

Ministry of Grace Church

Galatians Chapter 6

Introduction

Last week we talked a little bit about the difference between God's grace and His mercy. In His mercy, He will NOT give us what we deserve, eternity in the Lake of Fire. By His grace, He promises us what we don't deserve, eternal life and heaven with Him for eternity.

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who enables us to show both grace and mercy to those around us. We do this because we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And – the only reason that this is even remotely possible is because when we were completely unlovely, God loved us! Let's share the love of God with the people we encounter every day.

Bear One Another's Burdens

Galatians 6:1-10

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load. ⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Notes:

Throughout this letter Paul has reminded the Galatians the importance of being “others” focused. His emphasis is in serving each other and on loving each other in the same way that we love ourselves.

In the previous chapter he said,

... do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Galatians 5:13-14)

He opens this chapter with one example of how we can demonstrate that love. He reminds us that we need to love each other as we love ourselves and an outgrowth of that love is serving each other.

Self-love is evident in all areas of life. I'm sure we have all seen people who appear to not think about anybody but themselves. We call it selfishness and it is a product of our sin nature. If you remember, in

the previous chapter Paul made a list of some of the characteristics of the sin nature. This list included: strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, and envy. All of these are outgrowths of selfishness, outgrowths of being “me” focused. The fruit of the Spirit, however, includes peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are all outgrowths of the Spirit of God. These are outgrowths of being “others” focused.

In the opening part of the current chapter, Paul talks about a person who has been caught in a trespass. The Greek word for trespass is *paraptōma*, which is different than the word for a sin. A trespass refers to a lapse in judgment, or a mistake. We all make mistakes and we all sometimes do things we shouldn’t do. When one of these lapses in judgment or one of these mistakes is done *to* us, our first reaction is to get angry and to strike back, right? These immediate reactions come directly from our sin nature. And, when we see one of these things being done to someone else, we tend to get judgmental and self-righteous because, “we would never do something like that.”

Whether this trespass is committed against us, or against someone else, Paul teaches that we need to “love our neighbor as ourself.” One way of doing this is to “put ourselves in their shoes.” If we were the one who made a mistake, once we realized it, we would want others to be understanding of us and not immediately condemn us, right? That, according to Paul, is exactly what we should do to others who make a mistake; we should be understanding and not immediately condemn them.

“One another” is one of the key phrases in the Christian’s vocabulary. “Love one another” is found at least a dozen times in the New Testament, along with “pray one for another” ([James 5:16](#)), “encourage one another” and “build-up one another” ([1 Thessalonians 5:11](#)), “outdo one another in showing honor” ([Romans 12:10](#)), “show hospitality to one another” ([1 Peter 4:9](#)), and many others.

In the section before us, Paul adds another “one another” phrase: “Bear one another’s burdens” ([Galatians 6:2](#)). The Spirit-led Christian thinks of others and how he or she can minister to them. Another way of saying this is captured in one of the principles that Jesus taught,

The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. ([Matthew 23:11-12](#))

If we are constantly on the lookout for how we can help others, especially other Christians, then we will have a natural tendency to be “others” focused. But, in order to bear one another’s burdens, we need to know what other people’s burdens are. When we recognize that another Christian is undergoing a trial or is burdened in some way, we need to do more than just pray for them. We need to lend a hand, roll up our sleeves, get our hands dirty and do whatever we can to ease their burden.

-
In verse six, Paul introduced a concept that few pastors like to preach about. In fact, Martin Luther said,

“These passages are all meant to benefit us ministers. I must say I do not find much pleasure in explaining these verses. I am made to appear as if I am speaking for my own benefit.”

Like Luther, I dislike teaching about passages like this. So, let me simply repeat what Paul said:

Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ([Galatians 6:6](#))

-

Paul then goes on to present one of those “elementary principles of life,” at least from the Christian perspective. Back in chapter 4, Paul condemned these elementary principles of the world as directing us toward legalism and a “me” focus. Here, however, he shows that there are also some spiritual elementary principles of life that lead us to being “others” focused. He explains this one as “we reap what we sow.” He is not saying this in isolation. He just told us to bear one another’s burdens, and now he says,

let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

If we are sowing love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ by serving them from a humble heart, then God will see to it that we harvest in proportion to what we sow. But, don’t expect immediate results. When the time is right, (that is, *in due season*) God will provide us with blessings commensurate with how we serve others. Also keep in mind that the harvest we reap may not even be in this lifetime. We may not reap the harvest of blessing until we stand before our Lord at the Bema Seat Judgment. I believe that’s what Jesus was referring to when he taught His disciples:”

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

We have said before that there is nothing that we can do on this earth to earn God’s favor. We already have more of His favor than we could ever earn. But we can earn eternal blessing.

Final Warning and Benediction

Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Notes:

It was Paul’s custom to dictate his letters to someone else who actually wrote them. Therefore, at the end of the letters, Paul typically wrote a short note, or postscript, both to authenticate the letter and to add a personal touch. Examples of this are found in **1 Corinthians 16:21-24**, **Colossians 4:18**, and **2 Thessalonians 3:17**. So, it is not surprising to see that he wrote this postscript to the Galatians. What is interesting is that he says that he wrote it in large letters. We have noted before that Paul may have had an eye disease that resulted from Malaria, contracted while he was on his first missionary journey. This may be the reason for his writing with large letters.

Here, he summarizes his message to the Galatians. He says that those who are forcing Christians to be circumcised are doing so, not for the good of the Galatian Christians, but for their own selfish purposes. You see, these were people who had been steeped in the Law from their childhood and could not break

free. Though they claimed to be Christians, they didn't want to be criticized by others for abandoning the law in favor of the cross of Christ.

And – to make matters worse. These people who insisted on the Galatian Christians being circumcised, didn't even keep the Law themselves. They were bragging about how they kept the Law, even when they didn't. Paul's response was that the only thing he would brag about was the cross of Christ itself.

Paul's bragging about the cross is made all the more unusual given the manner in which the cross was viewed in polite Roman society in the first century. The word "cruX" (the Latin word for "cross") was never even mentioned because of its offensive and shameful nature. No one ever said that a person was "crucified." Rather it was euphemistically said that they were "hanged on the unlucky tree." Paul not only was not afraid to use the unmentionable word, he associated himself with it and even bragged about it, because our Savior granted us eternal life through His despised sacrifice on the cross.

Paul then summarizes the letter by stating that circumcision, or the lack thereof, means nothing. What is really important is whether or not a person is a "new creation." In other words, salvation by faith and faith alone is ultimately the only thing that really matters.

So What?

Throughout this letter to the churches in Galatia, the Apostle Paul has been condemning the notion that a Christian has to be circumcised and has to obey the Law of Moses. He makes it very clear that faith in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the only thing that is necessary for becoming a Christian. Paul even goes so far as to point out that if righteousness can be obtained by the Law, then Jesus died for no purpose.

yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ... for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:16, 21)

He says that we are justified before God (declared righteous, innocent, Not Guilty) just like Abraham was, not by obedience and circumcision, but by faith. And – as a result, not only did God declare us to be righteous, he also declared us to be his children. And not just children, but sons, those who will inherit the riches of the Father.

Trying to obey the Law is an activity of the flesh, our sin nature. Trying to keep the whole Law, all the time is fruitless - because nobody can do it. Throughout this study, we have repeatedly noticed the fact that keeping the Law (which includes keeping the rules and legal requirements of any "church") is really a "me" centric existence. It causes us to focus on "me" doing all the things that "I" need to do to please God. And, in the end, it forces "me" to focus on how successful "I" have or haven't been. The end result is either pride or self-loathing, both of which stem from our sin nature.

We also learned last week that as human beings, we can't "not think" about something. Instead, we need to find an alternative something to think about. The same is true of our life focus. The only way we can stop focusing on self is to learn to focus on others. Paul summed that up with these words,

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

If we truly love our neighbor as ourselves, we won't even have to look for opportunities to do good to, and for, others. The opportunities will come naturally. If we truly love others, we will develop that "others" mentality and we will be more concerned about their well-being than our own.

Now What?

Is there someone in your circle of acquaintances who needs to be loved or who needs to be recognized? It doesn't matter if they are a Christian or not. In fact, it might be even better if they are not a Christian. Loving others should be a natural characteristic of every Christian. Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

We can all think of cases where someone has been hurt by someone else who claims to be a Christian. Instead of condemning the other Christian, let's love on the one who was hurt. Let's all keep in mind what Peter said in his first letter:

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (1 Peter 4:7-10)

Let's pray.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.