

Galatians 6 – Chapter Study

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1. Stay Free

5:1-15

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus sets us free & makes possible a full, rich relationship with God.

An attempt to gain God's approval by good works & keeping the law brings us into bondage to rules & regulations that crush life.

Paul wrote this letter to Gentile followers of Jesus who'd been duped by false teachers called Judaizers into thinking they had to become Jews & keep the entire Law of Moses in order to please God.

Paul called them to hold on to their liberty in Christ & not get sucked into legalism.

I met a guy today at CBTL who used to come to Calvary.

He's going to another church now where he's helping with the ministry there.

The pastor has only been there for a year & a half and the church needs help so he's there serving Jesus.

He told me when he first came to Calvary, his pockets were filled with drugs.

He was addicted to several things, including gambling.

He said he used to make his bets in the parking lot, then during service would check on scores & races & see how his bets were doing.

He came because he knew he needed Jesus and Jesus met him here – though his life was messed up.

One day, in the middle of checking on his bets – as we were just looking at the Gospel of Grace, the reality of God's love for him, in the middle of the sin he was engaged in right then, overwhelmed him - & he set it all aside.

God delivered him of his addictions. Now he's serving God in a church where there are people who need to hear the Good News of God's love for them & what Jesus has done to set them free.

2. Walk in the Spirit

5:16-26

Then Paul moves to show how the Gospel of Grace is not an excuse for morally sloppy living.

On the contrary, grace empowers & motivates us to want to be holy.

The Law is an attempt to put on an external holiness.

Grace produces an inner rightness with God that works itself out into our speech & behavior.

But the love of God isn't something we just enjoy personally.

When God's love fills & frees us, it also overflows & impacts our relationships. So Paul writes -

3. Bear each other's burdens 6:1-5

¹ Brethren,

A family word, because that's what grace has made us – the sons & daughters of God.

So we're brothers & sisters.

And siblings have a duty to one another'; they look out for each other.

Siblings don't always get along – but when one of them is in trouble, the others come to their aid.

if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

if a man is overtaken in any trespass,

Picture someone running from something but it *outruns & catches* him.

It's the cheetah that brings down the antelope, the lion that catches the zebra.

Neither the prey *want* to be caught, they run their hardest, but the predator is swifter.

All of us here tonight either now, will, or have been overtaken in this way by some sin.

For generations, such wrongdoing is called a *besetting* sin.

It's some moral failure that keeps rearing it's ugly head.

You hate it & want to be delivered, yet it keeps nailing you.

Some besetting sins are obvious, like addictions. They're clear moral failures.

Others are more subtle; maybe a problem with uncontrolled anger, insane jealousy, or coveting.

Whatever it is, it's a battle & one that often gets the better of us.

Paul says we're to *assist* one another with these things.

What things?

if a man is overtaken in any trespass,

'Any' sin. // 'Trespass' = To fall aside.

The context of all this is *Walking in the Spirit*, ch. 5.

Anything that bumps someone out of walking in the Spirit.

We must be on guard about slotting sins into different categories & saying,

"Well, I can help people overcome gossip but drug addicts freak me out."

"I can pray for & check in on someone who's battling depression – but I don't even want to know if there are sex addicts here."

God is no respecter of persons. He desires to save, deliver & restore all sinners.

Jesus paid it ALL. All to Him we owe. Our sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow.

Jesus is the Redeemer & we are His redemptive community.

But take careful note of those who are called to engage in this ministry of restoration –

you who are spiritual

It's those who themselves are walking in the Spirit.

These are the ones who've removed the railroad tie from their own eye before they've set to work on the speck in their brother's eye.

Too often carnal Christians go off on an erring brother or sister & give them the what-for, when they themselves need correction.

If you confront an erring believer, it's crucial you first make sure what you're saying & how you're saying it is done in the Spirit, not your self-righteous flesh.

If it is in the Spirit, then it will be as Paul says here –

in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

The word 'restore' was used for setting a broken bone & mending fishing nets.

It's the application of tender care to return something to full use.

Among any group of believers, some are going to fall; it's inevitable.

The larger the group, the *more* will fall. So, what are we to do with those who mess up?

You know what many churches do don't you? They either pretend nothing's happened –

Or they condemn those who sin & make life *miserable* for them.

Phil Keaggy wrote a wonderful song about this some years ago –

I heard the news today - That another soldier tumbled,

A fragile warrior slipped and fell from grace.

The vultures swooped to tear his heart - And pin him to the ground,

And from the shadows someone took his place.

Today we talk amongst ourselves, We never bought his words.

We say we've seen the madness in his eyes.
Tomorrow he's forgotten as We've scrubbed him from our hearts,
And as he bleeds we slowly turn our eyes.

But it could've been me, - I could've been the one to lose my grip and fall.
It could've been me, - The one who's always standing tall.
For unless you hold me tightly, Lord, - And I can hold on too,
Then tomorrow in the news - It could be me.

Paul calls the Family of God to face sin head on & to take responsibility for one another.

Those walking in the Spirit are to be pro-active in assisting the struggling.

Let's take stock of what kind of practical implications this has for a local church that does what Paul says here.

It means we're going to have to be engaged in genuine fellowship; getting to know one another & sharing our spiritual journey.

This is why we URGE people to get plugged in to a small group.

It requires a balance of grace and holiness.

On one hand, there is enough grace that a person knows they can be open & honest about their failure without the fear they'll be booted out.

On the other hand, showing grace doesn't send the message that sin doesn't matter.

It does! Sin is what put Jesus on the Cross.

While we yearn for holiness, we realize we're not there yet.

Grace keeps us on the path *to* holiness.

In James 5:16 we read this, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed."

Millions of Christians have read that & said – "If only!"

James said it because confession of sin to a spirit-led brother or sister is crucial to defeating it.

Confession takes our sin out of the darkness & brings it into the light of God's truth & grace.

The devil angles to cultivate some little patch of private, secret sin in your life.

The seeds of sin grow best in the dark.

Left there they'll eventually blossom into bitter fruit that will emerge into the light.

What satan begins in secret, he plans one day to shout from the rooftops so he can shame & destroy you, making you another of his trophies.

Don't let sin sit secret.

Men, take it to a brother who's spiritually mature & tell him your struggle.

Ladies, take it to a spiritually-solid sister & ask for prayer.

If you're the one to whom someone comes with a request for help, show grace & restore that hurting brother or sister with gentleness, considering yourself, lest in your attempt to help them, you get sucked in.

The pastors of 3 churches agreed to meet for prayer on a weekly basis.

They met for a few weeks but weren't connecting like they knew they ought to.

So one week one of them said, "I think if we were to share something we struggle with, it would break down the walls between us and help our prayer."

The others agreed, so the pastor with the idea went first. "Okay, I confess to you men that I dip into the offering every now & then before it gets counted. I take a ten or a twenty. It's wrong. I know it. Pray for me."

The others solemnly nodded & said they'd pray.

The second said, "Your honesty humbles me. But it encourages me to admit that I occasionally look at girlie magazines. There's a store near my house where I can do so without anyone seeing. It's wrong & I ask you to pray for me."

The two look at the third pastor, waiting to hear his confession.

He said, "I have a problem with gossip, & I can't wait to get out of here."

One of the greatest complaints you hear about Christians is that we're a bunch of hypocrites.

While that isn't true, there are 2 or 3 who aren't, the complaint does reveal something about the world's perception of the Church that needs to be addressed.

We've set the standard so high we don't permit failure.

Christians are afraid if they let others know about their struggles, they'd be an outcast.

So they go to church with their saintly-smile on & never let anyone in.

Then they start to get resentful because no one really knows them.

It gets to be too much to keep the religious front up, so they give up.

They stop going to church because it's an empty hour or two of pretend.

They get tired of reciting lines they don't believe anymore.

Let's turn that around. Let's **DO** what Paul says here.

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Paul says the same thing as in v.1 in a different way.

Instead of standing off at a safe distance watching people morally blow up, we must move to their side and help them.

This kind of practical, tough-minded love & service of one another gets to the very heart of what Jesus said when He said the greatest command was to love God & others.

Paul now has a word for those who see themselves as too important or too holy to help others.

3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

If Jesus, God incarnate – would lower Himself to take on frail flesh, kneel at the feet of a bunch of kids, which is what most of the disciples were, and wash their feet – then who are any of us to think serving even the lowliest is beneath us?

Jesus touched lepers & played with little children – and we won't take lunch to the homeless or work in the nursery because we're too → What? // Important? Busy?

4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Because the translators bring the words straight over from the Greek, it sounds selfish / self-congratulatory. That's not at all what Paul means.

He's calling for honest self-evaluation.

In vs. 2-3 we're to pattern ourselves after the example of Christ.

So in the business of evaluating ourselves, we mustn't compare ourselves to one another, but to Jesus.

He & he alone is the standard.

When we compare ourselves to Him, then whatever changes the Spirit makes in us that approximate to the image of Christ becomes a cause for rejoicing.

5 For each one shall bear his own load.

If we put v. 5 next to v. 2 we seem to have a contradiction.

Bear one another's burden vs. bear your own load.

The solution to this dilemma is to discover Paul uses 2 different words for 'burden.'

In v. 2, it's a weight that's *too heavy* for one to carry alone.

In v. 5, the word refers to something *light*

It was used to describe the pack a soldier carried on his back.

It referred not just to weight but to the *contents* that made up that weight.

The soldier's pack contained the *necessities of life* in the field.

What Paul means in v. 5 is that there are *some duties*, *some* responsibilities that *cannot* be shouldered by others.

There are some parts of our spiritual lives we *can't delegate*.

He's speaking specifically about what he'd *just* written about.

We cannot leave it to others to carry the burdens of our brothers & sisters.

We can't isolate ourselves & leave it for others to create an environment of grace & holiness.

We can't retreat to a resort & live to ourselves.

It's part of our call in following Christ to love one another - & that means to serve one another in the hard work of restoration & burden bearing.

My load includes you - and your load includes me!

4. Look for opportunity to do good 6:6-10

6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Paul reminds the Galatians to support those who labored in the ministry of the Word.

Every believer has a calling.

A few are called to the work of full-time ministry.

If people are being blessed & growing because of the faithfulness of their pastors & teachers, they ought to support them so they can continue to minister.

Preparing sermons & studies isn't easy or quick.

It takes time & serious effort to put a study or sermon together.

I trust you come here on Wednesday night hungry, spiritually needy & ready to belly up to a table with a good meal spread.

So I don't want to throw down a cold hot-dog in a dried out bun before you.

Or some microwaved DiGornio pizza – downloading someone else's study & reheating it with a couple new stories.

Sure I'm inspired & blessed by other teachers, books, commentaries.

I read & study what they have to say.

But more than anything, I want the text to be the thing.

I want you to know the Bible – not what I or anyone else says about it.

So first the text has to work on me; rearranging & editing me.

I wrestle with it, puzzling over the hard passages. What does it mean, & how do I communicate that with you?

What's God saying here?

Paul calls the Galatians to support their teachers who are faithful in the Word.

And not just in financial support.

But in encouraging them with updates & reports on how God is using their teaching.

I can't tell you how stoked I was to hear from that guy this morning at CBTL telling me about how God used my teaching to change his life – and how that change is now setting others free.

7 Do not be deceived,

Paul would not say that unless this was something in which it's easy for us to **BE** fooled about

God is not mocked;

God is not fooled. No one is ever going to pull a fast one over on God.

Paul says all this because he's about to reveal an important truth the devil works overtime trying to hide.

for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Actions have consequences. It's the law of cause & effect.

If our actions are based on the flesh, the consequences will be bad.

If they're motivated by the Spirit, the results will be good.

God can forgive sin, and that forgiveness removes the threat of punishment.

But forgiveness doesn't negate the consequences.

When I was a little guy, I loved fire. Loved to play with matches.

We had a brand new chair that had been delivered to our house. My dad's reading & TV chair.

It was upholstered in a brand new fabric, nagahyde! Red. Expensive.

One day, I was playing with some matches & my mother told me to put them away.

I pretended like I did but actually went into the room with the brand new chair, knelt on my knees in front of it, with my elbows on the seat, and proceeded to pull a match out between the cover and the lighting strip.

It caught, burnt the tip of my finger, so I dropped it onto the seat. Instant hole.
My mother came in right then, saw what had happened and sent me to my room.
I waited for what seemed like forever before she finally came in and spanked me.
Then we sat on the edge of the bed & I apologized profusely for what I'd done.
She asked me what I learned & I said that I ought not play with matches & that I wouldn't ever again.
My mother was really good at that kind of thing & knew I was sincere in my repentance.
We were restored. There was no lingering bad stuff between us and when my dad got home, though he was upset my mother let him know that I'd been dealt with.
There was never any recriminations or comments made about my stupid little blunder.
But we had that chair for the next 2 decades in our house – and forever it had a burn mark in the seat to remind me that when I sin, there are consequences.

The upside of that is that that's true for the Spirit too.

What we do in obedience to & for the glory of God will result in consequences that enhance & promote eternal life.

⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We ought to be on the lookout for opportunities to do good.

Specially when it comes to showing active & practical love to the family of God.

IV. CONCLUSION Ch. 6:11-18

¹¹ See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

This was Paul's way to affirm this was really from him.

Earlier he'd reminded them how when he was there with them, they'd shown him such love that they would have given him their eyes if possible.

All of this along with what we read in Acts moves some scholars to think Paul had some kind of an eye-affliction. There was a strain of malaria in the region that caused severe headaches & eye problems.

His eye-sight was so poor when he wrote he had to use large letters.

¹² As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

Paul unmasks the real motivation behind the Judaizers push for the Galatians to be circumcised.

Because they couldn't keep the law themselves, they thought that by recruiting more people to it, it would make up for their failure.

This is like a golfer who can't break a hundred.

So he recruits a dozen people to play golf – they all go out and buy a set of clubs, a pack of balls, and a gold get-up. And he thinks that makes him a good golfer!

¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

One of the great capacities God has given us is the ability to exult, to rejoice, to let loose with a burst of enthusiasm.

Because He created us with the capacity, there must be some proper venue, some holy outlet for it.

There is – in praise to Him! Praise is boasting in God. It's bragging on Him.

At the cross we see most clearly what God is about in loving us.

There we see the wisdom of God, the humility & power of God.

If you can stand before the cross of Christ and not be moved to loud peals of praise, something is wrong!

And as Paul says here – the cross puts everything else in the proper perspective.

When Ulysses was sailing his ship through the sea of the mermaids, he stopped his men's ears with wax so they would not hear their song which was said to drive men mad with desire. They would then drive their ships

onto the rocks and be killed.

With their ears plugged, Ulysses then lashed himself to the main mast of the ship but left his ears open so he could hear the siren's song but could not get to the wheel.

By tying ourselves to the cross of Christ, it keeps us centered & clear from the traps that would wreck us.
And clinging to the cross God fills our ears with a sweeter song than any the world could ever sing.

I have heard so many songs - Listened to a thousand tongues
But there is one - That sounds above them all
The Father's song - The Father's love
You sung it over me and for eternity - It's written on my heart

Heaven's perfect melody - The Creator's symphony
You are singing over me - The Father's song
Heaven's perfect mystery - The king of love has sent for me
And now you're singing over me - The Father's song

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision [being a Jew or a Gentile] avails anything, but a new creation.

Being a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ makes us new creatures where old labels like Jew & Gentile don't matter any more.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

The Judaizers were all about rules, rituals, regulations.

But grace does away with all that.

It establishes a new way that brings peace & mercy.

And it makes a new community – a new chosen people – the Church.

17 From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Paul's done a more than adequate job of unmasking the error & schemes of the false teachers.

He calls the Galatians to not let any more such foolishness find a place among them.

They must remember who & what he was to them – an apostle of the Gospel of Grace.

That calling had cost him dearly in terms of persecution.

But he was more than glad to bear it because he saw his scars as trophies of Christ.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Feed My Sheep

Feed My Sheep