

Live as a New Creation

Galatians 6:1–18

Key Verse: 15

“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.”

Well here we are at the end of Galatians and how has it been so far? I think that it has been wonderful to study. Chapter 5 seems to be a climax in which Paul proclaims freedom in Christ and living by the spirit. And in many ways I think that chapter 6 helps us with how to do that. It begins with practical teachings of how to love one another in our Christian community. Then he talks about reaping and sowing and concludes with being a new creation. May God bless the conclusion of our study of Galatians.

Let's read verses 1-6, “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.” Taking a look at these verses the first thing we notice is that Paul calls them “brothers.” This shows Paul's sense of community and that he considers them as part of his extended family. And really that is what church should be for all of us because God is our father and we are all brothers and sisters. And the more time you spend with someone the deeper you will go in the relationship. Inevitably sin will happen, either we will sin or they will sin. It's not a matter of if, but of when because we are sinners. We will either sin against each other or against God. And Paul says that sin is the result of our passions and desires that are used in the wrong way and verses 5:19-21 show us what they are. They are sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies. And when you think about it, all of these can be boiled down to four basic categories; sexual, social, spiritual and personal. So if we are not filled with the spirit, helping us along the way, and we are left to ourselves, our passions and desires will get polluted and twisted in various ways. One of those ways sin comes out is in our sexuality. God intended our sexuality to be for a husband and wife to enjoy but because of sin it becomes immoral, impure and sick. Another way sin comes out is socially through hatred or envy causing divisions and factions among God's people in the church. Sin can also come out spiritually in such things as idolatry and witchcraft. Sin can also manifest itself personally through fits of rage, selfish ambition, drunkenness and debauchery. If sin goes unchallenged in a person's life, eventually they will fall, just like our Bible house. It was once a beautiful place but it was abandoned and left alone, it began to fall into decay. If you look at google maps street view you'll see that in front no trees existed. But if you go there today you'll see a big tree. And that tree, which is not a bad thing left to itself has become bad because it is growing from under the staircase. And if left uncared for, it will eventually breakup the staircase and the roots will destroy the pipes underneath. It has already messed up the railing and fence; it's just a matter of time for it to cause further destruction, so we have to act. This is just how sin is.

And since sin is going to happen, Paul is telling the Galatians that they should be ready when it does so that they will know what to do. Whatever form sin comes in, it enslaves person and they become the prey of Satan. Those who are trapped in sin, lose joy and stop growing spiritually, eventually they become a threat to others, because Satan intends to destroy the church through them. So Paul urges those who are mature and live by the Spirit to be aware of and pay attention to sin problems in the Christian community. We cannot neglect or ignore them. We have to deal with them properly for the good of everyone in Christ. But they question is how.

Should we use the scarlet letter method? Obviously not. Paul says "restore that person." The word "restore" has the meaning of "mending what has been broken." It refers to restoring one's relationship with God, and with the Christian community, and helping them return to a useful position in the body of Christ. For this to happen, the sin must be confessed, repented of and forgiven. The word caught in verse 1 can have a couple flavors; like, "Ah ha ! I caught you red handed." However I don't think that is the way the author intended. When someone is "caught" by the power of sin, they need help to escape because sin is a trap. Sin is like a baited hook, it's there to trap people. And we are so dumb because we fall for it all the time. After our service trip we went crabbing in the Chesapeake Bay. We caught so many crabs with just a string, a weight and a piece of chicken. Let me tell you that it builds your confidence to know that you can survive with just those 3 things, but why does this work? It's because the crabs won't let go of the chicken and they hold on to the bait without seeing the net coming up behind them and their desire for it eventually leads to their destruction. That's the nature of sin. And when we are caught by it, we need help to escape. The prophet Nathan helped King David when he was caught in sin. Nathan helped David to confess his sin before God, which was the first step in obtaining freedom from it. This required great courage and wisdom on Nathan's part. There was a chance the king would reject his counsel and have him killed. So dealing with sin is not easy. Because the person who is sinning, doesn't like being called out because of it and our first reaction is to fight back. But what we have to remember when we are in that situation is that when someone calls us out because of our sin, it is really a sign of love. A person who has unchecked sin in their lives are really people who are missing out on deep spiritual love because they don't have the blessing of someone being able to help them. So the next time that someone addresses your sin problem, whatever it may be, thank God for that person because it's a sign of love for you.

There are always at least two sides in dealing with problems. There are those who don't like it and some people who love to point out other's sin problem. They love to attack a person's sin problem with their guns blazing. And they shoot up everything in sight. But the Bible says that it must be done gently. Though sin must be dealt with clearly, however the goal is restoration, not condemnation. I think the more spiritually mature a person is the better at this they become to move from condemnation to restoration. Someone who is not mature, filled with the spirit, can condemn, or lord over another because they are not tempted by that particular sin. However Paul warns against that in verse 3. He says, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Satan is the master deceiver and he can deceive us by making us proud where we think that we are better than we really are. This verse also applies to those who are indifferent or think they are too important to get involved in helping a brother caught in sin. Paul says that each one of us should test our own actions to God's word and not compare ourselves with our brothers or sisters.

But Paul makes it clear that in doing so we have to be careful so that when we are helping another, we don't become tempted along the way. One guy after becoming a Christian wanted to help his drinking buddies to know Jesus. However instead of helping them, they influenced him and instead of talking about Jesus, he became drunk. We have to watch out because Satan is a master hunter and before you know it if you're not careful, you're climbing into the trap with the person you're trying to help. Another example a woman goes over to help her friend who is having marital problems. When she gets there her friend starts going off on her husband and how bad he is. She is just blasting him left and right but if the one who is trying to help is not careful, she can become influenced by her friend because her friend is deceived and they can be very convincing and before you know it, she's comparing her own husband and says, "Hey wait a minute, my guy does that too." And she falls into the trap when she went there trying to help. So we have to be careful.

In verse 2, Paul says that we are to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" and in verse 5 he says, "for each one should carry his own load." How is this possible? It seems like they are at odds with each other. How can we carry each other's burdens and yet carry our own

loads? In thinking about this, it helps to know what the original text is referring to. We can't simply say that a burden and a load are the same. They're not, they are different. Simply put a load is something that we can carry alone and a burden is something that we can't. We need help. A load is something that God wants us to struggle with personally because it trains us and builds us up by producing perseverance; and perseverance produces character; and character, hope. (Ro 5:3-4) So loads are good for us. They're hard but good. For example like becoming a responsible, reliable and productive part of society. This may not be easy for us but it is good for us to learn. On the other hand a burden is something that is too big for us to handle on our own. For example being caught in sin, we need others help to get out. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mt 11:28-29) For example carrying out God's ministry at IIT is a burden and no one can do it alone. We need each other and have to work together, along with the help of the Holy Spirit, if we want to be successful.

But we often have trouble figuring out what are burdens and what are loads. What we should struggle with ourselves and when to ask for help. So what happens is people go to the extreme where they go to everyone they know thinking their load are burdens and they want someone else to carry their load. But in doing so they miss the blessing of being taught the truths of God. On the other hand there are people who keep their burdens to themselves and they are almost crushed to death trying to bear something they can't. We need to become better at identifying loads and burdens, and when to push on or ask for help.

Let's read verses 7-10. "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." Through these verses we see the power and sovereignty of God. God can not be mocked. He sees and knows all. And Paul is warning us that everything we do is either sowing or reaping. And we will eventually we will reap what we sow. And I think the reason Paul writes it like this is because of the situation that was going on in Galatia at the time. There were the Judaizers who were pushing circumcision for the wrong reason. They were trying to make the Galatians their disciples by following their rules and not Jesus. (v12-13) They were masking as pious and holy when they were really not. And so Paul was warning them that they could not fool God. God know everything including the reasons why we do what we do. However we still have to take Paul's warning seriously. We must always check our motives in what we do to make sure we are doing it for the right reason because even if what we are doing is good, if we are doing it for the wrong reason, it can become a cancer on our soul.

We can learn so much from reaping and sowing. The first thing we should learn is that we should not be shocked by what we reap. Some people are shocked when they reap after they have sown. What do I mean by this, I'll give you an example. If we sow apple seed, we should expect apple trees right? We should be shocked if watermelons appeared but not apples. That is common sense right? However in life some people are shocked by this phenomenon. They are shocked that they failed the exam when they really didn't study. Or they are shocked that they gained weight when they overate. Or they are shocked when they get divorced when they didn't take care of their marriage properly. We sow and reap all the time. But are you aware of what you sow? If a person sows bitterness to everyone they come in contact with, is it shocking that they reap bitterness in return? On the other hand if a person sows love they will reap love. I heard a story about a couple who went to marriage counseling because they were getting divorced. When the counselor asked, the woman was shocked that her husband wanted a divorce. "I don't know what happened, he just changed one day," she said. However when the counselor asked the husband his response was quite different. He said, "Everyday when I come home from work, the minute I come in the door, she begins to attack me. She accuses me and humiliates me in front of the kids. This has been

going on for years and now my children are starting to do the same and they are only 6 years old.” They are two completely different views. I’m not saying who is right or who is wrong, just that we have to illustrate we reap what we sow. Therefore we have to be careful and be aware of what we sow.

Behavioral science teaches us that thoughts guide behavior, behavior forms our habits, habits develop our character, and character shapes our personality. The seed we sow in our own minds has tremendous power in our lives, and in the lives of others. If we indulge in lustful thoughts and petty pleasures, then our personalities will be distorted and our lives ruined. On the other hand, when we meditate on the word of God day and night, our personalities develop in the image of Christ and we will be healthy and happy. We reap a harvest of righteousness and peace. A man reaps what he sows. This is a universal truth. Anyone who sows to please the flesh, yet expects spiritual fruit, deceives himself. He is ignorant of God. Many people sow recklessly. They plant harmful thoughts or words with no sense of responsibility. They will reap what they sow. A mother repeatedly told her son, "Go out and die," when she was burdened by him. One day, he took his life tragically. She didn't mean it. But her words bore the fruit of death.

This principle of sowing and reaping reveals God's character. God is faithful to his word. God is just; he does not show favoritism. God is living. God is watching. No one can escape God's watch. So we should not be deceived. There was a devout Christian man who was offered a bribe. But he refused to take it saying, "Someone is watching us." The briber claimed, "No one sees us." Then the Christian responded: "Three people see us. You see and I see, and especially God sees us." And he did not take the bribe. When we fear God, sensing that God is watching us, then we cannot be deceived. In Christ we have freedom, we should use our freedom to please God.

However the important thing we have to learn about sowing and reaping is that they happen in their own time. In our time we have become impatient and expect things right now. But it often doesn't work like that. A farmer knows that sowing takes time. They have to constantly take care of their crop, watering, weeding and fertilizing it. It takes a consistent and faithful attitude to produce a crop. However we are impatient when it comes to spiritual matters. We think well I prayed twice, why didn't God answer? Or I read my Bible faithfully for a week, how come I didn't see results. That's why Paul says that we shouldn't grow weary in doing good because in the proper time we will reap a good harvest. But this takes patience and faithfulness. So when we sow seeds of love to someone, we have to give it time to let it take root. Eventually it will bear fruit. We have to be faithful when we sow this seed and think long term. That's why Paul said, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

However the only way we can really do this is if we have sincerely become a new creation. Let's read verse 15. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." What Paul is getting at here is that our outward actions or appearance doesn't really matter. What really matters is what's going on inside, in our hearts. We need to become new creations. But this is something that we can't do by ourselves. This can only happen by God's grace and power. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This means that we have become new people by the grace of God. We should be thankful to him and look to help our brothers and sisters in any way we can. We should be a blessing to one another and show love instead of what we really deserve. So please don't give up, keep sowing those good seeds for in the right time, you will reap a good harvest.