" to which Paul refers? It is the law of love and grace. Only as Christians have love for one another will they bear one another's burdens.

1. How should we respond when a fellow Christian falls into sin (v. 1)?
2. To what "law of Christ" does verse 2 refer?

"A burden shared is a lighter load."—Woodrow Kroll

B. Considering Yourself (vv. 3-5)

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

The spiritually strong should not become haughty, or high-minded, and therefore not help to restore the weak. Thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought will trap us in the sin of pride. Proverbs 16:18 warns, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

" Paul said if the person who has such a high opinion of themselves would look at the facts, they would discover they are nothing, and are only deceiving themselves. The apostle warned the Christian "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).

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In Galatians 6:4-5, the believer is first advised to test his or her own load limit and bear their own burdens before they attempt to help a weaker brother. Jesus taught the same lesson but used a different analogy. He said, “First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote [splinter] out of thy brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5).

A critic might use Galatians 6:2, 5 to attempt to show the Scripture is contradictory. Verse 2 says to “bear . . . one another’s burdens,” and verse 5 instructs the believer to “bear his own burden.” However, the apparent contradiction is clarified by verses 3 and 4. The Lord expects the stronger Christians to do both tasks, assist others, and carry their own burdens as well.

Also, there are two different Greek words translated as “burdens” in these verses. In verse 5, *phortion* means “something carried” with no reference to weight. *Baros* (v. 2) denotes a weight that places a demand on one’s resources, whether material, physical, or spiritual. When something is too heavy for us to bear alone, fellow Christians are to help shoulder the load.

1. But each person must carry his or her own cross of discipleship (burden), which Jesus called “light” (Matt. 11:30).
2. How might we deceive ourselves (v. 3), and how can we overcome this (v. 4)?
3. What does verse 5 mean?

“Beware of no man more than of yourself; we carry our worst enemies within us.” — Charles Spurgeon

C. Supporting the Ministry (v. 6)

¶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Paul reminds the church to take care of their Bible teachers financially. The word *communicate* here means “to share with others.” Evidently, there were still faithful teachers and preachers among the Galatians who were preaching and teaching the Gospel, as Paul had done among them initially, and he wanted the church to help meet their material needs. He had sent similar messages to other congregations (see Phil. 4:14; 1 Tim. 6:18; Heb. 13:16).

Those who preach and teach the Gospel should be supported financially, but those who teach a false doctrine should not. It is the duty of the church to provide for its pastor.

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Ministers are the Lord's soldiers, captains, and standard-bearers, and therefore are not to go to war at their own cost. In return, the minister must diligently carry out his or her responsibility.

With whom must we share, and why?

"We are not cisterns made for hoarding, we are channels made for sharing." —Billy Graham

II. PERSEVERE IN DOING GOOD (Gal. 6:7-10)

A. Sowing and Reaping (vv. 7-9) ⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. ⁹ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Verses 7-9 are not disconnected from the first six verses of chapter 6. Paul is still talking about giving to good causes and doing God's work. Believers supporting those who taught sound doctrine would be blessed, but those who supported the false doctrine of the Judaizers would not be blessed.

Even though Paul is talking about sharing material blessings with spiritual teachers, the principle of sowing and reaping applies to all areas of life. Just as in agriculture it is impossible to plant corn and reap potatoes, spiritually it is impossible to live a wicked life and reap righteousness. King David committed adultery and lost his infant son. Queen Jezebel murdered the prophets and was murdered herself. Even the apostle Paul, who penned this letter to the Galatians, was not immune from this principle. As a young man, he held the coats of the religious fanatics who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:58); and much later, as a seasoned evangelist and missionary, he was stoned and left for dead (14:19).

Keeping with his theme of sowing and reaping, Paul spoke words of encouragement to those who had stayed faithful in Galatia, urging them to "not be weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9). The principle of sowing and reaping works for the righteous as well as the wicked. There is, however, a time factor involved. One does not reap a harvest in a day, week, or month after planting; but if the planter is patient, in time a bountiful harvest will be reaped.

1. How do some people think they can outsmart God (v. 7)?
2. Explain the phrase "sows to his own flesh" (v. 8 NASB), and its results.

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3. What causes some believers to “lose heart” (v. 9 NASB)?

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”—Charles Wesley

B. The Household of Faith (v. 10)

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Paul instructed the church to keep on doing good for others, whether they deserve it or not; but the needy Christians should be especially blessed by the prayers and generosity of those with more resources. Paul did not collect offerings for all the poor people of Jerusalem, but only for those in the community of faith (Rom. 15:25-26).

Sometimes, individuals who never attend church will turn to the church for assistance during times of trouble or financial disaster. While screening for eligibility is Biblical (see 1 Tim. 5:9-10), these situations do provide the church with opportunities to demonstrate Christian love and compassion and open doors for witnessing the Gospel.

- Describe a time when a fellow believer did something good for you.

“We should always look upon ourselves as God’s servants, placed in God’s world, to do His work; and accordingly labour faithfully for Him; not with a design to grow rich and great, but to glorify God, and do all the good we possibly can.”—David Brainerd

III. GLORY IN THE CROSS (Gal. 6:11-18)

A. Paul’s Personal Salutation (v. 11)

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Paul began the conclusion to his letter by pointing out that he had penned these words to the Galatians personally without the use of a secretary. This was no small task for someone who apparently had eye problems (see 4:15) and was aging. No wonder he wrote “with . . . large letters” (6:11 NKJV).

Some say Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was damaged eyes from his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. Others say his “thorn” was literally “the messenger of Satan to buffet [him].” In any case, God promised him sufficient grace to deal with the problem (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

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We are not told why Paul departed from his usual custom by penning his own letter on this occasion. But his statement was a pledge to the Galatians that the epistle was genuine, since it bore the marks of his handwriting. It was also proof of special affection for them that he was willing to undergo this labour on their account.

This special interest in those with whom he was communicating was characteristic of the apostle. Again and again he reminded the churches that they were on his prayer list. He wrote of how often his thoughts turned to them. He spoke of the personal sadness that being separated from them brought, and of the sheer delight he experienced when with them. Surely, those who received this letter felt the love and regard the apostle had for them.

“I would have every minister of the Gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, and with the exuberant affection of a mother.”—Francois Fenelon

B. Salvation by Faith (vv. 12-16) ¹² As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. ¹⁴ But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. ¹⁶ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul returned to the major theme of salvation by faith and not by works of the Law in the concluding verses. Remember, this letter was written primarily to combat the false doctrine of the Judaizers who were trying to mix grace and the law of Moses.

In these final verses, Paul delivered some of his most stinging criticism toward the Judaizers. He accused them of preaching circumcision so they might bypass the persecution and humiliation connected with the Cross (v. 12). In modern times, the cross has become a shiny piece of jewellery that Christians and non-Christians wear around their necks; but in Paul’s day, it was a cruel instrument of death and humiliation.

In verse 13, Paul indicted the Judaizers for not keeping the very law they preached while insisting the Gentile converts become Jewish proselytes through circumcision. Paul had made a similar accusation against the Jews in his letter to the Romans (2:17-23). Earlier, Jesus had accused the lawyers with laying on the people “burdens grievous to be borne” while not being willing to lift a finger to help (Luke 11:46).

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Paul compared himself to the false teachers by indicating he was not ashamed to be associated with the cross of Jesus Christ. The Lord was crucified for Paul's salvation, and Paul was crucified with Christ for his own sanctification (separation from the world). Salvation by faith does not just give the repentant sinner a facelift, but makes him a whole "new creature" (Gal. 6:15). This was something the Law could never do.

After the new birth, this new creation is to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh (5:16). To those who followed this lifestyle, Paul pronounced a rabbinical blessing of shalom, or "peace . . . and mercy" (6:16).

1. What might someone do today to "avoid being persecuted" (v. 12 NIV)?
2. Describe the type of boasting that pleases God (v. 14).

"Salvation comes through a cross and a crucified Christ." —Andrew Murray

C. Gracious Conclusion (vv. 17-18)

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Finally, Paul asked the church not to trouble him anymore with these matters. Before closing, he took a parting shot at the Judaizers by reminding his readers that while he had suffered much for Christ, "bear[ing] in [his] body the marks of the Lord Jesus," these pampered, well-fed false teachers from Jerusalem had not suffered at all. The word marks here means "a mark incised or punched (for recognition of ownership), that is, a scar of service [much like branding]" (Strong). A slave owner in Paul's day might brand those who belonged to his household. Paul considered himself to be a love slave to Jesus.

When Paul thought of his physical marks, perhaps he was thinking of the fang marks from the snake bite (Acts 28:3), or maybe the 195 lashes he received of the Jews in five separate beatings, or the calluses on the bottoms of his feet from the three times he was beaten with rods (2 Cor. 11:24-25), or his many scars from the time he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). In any case, it is not likely that the Judaizers had any such "badges of honour" to show since they preached a non-offensive message to the Jews.

Finally, Paul gave another rabbinical blessing to his readers, referring to them as "brethren" and pronouncing upon them "the grace [unmerited favour] of our Lord Jesus

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Christ” (Gal. 6:18). His central message to the Galatians was salvation by grace, so it was fitting that he closed with that thought.

- How did Paul’s physical body testify to his relationship with Jesus?

“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

CONCLUSION

“Our generation has become well versed in Christian terminology but is remiss in the actual practice of Christ’s principles and teachings,” said Billy Graham in his book Storm Warning.

“Hence, our greatest need is not mere Christianity but more true Christians.”

GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

“LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL DOING: FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT” (Gal. 6:9).

This statement comes at the end of several specific imperatives which Paul included in his instructions to the Galatian Christians concerning practical ways to live the Christian life. Paul taught that good works will grow out of our salvation experience. These imperatives of verses 1-8 illustrate what good works really are:

- We are to restore anyone overtaken in a fault or trespass (v.1)
- We are to bear one another’s burdens (v.2)
- We are to prove our own work, not someone else’s (vv. 3-5)
- We are to share good things with those who teach us the Word (v. 6)
- We are not to deceive ourselves but remember that we reap what we sow (vv. 7-8).

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- We are not to “become weary in doing good [works]” such as these, for “we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (NIV).

Daily Devotions

M: Be good to your neighbour – Leviticus 19:13-18

T : Care for the needy – Deuteronomy 15:7-11

W: Glory in the Lord – 1 Chronicles 16:7-14

T : Cherish Christian Fellowship – Acts 2:41-47

F : Serve God’s People – Acts 6: 1-7

S : Do Not Show Favouritism – James 2: 1-8