

September 29, 2024

The Point: We fulfill our purpose as we serve others in love.

Session Passage: Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians 6:1-5

Connection to the Point. We fulfill the law of Christ as we restore others and help carry their burdens.

Context. In the previous chapter, Paul wrote of how the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit changes the focus of how a believer lives from works of the flesh (5:19-21) to the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23). This change should not lead to vain glory or conceit (v. 26), but to a life of service to God and others.

Brothers and sisters (v. 1). The Greek term (*adelphos*) literally means “brothers,” but in this context refers to all members of the Galatian congregation so *brothers and sisters* is an accurate translation.

Overtaken (v. 1). The word (*prolambano*) means “to be caught” or “to be trapped.” The picture is of a person who fell into the trap of sin and now could not get loose from its grip.

You who are spiritual (v. 1). Given Paul’s emphasis on the need for unity in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-16), he was not declaring that there were two classes of Christians—the spiritual and the non-spiritual. This verse appears after Paul had warned believers not to live in the works of the flesh but to walk by the Spirit and thereby produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). What he was acknowledging was that not all Christians consistently live a walk guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In their walks with Christ, Christians range from those who are very immature to those who are very mature and everywhere in between.

Restore (v. 1). The word *restore* (*katartizo*) occurs in the Gospels to denote the mending of fishing nets (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19). It means “to adjust thoroughly,” “unite completely,” or “to knit together.” In the medical usage of Paul’s day it meant “to set fractured or dislocated bones.” Clearly, it is a healing word. Christians need to bring healing into the lives of those fellow believers bruised by the ensnarement of sin. Obviously, forgiving sin and setting one free from sin are works of God. However, as God’s ambassadors in reconciliation, Christians have a role in leading others to that restoration (2 Cor. 5:16-21). *Restore* also could refer to restoring a person who is under church discipline to a holy life.

Gentle spirit (v. 1). *Gentle* (*prautes*) is the same word for “gentleness” in the fruit of the Spirit list (5:23). Gentleness does not mean overlooking the sin of the individual, but rather that the process of restoration should be done with an attitude of sensitivity, understanding, and humility. The need for such an attitude in the work of restoration is so that the restorer will not become ensnared in the same sin. A gentle spirit is the remedy for pride, conceit, and self-righteousness which could lead to such a fall.

Carry one another’s burdens (v. 2). The term for *burdens* (*baros*) refers to “a heavy, oppressive load or weight.” Christians who are led by and empowered by the Spirit will help each other with the heavy burdens that they bear. Even though every person should “carry his own load” (v. 5), sometimes the weight of life creates burdens that are more than one person can bear. In those times, those in step with the Holy Spirit should help carry such burdens.

The law of Christ (v. 2). The *law of Christ* is the new commandment that Christ gave to His disciples in John 13:34, “Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.” This is the second half of the great commandment (Matt. 22:36-40). In addition to loving God, we must also love our neighbor as ourselves. These actions fulfill the whole law (Matt. 22:40; Gal. 5:14).

Considers himself to be something (v. 3). Those believers who have a prideful attitude think more highly of themselves than they ought. This results in two errors. First, in their pride they often cannot help others bear their burdens, seeing

such actions as being beneath them. Second, again in their pride, they refuse to let others help them bear their own burdens.

He is nothing (v. 3). Those who consider themselves to be more than they actually are in reality are *nothing*. This does not mean they are worthless in God's eyes because as is the case with all humanity, they are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:5-6). However, such people are not as spiritual as they believe themselves to be, and they are of no help in regards to restoring anyone else.

Examine his own work . . . not compare himself with someone else (v. 4). In the case of a believer who thinks more of himself than he ought, the cure for such pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness is self-examination, meaning focusing on one's own spiritual life and laying it before God to be evaluated by the law of Christ and the Word of God. Although Christians have been forgiven all their sins and possess the perfect righteousness of Christ, we will all stand before the throne of God and be judged for our actions—how we lived our lives as believers. The good deeds done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be rewarded while the deeds done in the flesh will crumble to nothing under God's examination (1 Cor. 3:5-15). This reality should reorientate the believer's perspective so as to eliminate such pride, competition, and boasting and make the believer more aware of his brothers and sisters around him in need of restoration and aid in bearing their burdens.

Take pride in himself alone (v. 4). This term for *pride* (*kauchema*) can have a good sense or bad sense depending on the context. In this case it is not a sinful type of *pride* in oneself—neither that of unbelievers who see no need for God in their lives nor the sinful pride of believers who think too highly of themselves. However, the type of pride the believer is to have is not spelled out. Therefore it must be understood in relation to Paul's words later in the chapter, "But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation" (vv. 14-15). If the believer is to boast, it should be in the atoning work of Christ and the saving grace of God. A believer can take pride in (in the sense of rejoicing in) one's own progress in sanctification through walking in the Spirit. However, such rejoicing should be thankfully tempered by the fact that such progress is due to God working in the believer (Phil. 2:12-13). It should also be tempered by the truth that even as believers, we all fall into sin, and when we measure our progress in sanctification against God's perfect righteousness, we are all left wanting.

Carry his own load (v. 5). This is not a contradiction of verse 2. The word in verse 2 for "burdens" (*baros*) means a "heavy, oppressive weight," while the word in verse 5 for *load* (*phortion*) refers to a ship's cargo or a traveler's pack. In verse 5 Paul most likely was referring to the *load* that every believer must carry alone throughout his or her life—the day-by-day living in the Spirit. While we can all share one another's burdens in life and support others in many ways, walking in the Spirit is something all believers must do for themselves as individuals in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.¹

Galatians 6:6-8

Connection to the Point. We will reap the rewards of doing good as we serve others.

The one who is taught the word (v. 6). The term "catechism" (a summary of the truths of Christianity in the form of questions and answers used to instruct believers in the faith) comes from the Greek word for *taught* (*katecheo*). Although a full-blown catechetical system would not be developed until the second and third centuries AD, this verse indicates that structured teaching concerning the truths of Christianity was part of the church's ministry from the beginning. The relationship between the teacher and the ones taught was an important part of the early church's discipleship, and Paul spoke of the generosity (support of teachers) necessary to maintain this emphasis on spiritual growth through the teaching of the Scriptures.

Share all his good things (v. 6). The word for *share* (*koinoneo*) implies a partnership or fellowship between the teacher and those being taught. This also suggests contributions on the part of the students in support of their teachers. Though Paul often preached the gospel without receiving money for his efforts (1 Cor. 9:13-18) and earned his living as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-4), he certainly was not opposed to a paid ministry in places where the church was more established with a fixed structure (1 Cor. 9:11-12; 1 Tim. 5:17-18). He believed that a worker was worthy of his pay.

The teacher (v. 6). Among the duties of the pastor, teaching was a primary responsibility. In Ephesians 4:11-13, the terms “pastors” and “teachers” seem to refer to the same office. Paul told Timothy that one of the characteristics of an overseer is that he must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:1-7; see also 2 Tim. 4:2). The reference to the disciple sharing his resources (*all his good things*) with his teacher suggests there were established churches with pastors who needed the support of their congregations.

Don't be deceived (v. 7). Those *deceived (planao)* were “led astray.” It pictures those who had wandered down the wrong path because they were misled. Persons from inside or outside the church may have led some believers astray into thinking those taught had no responsibility to support their teachers (1 Cor. 9:14).

God is not mocked (v. 7). The word *mocked (mukterizo)* literally means to “turn up the nose” or “treat with contempt.” By failing to provide for their leaders, the Galatian believers mocked God’s principle of sowing and reaping.

Sows . . . reap (v. 7). One of the principles in the Scripture is that a relationship exists between sowing and reaping. Isaac sowed seed and reaped a hundred-fold according to God’s blessing (Gen. 26:12). The psalmist stated that those who sow in tears will reap in joy (Ps. 126:5). Those who sow injustice will reap disaster (Prov. 22:8). Those who sow righteousness will reap faithful love (Hos. 10:12). Paul said that believers would reap according to the measure they sowed (2 Cor. 9:6).

This is different from the idea of “karma” because karma implies a direct cause/effect relationship. Sowing and reaping does not always occur in proportion. Karma leaves no room for God and His grace, where the principle of sowing and reaping is directly related to God and His grace.

Sows to his flesh (v. 8). “In the flesh” and “in the Spirit” are the two ways in which a believer can live. To sow *to the flesh* means to feed those areas (the “old self,” Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9; “the desire of the flesh,” Gal. 5:16-17) that produce “the works of the flesh” (vv. 19-21).

Reap destruction (v. 8). Those who live unrestrained by the Spirit of God end up living lives of intemperance, sexual immorality, and indulgence. *Destruction (phthora)* describes the decomposition of a corpse and the ravaging of a human body through disease, decay, and death. In this context it may indicate eternal damnation in the case of the unbeliever (5:21) or loss of eternal rewards in the case of believers (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Sows to the Spirit (v. 8). This phrase is associated with Paul’s previous commands that the Galatian believers “walk by the Spirit” (5:16), “live by the Spirit” (v. 25), and “keep in step with the Spirit” (v. 25). It entails living one’s life in submission to and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reap eternal life (v. 8). *Eternal life* involves living forever in and enjoying God’s presence after this life, but it also involves abundant life now (John 10:10). This life was made possible by the atoning work of Christ and is lived now in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who sow in the Spirit reap a harvest of eternal proportions which will never fade, decay, or be destroyed (Matt. 6:19-21).

Galatians 6:9-10

Connection to the Point. We are called to seize every opportunity to serve.

Let us not get tired (v. 9). Farming is hard work. Dangers to both the agricultural and the spiritual farmer include growing weary or becoming discouraged. It is not just the work of casting seed that must be done, but also tending the field. One danger to a plentiful harvest is that the farmer quits before the time of harvest. Paul used similar language to express the same idea when he warned the Thessalonian believers, “Do not grow weary in doing good” (2 Thess. 3:13).

Doing good (v. 9). These actions are not done in pursuit of salvation, for that is by grace through faith alone in the atoning work of Jesus (Eph. 2:8-10). Paul used two different words for *good (kalos, v. 9; agathos, v. 10)*. He likely used them as synonyms since both emphasize deeds that are profitable and virtuous.

Proper time (v. 9). Greek included two different terms for time—*chronos* (chronological time) and *kairos* (an appointed or opportune time). Paul used *kairos* here to urge the Galatian believers to not tire of doing good because at God's appointed *time* in the future they would be rewarded by Christ for their actions. Paul also used this word to emphasize that "now is the acceptable time" for salvation (2 Cor. 6:2) as well as "making the most of the time" in this present age to share the gospel in both word and deed (Col. 4:5).

If we don't give up (v. 9). This admonition is not related to one's salvation, but rather how the believer lives life in the Spirit. The term *give up* (*ekluo*) suggests losing heart or despairing (2 Cor. 4:1,16; Eph. 3:13). Believers could be tempted to lose heart and become discouraged due to such things as difficult life circumstances, God not intervening in one's life as expected or desired, or becoming disheartened or apathetic with the passing of time. However, believers should stand firm in the Spirit because the ultimate victory was won by Jesus at the cross, so the spiritual harvest is sure, no matter what one's present circumstances may be.

As we have opportunity (v. 10). Paul used the same Greek word for *opportunity* (*kairos*) as he did for the proper "time" (v. 9). When presented with opportunities to do good to others, we should take advantage of these and act. As Paul told the Ephesian believers, "For we are his [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

Work for the good of all (v. 10). Paul appealed to the Galatian Christians to do good to all, be it believers or nonbelievers. All people are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and are valued by God. Furthermore, God sent His Messiah to atone for our sins when we were all His enemies (Rom. 5:8). Also, God acts for the good of all in doing such things as sending rain on the just and the unjust. By imitating Him in doing good to all people we demonstrate that we are His children (Matt. 5:42-48).

Especially (v. 10). This word (*malista*) means "most of all," "above all," and "particularly."

Household of faith (v. 10). Although Paul urged the Galatian believers to do good to all people, he emphasized that caring for fellow believers was particularly important. In Ephesians, he noted the special bond believers share with each other, "So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19). The body of believers is a family, the church (the body of Christ). Believers function together in worship, fellowship, meeting the needs of others, evangelism, and discipleship (Acts 2:42-47). As brothers and sisters in Christ, we have an obligation to care for the needs of one another. Doing good for others should not exclude those who are outside of the church, but believers should make sure that they take care of their own family of faith both as an act of love and a witness to those outside the faith.

1. Timothy George, *Galatians*, v. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 418–419.