

**Paul's Letter to the
Galatians
Chapters 5-6**

Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)

- ¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*
- ² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.*
- ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.*
- ⁴ You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*
- ⁵ But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.*
- ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)

- 7 *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?*
- 8 *That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.*
- 9 *"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."*
- 10 *I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.*
- 11 *Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.*
- 12 *As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)

- ¹³ *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*
- ¹⁴ *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*
- ¹⁵ *If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

- Paul Gives a Short, Authoritative Greeting (1:1-5)
- Paul Gives a Strong Warning (1:6-10)
- Paul Proves That He Received the Gospel Directly from God – Not from Men (1:11-2:14)
- Paul Defends His Law-Free Gospel Using Several Arguments (2:15-4:31)
- Paul Teaches the Galatians How to Live Out the Law-Free Gospel. (5:1-6:10)
 - Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)
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Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)

- Stand Firm in Your Freedom From the Law (5:1-12)
- Use Your Freedom, Not to Sin, But to Serve One Another in Love (5:13-15)

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

¹ *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

- Picking up on the idea in his last argument that we are spiritual children of the free woman, Paul tells the Galatians that Christ did what he did to **set them free** from those *weak and miserable principles* (cf. Gal 4:9) of their pagan religions.
- Therefore, he commands them to stand firm in their freedom and not become burdened again by the same kind of slavery they had been under as pagans by going along with the Judaizers and putting themselves under the Law of Moses. (cf. 4:8-11)

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

- ² *Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.*
- Paul then uses a couple of attention grabbing expressions designed to let the Galatians know that he is **dead serious** in what he's about to tell them:
 - *Mark my words!* Literally: Look!
 - *I, Paul* a reminder of who is writing: *an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father* (cf. 1:1)

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

² *Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.*

- If the Galatians go along with the Judaizers and become circumcised in order to earn favor with God, then the salvation offered in Christ will be of **no value** to them.
- Why?
- Because they will have crossed the line from trusting in **Christ alone** for salvation to trusting in **law-keeping** for salvation and as Paul has already shown these two approaches to salvation are completely **incompatible**. (cf. 3:11-12, 18)

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

- ³ *Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.*
- Paul has already stated earlier (3:10) (from Deut 27:26): *“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do **everything** written in the Book of the Law.”*
 - In other words the Law is a unit and cannot be divided. You either **keep** all of it or you are guilty of **violating** all of it (cf. James 2:10).
 - The Galatians had already started observing the Jewish religious days (4:10) and were now contemplating becoming circumcised.
 - Paul is warning them: if you intend to please God by keeping the Law, you have to keep the whole thing – perfectly. And, as we know, no one can actually do this.

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

- 4 *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*
- Here we see that the issue is not so much whether the Galatians engaged in the physical act of circumcision, but the **attitude** that they have towards circumcision.
 - This verse teaches that when a person depends on the religious value of something that **they** do to put themselves in right standing with God, they are no longer relying on grace. Therefore they have alienated themselves from Christ and will be eternally condemned (cf. 1:8-9).

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

- 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.*
- In **contrast** to those who are trusting in religious activities (such as circumcision) to earn God's favor, **we who believe in Christ** are empowered by the Spirit, through faith, to eagerly and confidently anticipate that God will declare us to be righteous in the final judgment – not because of what we have done, but what Christ has done on our behalf.

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

- ⁶ *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*
- The Christian life is not about religious activity.
 - The Christian life is about having a wholehearted, life-changing, personal trust and dependence on the finished work of Christ alone in order to have right standing with God.
 - And the person who has this kind of faith will show it by loving God and others.
 - *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1John 4:7-8)*

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

7 *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?*

8 *That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.*

- Paul uses a sports metaphor: Like a runner doing well in a race, the Galatians had at one time been doing well in believing and obeying the Gospel.
- But now they were like a runner who had been knocked out of the race by someone coming in from the sidelines to trip them up. In this case, that “someone” was the Judaizers.
- The kind of arguments being advanced by these Judaizers that lead the Galatians away from obeying the truth are clearly not from God.

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

9 *"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."*

- Paul appears to be quoting a proverb that was well known at the time – he uses this same expression in 1 Corinthians 5:6.
- The basic idea is that something that starts small can eventually grow into a large problem if something is not done about it.
- In this case, the Judaizers are a relatively small group, but if the Galatians continue to allow them to be an influence they will eventually take down the whole church!

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

¹⁰ *I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.*

- In spite of the strong concerns expressed, Paul continues to believe the best about his Galatian converts – that in the end they will come to their senses and reject the Judaizers’ false teaching.
- Notice Paul’s confidence is “in the Lord” meaning God’s ability to bring them to their senses, Paul believes that He who began a good work in them will be faithful to complete it (cf. **Philippians 1:6**).
- While Paul is in anguish over these false teachers and the damage they have sought to bring about in the lives of those he loves, he nevertheless rests in the fact that God will ultimately bring them to justice.
- This statement is also a warning to the Galatians not to go along with the false teachers lest they suffer the same end.

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

¹¹ *Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.*

- We're not given enough context here to know for sure, but evidently, in an effort to undercut Paul's credibility, the Judaizers must have accused Paul of being inconsistent, saying perhaps that he came off strong against circumcision in Galatia, but that in other settings he still preached circumcision.
- Even at this distance we can see the absurdity of this charge. Some of Paul's greatest persecution came because he preached that Christ saves apart from circumcision or law keeping.

Stand Firm in Your Freedom (5:1-12)

¹² *As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

- Paul makes one last “cutting” remark towards the Judaizers – perhaps one of the crudest and most sarcastic of all Paul’s statements that we have on record.
- Many of our modern translations give rather colorful renderings of this text:
 - *Tell those who are disturbing you, I would like to see the knife slip.* (Jerusalem Bible)
 - *If only those who are upsetting you would make a complete job of this ‘cutting’ business; then we should have no more trouble from them!* (F.F. Bruce)
- Underlying Paul’s sarcasm is his view that circumcision no longer has legitimate religious significance and when done to gain acceptance before God is nothing more than bodily mutilation.

Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)

- Stand Firm in Your Freedom From the Law (5:1-12)
- Use Your Freedom, Not to Sin, But to Serve One Another in Love (5:13-15)

Use Your Freedom to Serve (5:13-15)

- ¹³ *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve [literally, “render slave service to”] one another in love.*
- Paul reminds us again that we are free but now gives:
 - **A Warning:** Do **not** use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature.
 - **An Appeal:** Use your freedom to serve one another in love.

Use Your Freedom to Serve (5:13-15)

¹³ *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve [literally, “render slave service to”] one another in love.*

- Paul warns here against a **misuse** of Christian freedom: libertinism – a view that since we are free from the law we are now free to sin! (cf. **Rom 6:15**)
- Some would argue that the solution to libertinism is more law – Paul would not agree. The solution that Paul offers here is to serve one another in love.
- We shouldn't miss the irony that while Paul has spent most of this letter arguing **against slavery** (to the Law), he now argues **for slavery** – a **good** slavery where we serve one another in love.

Use Your Freedom to Serve (5:13-15)

- ¹⁴ *The entire law is summed up in a single command [as Leviticus 19:18b says] : "Love your neighbor as yourself."*
- *Paul speaks here of Christians fulfilling the law. Is it that having made such a great show of throwing the law through the front door, Paul now unobtrusively readmits it through the back door? Does v.14 indicate something of a fundamental inconsistency in Paul's thought? (Richard Longnecker on Galatians, p.241-2)*
 - A key thing to notice is that Paul does not speak here (nor in Rom 13:8-10 where he makes a similar statement) of "doing" the law, but of "fulfilling" the Law.

Use Your Freedom to Serve (5:13-15)

¹⁴ *The entire law is summed up in a single command [as Leviticus 19:18b says] : "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

- The focus of Paul's statement is not on law, but on love.
- So it is love - love that responds to Christ's love - that defines our new life in Christ (cf. 2:20).
- Ultimately, we can fulfill the law by loving one another (in response to Christ's love) because Christ, acting on our behalf came and fulfilled the law's requirements (cf. Mat 5:17ff)

Use Your Freedom to Serve (5:13-15)

¹⁵ *If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

- An alternative to the kind of love that we are to have for one another is described in the vivid illustration that Paul gives in vs. 15: We can end up like wild beasts who, in a fight to the death end up destroying each other.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- ¹⁶ *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*
- ¹⁷ *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*
- ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*
- ¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;*
- ²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions*
- 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.*

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
- ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*
- ²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*
- ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*
- ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

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Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- In the previous section of Galatians (5:1-15) Paul warned against **two** possible **abuses** of the **freedom** that we have in Christ:
 - **Legalism** – attempting to achieve right standing with God through law-keeping
 - **Libertinism** – viewing our “freedom” as a license to sin and abandoning all efforts to live holy lives.
- In this section (5:16-26) Paul explains that as Christians we must live out the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- In doing this we will avoid the two pitfalls (legalism and libertinism) that he warned us about in the previous section.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- The **primary** emphasis in this section is on how the Spirit helps us to avoid the pitfall of **libertinism** by preventing us from gratifying our sinful lusts.
- But Paul also shows in this section how life in the Spirit leads us away from **legalism**:
 - *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.* (5:18)
 - *Against such things there is no law.* (5:23)
- In referring to the Spirit's work in leading us away from libertinism and legalism, Paul uses an number of different phrases that I believe are **synonymous**, though each phrase emphasizes a different nuance of the Spirit's work:
 - "walk ("live" in the NIV) by the Spirit" (v.16)
 - "led by the Spirit" (v.18)
 - "the fruit of the Spirit" (v.22)
 - "keep in step with the Spirit" (v.25)

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- Throughout this section there is a tension between two ideas:
 - We are told that it is the **Holy Spirit**, who **causes** us to live the kind of virtuous life that is pleasing to God and that those who are **not** controlled by the Spirit are controlled by the sinful nature and **cannot** please God (cf. **Rom 8:5-16**, especially vs.8)
 - And yet Paul **commands** us to “walk in the Spirit” (5:16) and “keep in step with the Spirit” (v.25) which indicates that it is **our responsibility** to be under the Spirit’s control!
- This tension is found throughout scripture, the most blatant example is found in Philippians 2:12-13 :
 - *...continue to **work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.***
- From the standpoint of human understanding these two ideas seem difficult to reconcile, but the Bible teaches that both are true.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

¹⁶ *So I say, live [literally, “walk”] by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature [literally, “flesh”].*

- To “live” (or walk) by the Spirit, means that we are to have the Holy Spirit inwardly motivate us to live a life that is pleasing to God.
- If we conduct our lives in this way, Paul gives us a promise: we will not fulfill the desires of our sinful nature.
- Unlike the imposition of the Law or legalism, which attempts to change behavior through **external** pressure, the Spirit works through **internal** motivation – primarily through love (cf. 5:5-6).
- We see a similar idea in Eph 6:6b – *like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.*

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

- ¹⁷ *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*
- *“For”* – Paul elaborates on how it is that those whose conduct is directed by the Spirit will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.
 - The Spirit and our sinful nature are opposing forces that operate within us.
 - So when we operate under the power of the Spirit, we will not do those things that we would normally want to do if we were acting in accordance with our sinful nature.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

- To be “led by the Spirit” is another way of saying to “live by the Spirit”, to have the Holy Spirit motivating you from within to live a life that is pleasing to God.
- A life “led by” or “lived by” the Spirit is a life that not only delivers us from a life of sinful indulgence but also delivers us from the tyranny of being under law.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery...*

- Paul considers sinful behavior, the outworking of our sinful nature, to be self-evident. Even pagans show an inborn ability to recognize such things as wrong:
 - *Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know His law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. (Rom 2:14-15 NLT)*

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery...*

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

- Paul then begins to list specific examples of the “works of the flesh” (ESV).
- The list is not intended to be exhaustive as indicated by the phrase “and the like” (vs.21), but this list is given so that we can have a better idea of what Paul means by “the works of the flesh”.
- Notice the outcome of a life that is characterized by this kind of behavior: such people are not truly saved.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;*

- *sexual immorality* – primarily to sexual intercourse outside marriage, but can refer to other kinds of sexual sin.
- *impurity* – broad term, can refer to immorality, indecency, sexual impurity
- *debauchery* – living without any moral restraint; licentiousness, sensuality, lustful indulgence, indecency, flagrant immorality

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

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

- *idolatry* – the worship of idols – not only of graven images but of any substitute for the living and true God. In Col 3:5, covetousness is described as a form of idolatry.
- *witchcraft* – magic potion, charm, casting of magic spells, sorcery
- *hatred* – animosity, hostility
- *discord* – strife, selfish rivalry, fighting
- *jealousy* – envy
- *fits of rage* – anger, wrath, fury, intense feeling
- *selfish ambition* – a hireling, self-interest, rivalry
- *dissensions* – standing apart, causing disunity, divisions
- *factions* – heretical sect, false party or teaching

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

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.*

- *envy* – jealousy over the good success of another (cf. Mt 20:15)
- *drunkenness* – intoxication
- *orgies* – carousing, revelry, excessive feasting

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- Having listed the behaviors (“works of the flesh”) that characterize the life of an unbeliever, Paul now lists the qualities which characterize the life of genuine Christians, which he describes as “the fruit of the Spirit”.
- These two sections **contrast** the **ugliness** of the works of the sinful nature with the **beauty and attractiveness** of the fruit of the Spirit, thereby **motivating us** to turn away from the works of the flesh and turn towards the fruit of the Spirit.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- Paul's probably uses "fruit" in the **singular** to show us that the Spirit produces these things in us as a unit.
- Referring these qualities as the "fruit of the **Spirit**" draws attention to the fact that it is the **Holy Spirit** who **produces** these qualities in us.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- *love* – first in the list, this command is of supreme importance as we saw earlier (5:6, 13-14) and includes many, if not all, of the other qualities:
 - *Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but **rejoices** with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
(1Co 13:4-7)

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

- *love* – to value and recognize the worth of others, to desire the well-being of others
- *joy* – on a surface level joy is the happiness that results from pleasant circumstances. But Christian joy is grounded in something that is true even when we find ourselves in unpleasant circumstances: that we have a hope (confident expectation) of sharing in God's eternal glory:
 - *And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.* (Rom 5:2b-4 NIV)

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

- *peace* – in scripture means not just the absence of war and fighting, but includes the idea of wholeness and wellbeing. Christians experience peace in a number of ways:
 - We have peace with God (**Rom 5:1**)
 - We have a peace that “transcends all understanding” and guards our hearts and minds (**Phil 4:7**)
 - Christ characterizes us as “peacemakers” (**Mat 5:9**)
- *patience* – endurance of wrong without anger
- *kindness* – goodness, showing benevolence to others
- *goodness* – kindness, perhaps generosity (cf. Mat 20:15)
- *faithfulness* – trustworthiness, loyalty, especially to God

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- *gentleness* – being considerate and courteous to others
- *self-control* – having the ability to restrain yourself from over-indulgence or addictions, particularly in things like: sex, food, or alcohol.
- As long as anyone lives according to these virtues which Paul has listed, they will never be in danger of violating any reasonable law (whether the Law of Moses or otherwise).
- In saying this, Paul is no doubt getting in a jab at the Judaizers who sought to bring about the Galatians' sanctification by imposing the Law on them.
- But he is also contrasting the way of the Spirit with the way of law-keeping: the way of the Spirit is to live with virtue beyond anything that any law requires or could ever bring about. It is an entirely different mindset!

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

- “Those who belong to Christ” – those of us who are true believers in Christ – were represented by Christ when He was crucified on the cross.
- As a result, because Christ was being punished on our behalf, all of the sins that our sinful nature (with its passions and desires) would ever produce (past, present, and future) have been paid for.
- Therefore we are no longer to obey the dictates of our sinful nature and its evil desires – it was crucified on the cross with Christ and therefore we should have nothing to do with it.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

- We were given a new spiritual life (regeneration) by the Holy Spirit, therefore we should now *keep in step with* (be in line with, walk in the footsteps of, live according to the standard of) the Spirit.

Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)

²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

- As an immediate application of what Paul has been teaching the Galatians about not gratifying the desires of the sinful nature and instead keeping in step with the Spirit, he makes a specific application to something that was evidently going on in the church at that time.

How Do We Live By the Spirit?

- Recognize that you are **responsible** for your own behavior:
 - You are commanded **not to sin**. When you sin – you are guilty and will be held accountable.
 - You are commanded to **obey God** from the heart. You are expected to make every effort to do so. If you fail to do so then you are guilty and will be held accountable.
- Recognize apart from the work of the Spirit in our hearts, we would **never** obey God.
- Therefore to the extent that we do find ourselves living in **obedience** to God we are to **give God all the credit** and give Him praise and thanks for changing our hearts.
- When we do **sin**, we are to **take full responsibility**. We must repent and confess our sin to God and receive forgiveness because of Christ's intercession for us and we should give thanks to God for His mercy.

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- 1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*
- 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
- 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
- 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
- 5 for each one should carry his own load.*
- 6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*

Doing Good to Others(6:1-10)

- 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*
- 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- 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.*
- 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

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Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- In this section (6:1-10), Paul gives a series of instructions that spell out in practical ways what it means for us to:
 - “Live (or walk) by the Spirit” (5:16, 25a)
 - Be “led by the Spirit” (5:18)
 - Produce the “fruit of the Spirit” (5:22-23)
 - “Keep in step with the Spirit” (5:25b).
- Paul covers a variety of practical topics in this section (6:1-10):
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another’s burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financial support to teachers in the church (6:6)
 - Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)
 - Persevering in doing good to others (6:9-10)

Restoring a Sinning Brother (6:1)

¹ *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

- In Paul's first instruction, he:
 - Describes a **problem**
 - Prescribes the **remedy**
 - Gives a **caution**

Restoring a Sinning Brother (6:1)

- ¹ *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*
- **The Problem:** someone in the church has either become ensnared in a pattern of sinful behavior or been caught committing a sin – perhaps one of those listed earlier (*sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry, etc. 5:19-21*).
 - This demonstrates that although Paul stated that those whose lives are **characterized** by such sinful behavior “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:21), Christians do continue to struggle with sin (cf. *1 John 1:8-2:1*) throughout their lives.

Restoring a Sinning Brother (6:1)

¹ *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

- **The Remedy:** the other believers in the body, those who are spiritual – those living by, led by, exhibiting the fruit of, and keeping in step with the Holy Spirit – have a responsibility to **restore** the sinning believer.
- **How** do we go about restoring someone who is in sin?
 - Show them from the Bible that what they are doing is wrong.
 - Point out the bad consequences which are likely to result from their behavior to both themselves and others.
 - When they come to a place of sorrow and repentance for what they have done, remind them of the grace and forgiveness found in Christ and receive them as Christ has received them.
- We are to do all this in a way that shows **gentleness** (meekness, consideration for) the person who sinned.

Restoring a Sinning Brother (6:1)

- ¹ *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*
- **The Caution:** One of the dangers in attempting to restore someone “caught in a sin” is that you could end up being pulled onto sinning yourself!
 - **Joining** in the sin that you were originally attempting to remedy
 - Committing a sin in **response** to the other person’s sin such as: pride, self-righteousness, becoming judgmental, gossip, becoming overly harsh.
 - Dealing with the sins of others is necessary, but hazardous!

Responding to a Sinning Brother

A survey of some of the New
Testament Passages that instruct us on
how we should respond when we see
our brother sin

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- No one passage deals with every possible problem that you might encounter in responding to a brother who sins.
- By pulling together a number of passages we can get a clearer picture of how to respond in a variety of situations.
- As we look at each passage, we will make observations noting differences and similarities between the them.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- (Jesus speaking) *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Mat 18:15-17)*
- *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. (Luke 17:3 NIV)*

Observations From **Mat 18:15-17**; **Luke 17:3**

- The process described in this passage is known theologically as “**church discipline**”.
- The **objective** throughout this process is to bring about the repentance of the sinning brother. When that happens, we are to **forgive** them.
- This passage tells us that knowledge of the sin should be kept to the **smallest group possible**.
- If the sinning believer will not listen to you, then the only option is to **escalate** and bring in other church members to help.
- If someone continues to refuse to repent of their sin in spite of multiple efforts by a number of church members, the issue must be brought before the **whole church**.
- If the unrepentant person will not listen to the church, then church members must avoid having fellowship that person until he or she repents.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus ... hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough...

Responding to a Sinning Brother

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (continued)

*I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that **you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler.** With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. **“Expel the wicked man from among you.”***

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- There is good reason to believe that the Corinthian church obeyed Paul and expelled the immoral man spoken of in 1Cor 5:1-13 and that the man later came back to the church and asked to be forgiven. Here was Paul's response:
- *The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him.*
(2Cor 2:6-10a)

Observations From 1Cor 5:1-13; 2Cor 2:6-11

- Here we see Paul calling for church discipline for sexual immorality.
- In giving these instructions Paul states many of the same principles of church discipline given by Jesus in **Mat 18:15-17**:
 - Sin on the part of a fellow church member is not to be ignored— especially obvious, flagrant sin. The church has a responsibility to deal with the sins of its members.
 - The final step for dealing with unrepentant sin is for the church to assemble as a body and to expel the unrepentant person from their fellowship.
 - The goal of this action is to bring about the repentance of the sinning person – and if they repent, they are to be forgiven.

Observations From 1Cor 5:1-13; 2Cor 2:6-11

- Paul also makes some additional distinctions **not** given by Jesus in **Mat 18:15-17**:
 - Another reason for church discipline is to keep the sin from spreading through the rest of the church – *a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough* (1Cor 5:6).
 - Since this sin was already publically known, there was no need for multiple steps – it was to go before the church immediately.
 - Church discipline is **only** for someone “who calls himself a brother” – not for unbelievers outside the church.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *And we urge you, brothers, **warn** those who are idle, **encourage** the timid, **help** the weak, **be patient** with everyone.* (1Thes 5:14)
- Here we see that our response to a particular sin or weakness can vary depending on the nature of the problem. In some cases a **warning** is in order in others, **encouragement** or **help** is needed – in **all** cases we are told to be **patient**.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to **keep away from every brother who is idle** and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: **"If a man will not work, he shall not eat."** We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. (2Thes 3:6-12)*

Observations From 2Thes 3:6-12; 1Thes 5:14

- Here Paul calls for church discipline for continued unrepentant idleness.
- Paul alludes to the final stage of church discipline when he says in 2Thes 3:6, *keep away from every brother who is idle.*
- Paul does not mention the other “steps” of church discipline here, though they are implied as we saw in 1Thes 5:14 where he says to *warn those who are idle.*
- For this sin, Paul gives an additional command not to feed an able bodied person who will not work for their own food. This will provide additional incentive for them to repent of their laziness – as the Proverb says: *The laborer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.* (Prov 16:26)

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *I urge you, brothers, to **watch out for those who cause divisions** and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. **Keep away from them.** For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. (Rom 16:17-18)*
- *... avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. **Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.** You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. (Tit 3:9b-11)*

Observations From Rom 16:17-18; Tit 3:10-11

- In these two texts, Paul calls for church discipline of those who cause divisions in the church through deception, false teaching, or foolish controversies.
- Again, we see an allusion to the final stage of church discipline when Paul says in Rom 16:17, *keep away from them* or in Tit 3:10 where he says, *have nothing to do with him*.
- Tit 3:10-11 also mentions a need to give two warnings before having “nothing to do with them” – a short description of the process outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *[An overseer] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore, **rebuke them sharply**, so that they will be sound in the faith (Tit 1:9-13)*

Observations From Tit 1:9-13

- The instructions in this passage are given to overseers (=pastors = elders) who have a special role in addressing sin in the church.
- Note that in this case Paul does not call for the kind of “gentle restoring” that he calls for in Gal 6:1, but a “sharp rebuke”!
- From this we see again, as we did earlier (in 1Thes 5:14) that our response to sin must vary according to:
 - The type of sin we are dealing with
 - The kind of person we are dealing with
 - The kind of danger the sin poses to the person or to the church
 - Our relationship to that person

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *Do not entertain an accusation against **an elder** unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be **rebuked publicly**, so that the others may take warning.* (1Ti 5:19-20 NIV)
- Here we see that an elder (=overseer = pastor), because of the high profile nature of his position is:
 - Given special protection from frivolous accusations
 - Has more severe consequences when he does sin

Responding to a Sinning Brother

- *We all stumble in many ways... (Jam 3:2a)*
- *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (Jam 5:19-20)*
- James may have reference here to the sin of wandering away from the gospel (i.e. believing a false gospel)
- But any time we or one of our brothers become ensnared by sin if we don't pull out of it, we will end up walking away from the gospel, and the forgiveness that it offers, proving our faith was not genuine.
- Therefore if you succeed in persuading your brother to turn from his sin, so that he continues to live and embrace the gospel, his sins will be covered and he will be saved from eternal death and destruction in hell.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

Summary

- We as a church are responsible to help one another in our struggle with sin. We must not turn a blind eye to our brother's sin.
- Jesus has given us instructions on how to carry out church discipline if a member continues in outwardly evident sin and will not repent. We as a church must commit to following Jesus' instructions in this area if it becomes necessary.

Responding to a Sinning Brother

Summary

- But the **vast majority** of our ministry in helping one another deal with sin should never even reach the level of stage two of church discipline.
- **Most** of our ministry in dealing with one another's sin should be at a level of gently, lovingly, and humbly teaching, reminding, and encouraging one another to turn away from sin and thereby restoring one another as described in our passage in Gal 6:1:
 - *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- ¹ Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*
- ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
- ³ If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
- ⁴ Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
- ⁵ for each one should carry his own load.*
- ⁶ Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*

Doing Good to Others(6:1-10)

- 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*
- 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- 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.*
- 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

- Paul Gives a Short, Authoritative Greeting (1:1-5)
- Paul Gives a Strong Warning (1:6-10)
- Paul Proves That He Received the Gospel Directly from God – Not from Men (1:11-2:14)
- Paul Defends the Gospel Using Several Arguments (2:15-4:31)
- Paul Teaches the Galatians How to Live Out the Gospel. (5:1-6:10)
 - Living the Gospel in Freedom (5:1-15)
 - Living the Gospel in the Spirit (5:16-26)
 - Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- In this section (6:1-10), Paul covers a variety of practical topics (6:1-10):
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another's burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financial support to teachers in the church (6:6)
 - Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)
 - Persevering in doing good to others (6:9-10)

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

- ² *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
 - ³ *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
 - ⁴ *Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
 - ⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*
- **Command:** Carry each other's burdens
 - **Result:** You will fulfill the law of Christ
 - **Possible Obstacle:** Thinking too highly of yourself!
 - **Remedy:** Measure yourself by God's standards - not the failures of others.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

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

Command: Carry each other's burdens

- The word “burden” literally means a “heavy, perhaps crushing, weight”. Used figuratively, as it is here, it refers to oppressive suffering or a hardship that is particularly difficult or exhausting.
- The command to carry each other's burdens is a figurative way of saying that we are to do what we can to lighten the heavy load of our fellow believers – particularly when they are going through a time of great suffering and/or struggling with overwhelming difficulties.

A Few Examples...

BURDEN

- Someone is struggling with a sin problem and is having difficulty in overcoming it.

SOME WAYS TO HELP

- Confront them gently and with humility
- Examine relevant scriptures with them
- Help them think through the origins and consequences of their sin

A Few Examples...

BURDEN

- Someone has a task to perform that involves more work than they are able to do on their own

SOME WAYS TO HELP

- Come along side and cheerfully help with the task
- Enlist the help of others
- Loan or in some other way, provide equipment to perform the task
- Give wise and friendly advice

A Few Examples...

BURDEN

- Someone has physical needs (food, clothing, shelter), but is unable to provide for those needs

SOME WAYS TO HELP

- Provide what is needed
- Help them through advice or other resources, to provide for themselves

A Few Examples...

BURDEN

- Someone is overwhelmed with grief and/or suffering

SOME WAYS TO HELP

- Listen, Understand, Sympathize, Offer words of comfort (Rom 12:15)
- Help alleviate the suffering where possible

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

² *Carry each other's burdens...*

A few more observations about carrying other's burdens:

- There are **some** burdens that **other** passages teach us that we are **not** to relieve. For example, there are times when you must let people experience the consequences of their own sin or foolishness:
 - *A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.* (Proverbs 19:19)
 - *...when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."* (2Thes 3:10 – also see Proverbs 16:26)
 - *If [an unrepentant sinner] refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.* (Mat 18:15-17)

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

² *Carry each other's burdens...*

A few more observations about carrying other's burdens:

- Helping others carry their burdens does call for wisdom:
 - It is unwise to take on so much of someone else's burden that you become overburdened yourself.
 - It is unwise to take on a burden that you are not equipped or able to take on.
 - It is unwise to take on someone's burden if, in taking on that burden, you are forced to stop carrying the burden of others whose burden should be a bigger priority to you.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

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

Result: You will fulfill the law of Christ

- Paul probably uses this phrase, in part, as a contrast to the Law of Moses, which the Judaizers were seeking to impose on the Galatians, and which we are no longer under (compare **1Cor 9:21**)
- The “Law of Christ” consists of the teachings of Christ and His apostles, given in the New Testament, and is summed up in the command to love one another as He has loved us (**John 13:34-35**).
- Our obedience to the Law of Christ is a result of the Holy Spirit working in us to serve one another in love (**5:13-16**)
- Carrying each other's burdens is one of the ways that we serve one another in love and thereby obey this law.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

³ *[For] if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

Possible Obstacle: Thinking too highly of yourself!

- This verse is connected to the previous verse by the word “for” (omitted by the NIV) – so Paul is telling you that thinking too highly of yourself can hinder you from being willing to carry the burdens of others and fulfill the law of Christ!
- There are undoubtedly many other obstacles Paul could have cited that might hinder us from being willing to carry others' burdens, but here Paul only cites this one.
- This seems to indicate that this is a significant obstacle.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

³ *[For] if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

What does Paul mean here?

- Is Paul saying here that we should not recognize when we are good at something or that we have areas of giftedness?
- Is Paul saying that we should lose courage and think: “I amount to nothing, I am completely unfit to perform any kingdom work”?
- No! That kind of thinking would go **against** Paul's command to carry each other's burdens.
- It would also contradict many of attitudes Paul expresses about himself in **other** passages.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

³ *[For] if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

Paul frequently recognized and pointed out his own hard work as well as the gifts and the abilities that God had given him:

- *I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Phi 4:13)*
- *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder... (1Cor 3:10a)*
- *I worked harder than all of [the other apostles]-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (1Cor 15:10)*
- *Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast... Are [these false apostles who are leading you astray] servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again... (2Co 11:18,23)*

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

³ *[For] if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

So what does Paul mean here?

- I think the best interpretation goes something like this: If you think your ability to overcome burdens in your own life is a result of your own personal superiority (because you are a cut above those who are being crushed by burdens in their life) you dangerously deluded! Because apart from the grace of God, you would be nothing and you would have nothing!

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

³ *[For] if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

We are what we are by the grace of God:

- *But by the grace of God I am what I am...* (1Cor 15:10a)
- *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* (1Cor 4:7)
- While the apostle Paul could, with a clear conscience, brag about his accomplishments, he had no illusions about who he was apart from God's grace and neither should we.
- He calls himself *less than the least of all God's people* (Eph 3:8) and the *worst* of sinners (1Tim 1:15)

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

- ² *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
 - ³ *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
 - ⁴ *Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
 - ⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*
- **Command:** Carry each other's burdens
 - **Result:** You will fulfill the law of Christ
 - **Possible Obstacle:** Thinking too highly of yourself!
 - **Remedy:** Measure yourself by God's standards - not the failures of others.

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

⁴ *[But] each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*

⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*

Remedy: Measure yourself by God's standards - not the failures of others.

- The apostle now prescribes a remedy for those who have deluded themselves into thinking that they deserve credit for their perceived success in as a Christian:
- Instead of congratulating yourself for having escaped the burden under which your brother or sister is laboring, you should examine your own life to see whether it measures up to God's requirements – to the extent that you pass **that** test, you'll have something to brag about!

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

⁴ *[But] each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*

⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*

- The beginning of verse 4 is a **command**. This means that it is your personal responsibility to spend time examining your life in the light of God's standard.
- God's standard for us is given in "the law of Christ" (mentioned in verse 2).

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

⁴ *[But] each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*

⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*

- I do not believe Paul is being facetious when he says that, after examining your life, you can “take pride” in yourself.
- There is a sense in which, as a faithful Christian, you can find **encouragement** in examining what God is doing in your life and say with the apostle Paul:
 - *Now this is our **boast**: Our conscience testifies that **we have conducted ourselves** in the world, and especially in our relations with you, **in the holiness and sincerity that are from God**. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. (2Cor 1:12)*

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

⁴ *[But] each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*

⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*

- But you must avoid at all costs, measuring your success as a Christian by comparing yourself to others whom you view as less successful than yourself. To do so, is to be no better than the Pharisee who stood up and prayed about himself :
 - *“God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector.”* (Luke 18:11)

Carrying One Another's Burdens (6:2-5)

⁴ *[But] each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*

⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.*

- We must regularly examine our own life in light of God's requirements of us, because God expects each of us to carry our own "load" (i.e. responsibilities that he has given us).
- One day we will all stand before God and give an account to of how we carried out those responsibilities:
 - *For we will all stand before God's judgment seat... So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:10,12)*

Summary – How Should We Respond?

- When you see your brother or sister being crushed by a burden in their life that you yourself are **not** suffering from, ***how should you respond?***

Summary – How Should We Respond?

- Be thankful that God has (for the moment at least) spared you of that burden.
- Recognize that as a sinner, if it were not for the grace of God, you would be suffering, and fully deserving of, a far **worse** burden: an eternity in hell!
- Think about how Jesus, who was suffering **no burden**, came down from God's glorious presence and suffered a brutal death on the cross to relieve you from that burden of eternal hell.
- Then consider, as Mordecai admonished Esther, whether perhaps God has given you the abilities you have “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) to lighten your brother or sisters load.

Summary – How Should We Respond?

- Focus on what it is that God would have **you** to do in light of the commands given in scripture – carry the load that God has given you, because one day you will give an account for what you have done with all that God has given you.
- Be thankful that **Jesus** has borne **your** burden, so that even when you have **failed** to carry the load that God has given you (and we all do at times), Jesus has carried **you**.

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- In this section (6:1-10), Paul covers a variety of practical topics (6:1-10):
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another's burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financially supporting teachers of the Word (6:6)
 - Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)
 - Persevering in doing good to others (6:9-10)

Financially Supporting Teachers (6:6)

- ⁶ *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*
- Paul is introducing a new topic – but there is obviously some connection here to the idea of bearing each other’s burdens.
 - The verse describes **two** categories of people within the church:
 - Those who **receive instruction**
 - Those who **instruct**
 - The instruction being given is instruction in “the word” of God (cf. 1Thes 2:13; 2Tim 4:2)
 - At the time of this letter, this would have consisted of the Old Testament, as well as the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.
 - Today, of course, we find God’s word in the Bible.

Financially Supporting Teachers (6:6)

- ⁶ *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*
- In exchange for the spiritual benefit that they receive, those who are instructed in the Word of God must share “all good [material] things” with their teachers.
 - Paul describes a similar obligation of exchange between Gentiles and Jews in the early church:
 - *For Macedonia and Achaia [Gentile churches] were pleased to make a [financial] contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they **owe** it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' **spiritual** blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their **material** blessings. (Rom 15:26-27)*

Financially Supporting Teachers (6:6)

- ⁶ *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*
- This is one of several places in the New Testament that teaches that we have an obligation to support those who teach us the Word of God:
 - *...the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. (1Cor 9:14b)*
 - *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double [financial] honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1Tim 5:17-18 NAS)*

The Example of the Apostle Paul

in Receiving Financial Support

The Example of Paul in Receiving Support

- In a number of places in the New Testament, Paul affirms that, as a teacher and preacher of the gospel, he had a **right** to receive financial support **from those to whom he preached**. (1Cor 9:1-14; 2Thes 3:7-9)
- But in nearly every instance in the New Testament where Paul's right to receive support is talked about, we see that he voluntarily chose **not** to accept financial support from those to whom he preached:
 - Thessalonica (1Thes 2:9)
 - Corinth (1Cor 9:15-18)
 - Ephesus (Acts 20:33-35)

The Example of Paul in Receiving Support

- The **one exception** where it is recorded in the New Testament that Paul accepted financial support was from Macedonia, specifically the church at Philippi:
 - *I [Paul] **robbed** other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you [Corinthians]. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. (2Cor 11:8-9)*
 - *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; (Philippians 4:14-15)*

The Example of Paul in Receiving Support

- Paul gives **two** reasons why **he** did not accept support from the churches that he preached in:
 - **To set an example** that we are to work to support ourselves and not to live at the expense of others (2Thes 3:6-13)
 - **To silence his accusers** and keep them from claiming that he was just preaching for the money (2Cor 11:7-12)
- Nevertheless, in his letters, Paul **consistently affirms** that those who teach and preach the gospel have the right to receive financial support from those they teach. (1Cor 9:14; 1Tim 5:17-18; Gal 6:6)

Lessons We Can Learn From Paul's Example

- While teachers of the Word have a right to expect support from those they teach, they can (at *their* discretion) waive that right.
- We are not **commanded** to provide ongoing financial support to those who teach and preach in other places (including missionaries) – but if we choose to do so, it is commendable.

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- In this section (6:1-10), Paul covers a variety of practical topics (6:1-10):
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another's burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financially supporting teachers of the Word (6:6)
 - Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

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

8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

- **Opening Warning** – Don't be deceived
- **Unchangeable Fact** – God cannot be mocked
- **A General Truth of Life** – A man reaps what he sows
- **Principle of Sowing and Reaping Applied to the Christian Life** –
 - Sow to the sinful nature – Reap destruction
 - Sow to please the Spirit – Reap eternal life

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

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

Opening Warning – Don't be deceived

- This is a warning often given in scripture (1Cor 6:9; 15:33; Jas 1:16; Luke 21:8), which indicates that the truth about to be given is one that:
 - Has **serious** consequences
 - As sinful people we are apt to miss because we are so easily led astray by our own sin and by the clever lies of the devil

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

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

Unchangeable Fact – God cannot be mocked

- The word translated “mock” means to turn up one’s nose at someone or treat them with contempt.
- Paul **can’t** be claiming here that no one ever mocks God or treats Him with contempt – people do this all the time!
- In the context, it will become clear that Paul means that you can’t show contempt for God and get away with it. You can’t outwit God!

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

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

A General Truth of Life – A man reaps what he sows

- Here Paul cites a common sense principle of everyday life: there is a direct correlation between the seed you put in the ground and the plant that comes up.
- Likewise, there is a correlation between what you do today and what you may happen to you tomorrow.

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

- Paul now applies the principle of sowing and reaping to what he taught earlier (5:16-25) about living by the Spirit versus living according to the sinful nature.
- The **sowing** here refers to how you live your life **today**
- The **reaping** refers to what the outcome of your life will be in the **final judgment**.

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

- ⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- If the life you “sow” in this world is characterized by the works of the sinful nature (which Paul described earlier in 5:19-21) you will experience eternal destruction in the life to come!
 - *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 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 5:19-21)*

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

- ⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- If the life you “sow” in this world is characterized by a desire to please the Spirit and manifests the fruit of the Spirit (which Paul described earlier in 5:22-23) you will have an eternal life in the presence of God.
 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*
(Gal 5:22-23)

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

- ⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- Paul makes a very similar statement (without the analogy of sowing and reaping) in his letter to the Romans:
 - *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die [i.e. an eternal death in hell]; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live [an eternal life in the presence of God in heaven], because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom 8:13-14)*

Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)

- ⁸ *The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*
- If you do not seriously believe in a coming judgment or think that you can safely ignore the law of sowing and reaping, you are treating God with contempt and you will face eternal judgment.
 - On the other hand, if you trust God's Word and turn to Christ, seeking to be delivered from a life of sin, you will spend all of eternity with Him.

Doing Good to Others (6:1-10)

- In this section (6:1-10), Paul covers a variety of practical topics (6:1-10):
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another's burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financially supporting teachers of the Word (6:6)
 - Sowing and Reaping (6:7-8)
 - Persevering in doing good to others (6:9-10)

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.*

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

- These verses pick up the analogy of sowing and reaping introduced in the previous verses (vss. 7-8).
- Here the “sowing” involves perseverance in doing good to others, especially other believers.
- This kind of “sowing” is described in vs. 8 as sowing “to please the Spirit” and will result (according to vs. 8) in a harvest of “eternal life”.

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- “Doing good” is a general phrase that refers to any and all of the good things that we are commanded to do as Christians.
- “Doing good” would include, but is not limited to, the things mentioned earlier in this section:
 - Restoring a sinning brother (6:1)
 - Carrying one another’s burdens (6:2-5)
 - Financially supporting teachers of the Word (6:6)
- “Doing good” also includes a nearly endless list of other activities and behaviors talked about not only throughout this letter, but throughout the Bible!

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- Because our duties are so numerous, and often so difficult, even genuine Christians are in danger of becoming “weary in doing good”.
- At times we may:
 - Be **slow** to do what we know we ought to do
 - Make **excuses** as to why we haven’t done what we ought to do
 - **Feel sorry for ourselves** and **demand sympathy** from those around us.
 - Try to **rationalize** away our duties and pretend (and perhaps even convince ourselves in the process) that we are not obligated to do what Scripture commands!
- But this is not how Christians ought to conduct themselves!

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- If, as Christians, we're to be what we **should** be – what we **could** be by the grace of God – we must **not** grow weary in doing good!
- We “become weary in doing good” when we fail to trust (have faith in) God and allow ourselves to be influenced by worldly values.
- On the contrary:
 - *But those who **trust** in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and **not grow weary**. They will walk and not faint. (Isa 40:31 NLT)*
 - *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are **not burdensome**. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our **faith**. (1John 5:3-4 ESV)*

A Labor of Love is not a Burden!

*Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, **but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.** (Gen 29:16-20)*

We Must Keep an Eternal Perspective

- *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed ... we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence ... Therefore **we do not lose heart**. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For **our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all**. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2Cor 4:8-18)*

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- The phrase “become weary” could also be translated “lose heart” (NAS) or “become discouraged” (MIT)
- So not only must we keep **doing** good, but we must also watch our **attitude** as we do good – being careful to avoid any attitude which might mar the beauty of our good deeds or lead us to stop doing good altogether.
- The Lord loves a cheerful **doer** as well as a “cheerful giver”! (cf. 2Cor 9:7)

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- God is not pleased when we **do** or **say** the right things but our **hearts** are not in it:
 - *Man looks at the **outward** appearance, but the LORD looks at the **heart**.* (1Sam 16:7)
 - *The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their **mouth** and honor me with their **lips**, but their **hearts** are far from me.* (Isa 29:13a)

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- This verse provides a powerful motivation for us to not grow weary in doing good.
- If we thought our efforts at doing good would end up being fruitless, we would quickly become demotivated – but the apostle assures us that this is **not** the case: “at the proper time we **will** reap a harvest”.
- The word “harvest” is a figurative term that goes with the idea of sowing and reaping. It implies that we will receive a reward that is a **result of** and **in proportion to** our efforts at doing good.

Obedience to God's Word Brings Great Reward!

*The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving **joy to the heart.***

*The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving **light to the eyes.***

*The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.*

*The ordinances of the LORD are sure
and altogether righteous.*

*They are **more precious than gold,**
than much pure gold;*

*They are **sweeter than honey,**
than honey from the comb.*

*By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

(Psalm 19:8-11)

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- We are **sure** to receive a reward for doing good at the **final** judgment, but **often** our reward comes in **this** life and as well.
- The reward for doing good, however, is not always immediate. Paul says we will receive our reward “at the proper time”.
- John Brown says: “*Christians frequently act like children in reference to this harvest. They want to sow and reap in the same day*”.

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- Sometimes in our haste to see fruit from our efforts we end up hindering or preventing the results that would have come had we just persevered.
- It is up to our sovereign and all-wise God to determine when we will see the results of our work – whether in this life or the next (or both).
- In either case, we will only receive a reward “**if** we do not give up” – so hang in there!

Some Caveats About Not Giving Up

- There are times when the scriptures tell us to **stop** doing good for others, for example those who reject the good they have already received. This is not “giving up” in the Gal 6:9 sense.
 - *Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.* (Pro 23:9)
 - *If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.* (Mat 10:14)
 - *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.* (Tit 3:10)
 - *If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life ... There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.* (1John 5:16)

Some Caveats About Not Giving Up

- There will be times in our Christian life when we have to stop doing good in **one** area in order to do good in **another** area. This calls for wisdom, but this is not (necessarily) “giving up” in the Gal 6:9 sense.
 - *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) (Rom 1:13a)*
 - *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ... a time to plant and a time to uproot ... a time to tear down and a time to build ... a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (Eccl 3:1-8)*

Some Caveats About Not Giving Up

- At times you may believe that you need to hang in there with a particular situation or a particular person, even though others think it's best not to. This calls for wisdom!
 - *Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." **Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.** (Act 15:36-39)*
 - *Only Luke is with me. Get **Mark** and bring him with you, because **he is helpful to me in my ministry.** (2Tim 4:11)*

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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.

- Though there are caveats to consider, the bottom line is that Gal 6:9 teaches that we must persevere **throughout our life** in obedience to God's commands and in service to others and in so doing we will receive a reward from God.

Persevering in Doing Good to Others (6:9-10)

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

- “Therefore” – Paul draws a conclusion from all he has been saying.
- “as we have opportunity” - Opportunities to do good do not last indefinitely. If we do not act within the window of time God has given us, we may miss out altogether.
- Our obligation to do good is not to be limited to a certain class of people – we are to do good to “**all** people”.
- While we are obligated to do good to all classes of people, we are to give **priority** to helping our fellow believers – after all, they are part of our spiritual family!

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

- Paul Gives a Short, Authoritative Greeting (1:1-5)
- Paul Gives a Strong Warning (1:6-10)
- Paul Proves That He Received the Gospel Directly from God – Not from Men (1:11-2:14)
- Paul Defends His Law-Free Gospel Using Several Arguments (2:15-4:31)
- Paul Teaches the Galatians How to Live Out the Law-Free Gospel. (5:1-6:10)
- Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹¹ *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*
- ¹² *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*
- ¹³ *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.*
- ¹⁴ *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*
- ¹⁶ *Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.*
- ¹⁷ *Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*
- ¹⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹¹ *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*

- Up to this point, Paul has dictated the letter to someone (known as an amanuensis) who wrote down what he was saying.
- Now Paul takes the pen in his own hand and writes the concluding section of his letter to the Galatians (cf. [1Cor 16:21](#); [Col 4:18](#); [2Thes 3:17](#) where Paul does this same thing in other letters).
- The “large letters” that Paul made while writing this part of the letter were most likely for emphasis – much like we would use a boldface font or all capital letters for emphasis today.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹¹ *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*

- This concluding section, unlike the concluding section to most of Paul's other letters, contains:
 - No greeting
 - No expression of joy
 - No request for prayer
 - No doxology
- But this conclusion is **longer** and **reemphasizes** the main issues covered in the letter more than the conclusions to Paul's other letters.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹² *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*
- ¹³ *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.*
- Paul points out that the Judaizers, in their efforts to have the Galatians circumcised, are operating out of **selfish motives**:
 - **They're trying to save their own skin**: they want the Gentiles to be circumcised so that **they** can avoid being persecuted by the unbelieving Jews for having become Jewish "Christians".
 - **They are hypocrites and braggarts**: they don't keep the Law themselves to the extent that they ought to, but they insist that the Galatians keep it so they can brag to their fellow Jews that they make the Gentiles keep the Law.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹² *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the **cross of Christ**.*

¹³ *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.*

- The “cross of Christ” here refers to the place where the guilt for all our sin was paid for by Christ.
- This was the aspect of Christianity that non-Christian Jews found to be most offensive because, if rightly understood, it made the Law of Moses with all of its sacrifices for sin obsolete (cf. **Heb 8:13**)
- And a right understanding of the “cross of Christ” is what the religions of the world today still find to be most offensive – because it eliminates human merit as the means of attaining a right standing before God.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹² *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*
- ¹³ *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.*
- If the Judaizers had tried to compel the Galatians to be circumcised for the **best** of motives, Paul still would have warned against their false and damnable teaching because it was contrary to the Gospel. (cf. Gal 1:6-9)
 - But the fact that they were operating from **bad** motives, made their efforts to mislead the Galatians even **worse!**

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹² *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*

¹³ *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.*

- There are many Christians today who act out of the same bad motives that the Judaizers operated from: they are willing to twist or compromise the truth of God's word in order to win the approval of unbelievers.
- Such efforts usually do not succeed anyway: the world is rarely interested in having anything to do with the truth. Instead, they will demand that **we** do all the compromising.
- In the meantime our compromise offends God. "No servant can serve two masters"! (Luke 16:13)

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁴ *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

- Having exposed the self-serving motivations of the Judaizers, Paul now draws a contrast between his outlook and theirs:
 - The **Judaizers** boasted in their ability to persuade the Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses so that they might have standing in the unbelieving Jewish community.
 - **Paul**, though he had much in which he could boast (cf. **2Cor 11:21b-29; Phil 3:4-6**), boasted only in Christ's death on the cross on his behalf.
 - The **Judaizers** considered the doctrine of the cross to be a hindrance to the spread of Christianity and mixed in other practices to avoid being persecuted for it.
 - **Paul** taught that without a trust in the Christ's work on the cross alone, there is no Christianity and no salvation.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁴ *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

- Paul's trust in the work of Christ on the cross impacted his entire view of the world.
- The word "world", as it is used in this context, means the "epitome of everything outside of Christ in which man seeks to put his trust" (Ridderbos).
- When we truly trust in Christ's work on our behalf, we like Paul, find that the sinful things of this world no longer have the significance or attraction for us that they once did.
- Likewise we cease to be pawns of the world system run by Satan as we once were and are often objects of the world's hatred instead (cf. [John 15:18](#)).

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

- Here Paul makes a profound point which, if fully understood, is a one sentence summary of the whole letter.
- In fact, if fully understood, it is a one sentence summary of the entire Christian way of life!

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

- Under the Law of Moses, circumcision was important for anyone who wanted to enjoy the privileges that were a part of that covenant.
 - A Gentile who was circumcised under the Law of Moses could participate as a proselyte in many of the external privileges that were enjoyed by the Jews. (Ex 12:48)
 - A Jew who was **not** circumcised, on the other hand, was to be cut off from the nation of Israel and be treated no better than an uncircumcised Gentile (Gen 17:14)
- But with the coming of Christ, it no longer matters whether a person is circumcised or uncircumcised.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a **new creation**.*
- What counts now, Paul tells us, is a “new creation”
 - “New creation” here is a description of the change produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart of a previously unbelieving sinner.
 - This change is what causes a person to trust (have faith) in “the cross of Christ” (Christ’s payment for their sin on the cross) and results in a new mode of thinking and feeling that eventually shows itself in love for God and others.
 - So Paul is basically reiterating what he said earlier in Gal 5:6, but using different words – *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

- The principle Paul is teaching is that true Christianity is not about what we do or say **externally** – what makes someone a true Christian is the state of their **heart**.
- **Nothing** that a person does **externally** can make them a Christian:
 - A person may be baptized (and if they have genuinely trusted in Christ they **should** be baptized) but the ceremonial washing with water is not “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Tit 3:5)
 - A person may join a local church body (and every believer **should** become a member of a local church body), but being a member of a church does not automatically make you a member of Christ’s body.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁶ *Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.*

- Paul expresses a desire that peace and mercy be given to “all who follow this rule”.
- “This rule” is apparently the principle that Paul just laid down in the previous verse about the “new creation”.
- Therefore those “who follow this rule” are those who by God’s grace have become a new creation, having faith in Christ and living out that faith in love for God and others.
- In other words, Paul is wishing that peace and mercy be given to all those among the Galatians who are genuine Christians.

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

- ¹⁶ *Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.*
- Paul then refers to “all those who follow this rule” (i.e. genuine Christians) as “the Israel of God”.
 - It would appear that Paul is getting in yet another jab at the Judaizers by pointing out that those who have genuine faith in Christ do not need to be circumcised in order to share in the heritage of Israel – because by trusting in the One who is the true Hope of Israel, they have become a part of the “Israel of God”, i.e. the true Israelites .
 - *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.*
(Rom 2:28-29)

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁷ *Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*

- The “trouble” they have caused Paul may refer to the accusations and slander made concerning Paul, questioning his genuineness as an apostle, etc.
- Or perhaps, because Paul so identifies with his Galatian converts, he may be referring to the Judaizers efforts to deceive the Galatians as causing **him** trouble.
- The “marks of Jesus” that Paul bore on his body were, no doubt, the scars he had received over the years as he was persecuted for the cause of Christ.
- These scars give further credibility to Paul that he was Christ’s apostle and therefore this statement constitutes a warning that those who trouble him are troubling Christ!

Concluding Comments (6:11-18)

¹⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

- This has been a hard hitting letter, but Paul closes on a tender note where he assures his readers of his confidence in the genuineness of their faith by referring to them as “brothers”.