

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 6:1-10, *FREEDOM IN CHRIST IS A LIFE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS*

- A. Freedom to serve other Christians (1-5)
1. Those Christians who have sinned (1)
 - a. Mature Christians are to be gentle in seeking to restore a sinning Christian (1a), *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.*
 - 1) *Brothers*
 - a) As noted earlier, *Brothers*, refers to male and female Galatian believers.
 - b) The term reminds us that we are members of the same spiritual family which involves mutual obligations.
 - 2) *caught in any transgression*
 - a) *Caught*
 - 1] It means *to detect, overtake, surprise someone.*
 - 2] In this context, *the meaning is not that of detecting a person in the act, but of his being caught by the trespass, through his being off his guard.*
 - b) *Transgression*
 - 1] It means as a rule, *sins against God.*
 - 2] Here, it carries the meaning of *a false step, a blunder, a lapse from uprightness.*
 - 3] It is not a premeditated choice or habit of disobedience.
 - 4] Tom Constable, *The situation Paul envisioned here is that of sin overtaking a Christian as a faster runner overtakes a slower runner. It is not that God has caught him in the act of sinning as much as that sin has gotten the better of him in a particular instance. He has been surprised by sin rather than detected in it.*
 - 3) *you who are spiritual*
 - a) A spiritual Christian is one whose life bears the fruit of the Spirit.
 - b) Hebrews 5:13-14, *for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*
 - 4) *restore him in a spirit of gentleness*
 - a) *restore*
 - 1] It means *to put in order, restore to its former condition.*
 - 2] It was used to describe the setting of broken bones and the mending of nets.
 - 3] 2 Corinthians 13:11, *Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*
 - 4] Hebrews 3:13, *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
 - b) *spirit of gentleness*
 - 1] It means *gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one's dealings with others, including the concept of humility.*
 - 2] 1 Corinthians 4:21, *What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?*
 - 3] 2 Corinthians 2:7, *so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*
 - 5) John Stott, . . . *if we obeyed this apostolic instruction as we should, much unkind gossip would be avoided, more serious backsliding prevented, the good of the church advanced, and the name of Christ glorified.*

b. Such ministry demands humility as every Christian is vulnerable to temptation (1b), **Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**

1) *keep watch on yourself*

a) *Keep watch means to look at, to consider.*

b) A spiritual Christian must not become prideful but mindful of personal weakness.

1] Richard Longenecker, *What Paul, therefore, warns his converts about is their own vulnerability to such moral failings as they seek to correct in others, so that they do not become self-righteous and look down on those they are attempting to restore.*

2] William Barclay, *We are to compare our achievement not with the work of our neighbours but with what our best would have been. When we do that, there can never be any cause for conceit.*

2) *lest you too be tempted*

a) Another reason to keep watch on oneself is because of personal temptation.

1] 1 Corinthians 10:12, *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

2] Thomas Constable, *We can avoid a spirit of self-righteousness in dealing with those who stumble by remembering our own personal vulnerability to temptation.*

b) The *too* notes the one who needs to be restored. It confirms the point that the sin was not that of daily choice but one of temptation.

2. Those Christians who are burdened (2), **Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

a. *Bear one another's burdens*

1) *To bear means to carry, here, the emphasis is on spiritual truths, to bear one another's faults through prayer and encouragement.*

a) Romans 15:1, *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

b) 1 Thessalonians 5:14, *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*

2) *Burdens*

a) It means *hardship which is regarded as particularly burdensome and exhausting, oppressive.*

b) It means *temptations* in this verse.

c) Thomas Constable, *In view of the context probably the burden Paul had in mind was an excessive burden of particular temptation and struggle with the flesh. . . Verse 1 deals with restoration and this section (vv. 2–5) with prevention. We can bear by praying and perhaps counseling together.*

d) John Stott, *Human friendship, in which we bear one another's burdens, is part of the purpose of God for his people. So we should not keep our burdens to ourselves, but rather seek a Christian friend who will help to bear them with us.*

b. *and so fulfill the law of Christ*

1) *And so* ties the first part of verse 2 to the last part.

2) By lovingly serving a fellow believer who is struggling with sin, the law of Christ is fulfilled.

3) The legalists were declaring that a Christian must fulfill the law of Moses but Paul declares Christians are able to fulfill the law of Christ by serving others.

a) Galatians 5:14, *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

b) John 13:34, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

c) 1 John 4:21, *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

d) The law of Moses was kept externally but the law of Christ is internal, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Philippians 2:13, *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

4) Max Anders, *When a fellow believer succumbs to temptation, it is not our place to judge and condemn him (Matt. 7:1–6). Rather, we are to make sure he knows we love him and want to help him overcome his weakness and grow spiritually.*

3. Examine oneself to successfully serve others (3-5)
 - a. Pride gets in the way of serving others (3), *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
 - 1) *For* describes in verse 3 spiritual pride which is the opposite of gentleness and humility in verse 2.
 - 2) A prideful, conceited person disregards helping one who is struggling because he is judging the person based on a high view of himself, Galatians 5:26, *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*
 - 3) Our spiritual lives are not the result of our abilities but despite our inabilities.
 - a) Romans 12:3, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
 - b) *Nothing* points to the fact that our spiritual favor with God comes wholly from Christ.
 - c) Grant Osborne, *We must realize that all the good we do takes place through the Spirit in us, not as a result of our personal gifts, which are specific tools at the Spirit's disposal for his use.*
 - d) Ronald Fung, *Paul implies that those who imagine themselves to be somebody are unable to bear the burdens of others: fancying themselves to be without sin or weakness they are unable to sympathize with others or to concern themselves with their burdens; conversely, they are more likely to treat others with gentleness and humility if they feel their own weakness.*
 - b. Examine oneself objectively and not by comparing oneself to others (4), *But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.*
 - 1) *But*
 - a) Paul gives the remedy for conceit which he addressed in verse 3.
 - b) A Christian is to objectively examine himself and not compare himself to others.
 - 2) *test his own work*
 - a) *Test* means to prove with a view to approving, esteeming valuable.
 - b) A Christian's spiritual maturity is seen in examining his own life.
 - 1] 1 Corinthians 3:13, *each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.*
 - 2] Donald Campbell, . . . *to test his own actions. This means that rather than comparing himself with others he should step back and take an objective look at himself and his accomplishments.*
 - 3] Ronald Fung, . . . *he is to engage in self-assessment, not in critical evaluation of another.*
 - 3) *then his reason to boast will be in himself*
 - a) *Then* looks back to the first part of verse 1, and means *when he has tested his own actions, he may boast in himself.*
 - b) *Boast* refers to legitimate pride, to glory in, rejoice in, personal exultation, not sinful pride.
 - 1] The principle here is that a Christians is to examine himself and to glory in what God is accomplishing in him. It is in contrast to what Paul will say in the last part of this verse.
 - 2] Donald Campbell, . . . *rather than comparing himself with others he should step back and take an objective look at himself and his accomplishments. Then he can take pride in himself over what God has done in and through his life.*
 - 4) *and not in his neighbor*
 - a) Our comparison must always be to Jesus Christ and not to a neighbor who may be struggling.
 - b) Romans 12:3, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
 - c) Ronald Fung, *It is on his own conduct and performance that each person should concentrate, not the conduct and performance of others; he is to engage in self-assessment, not in critical evaluation of another.*
 - d) A Christian is to glory in God based on what God is doing in his life not in comparing himself to others who are struggling.

c. Every person has a load to bear prepared by God (5), ***For each will have to bear his own load.***

1) *load*

a) It means *burden, cargo*.

b) This is a different word from that which was used in verse 2, *burdens which are heavy*.

c) It is bearing something without reference to weight. Note

d) It is an *assigned task or service* for which all Christians will be accountable, Romans 14:12, *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

2) A Christian bears personal responsibility before God.

a) Verse 2 looks to current crushing loads which require assistance.

b) Here, every Christian is to carry his own weight which looks to future accountability.

1] Christians are responsible for what Christ commands.

a] 1 John 5:3, *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

b] Donald Campbell, *There are certain Christian responsibilities or burdens each believer must bear which cannot be shared with others. Jesus assured His disciples that such burdens were light, note Matthew 11:30, For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

2] John Stott, *So we are to bear one another's 'burdens' which are too heavy for a man to bear alone, but there is one burden which we cannot share—indeed do not need to because it is a pack light enough for every man to carry himself—and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgment. On that day you cannot carry my pack and I cannot carry yours. 'Each man will have to bear his own load.'*

B. Freedom to serve with finances (6-9)

1. Those who are spiritual leaders (6), ***Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.***

a. Jews were taxed for the support of priest and Gentiles paid fees for services.

b. Paul instructs Galatian believers to provide *all good things* to those who provide spiritual instruction.

1) *The word*

a) It is used in the New Testament to describe the teachings of the Christian faith now found in the Bible.

b) Acts 18:5, *When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.*

c) Colossians 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

2) *All good things* means physical needs.

3) One who devotes time to the spiritual needs of others should receive his physical needs from those he teaches.

a) 1 Corinthians 9:14, *In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.*

b) 1 Timothy 5:18, *For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."*

c) Martin Luther, . . . *it is impossible for one man both to labor day and night to get a living, and at the same time to give himself to the study of sacred learning as the preaching office requires.*

d) Charles H. Spurgeon, *If he gives you spiritual things, do not allow him to lack for temporal things.*

4) 1 Corinthians 9 explains why Paul gave up his right to receive financial support.

2. On the principle of giving (7-9)

a. A person reaps what he sows (7-8), ***Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For 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.***

1) Paul strengthens his previous statement concerning giving with a stern warning.

a) *Mock*

1] It means *to turn up the nose, to treat with contempt.*

2] Luke 16:14, *The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.*

- b) A person is deceived if he thinks he can mock God's rules.
 - 1] God can't be fooled because He is God.
 - 2] Ronald Fung, *A person cannot claim to accept the gospel and the obligations that come with it and at the same time live in obedience to the flesh instead of the Spirit.*
- 2) Paul notes a rule of God concerning serving self instead of serving others.
 - a) Each person decides what his harvest will be based on what he sows.
 - 1] Sowing to the flesh is living legalistically.
 - 2] Sowing to the Spirit is living by faith in Christ.
 - 3] The rule declares the type of crop is based on how one lives.
 - b) A person seeking to please his sinful nature by spending money on the flesh, will reap a corrupted harvest.
 - 1] *Corruption means ruin.*
 - 2] Romans 6:21, *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*
 - 3] Romans 8:6, *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
 - 4] Ronald Fung, . . . *failure on the part of those who receive instruction in the faith to carry out their financial responsibility toward the teacher is tantamount to failing to honor God, since making provision for the subsistence of the teacher of the gospel is part of the obligations entailed in the Christian way of life.*
 - 5] Max Anders, *You reap spiritually, relationally, mentally, and physically in direct relation to what you plant. It is foolish to think that you can live irresponsibly and not suffer damaging consequences.*
- 3) A person who serves others will experience the joy of eternal life.
 - a) Eternal life is a gift of God received by faith which is relationship, John 10:28, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
 - b) In this verse, *eternal life* refers to the quality of a believer's life based on fellowship with God, John 10:10, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
 - c) Donald Campbell, *If a person sows to please his sinful nature, that is, if he spends his money to indulge the flesh, he will reap a harvest that will fade into oblivion. On the other hand if he uses his funds to support the Lord's work, or sows to please the Spirit, and promotes his own spiritual growth, he will reap a harvest that will last forever.*
 - d) This rule speaks to the responsibility to serve physically those who serve spiritually. It may be expanded to depict one's lifestyle which either demonstrates commitment to the flesh or commitment to Christ.
- 4) Warning from Warren Wiersbe, *How many times we have seen the sacrificing godly pastor persecuted and driven out, while the arrogant promoter is honored and gets everything he wants. The carnal believer thrives under the "spiritual dictatorship" of a legalistic promoter-pastor, because it makes him feel secure, successful, and spiritual. The carnal believer will sacrifice what he has to make the work more successful, only to discover that he is sowing to the flesh and not to the Spirit.*
- b. Don't grow weary in serving others because a spiritual harvest is certain (9), ***And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.***
 - 1) The condition for reaping is to not grow weary to the point of giving up.
 - a) *Weary* means *tired, discouraged, to lose heart, to give up.*
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:13, *As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.*
 - c) Tom Constable, *Giving up mentally leads to growing faint spiritually.*
 - d) John Stott, *Active Christian service is tiring, exacting work. We are tempted to become discouraged, to slack off, even to give up.*
 - e) Hebrews 12:3, *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*
 - 2) *Doing good*
 - a) It can mean *sowing to the Spirit* as seen in verse 8.
 - b) Here, Paul is probably referring to all that is morally good.
 - c) It encompasses personal growth as one develops the fruit of the Spirit and ministry to others through service.

- 3) The harvest is sure.
 - a) It is not based on circumstances but on God's promise.
 - b) *Due season* refers to the time God has ordained with Christ's return as a primary hope.
 - c) Donald Campbell, *The reaping will come at God's proper time, which may be only in part in this life and in full in the life to come at the judgment seat of Christ.*

- 4) What is the harvest? Paul does not say but consider the thoughts of John Stott.
 - a) *It may bring comfort, relief or assistance to people in need.*
 - b) *It may lead a sinner to repentance and so to salvation;*
 - c) *It may help to arrest the moral deterioration of society (this is the function of 'the salt of the earth') and even to make it a sweeter and more wholesome place to live in.*

 - d) *It may increase men's respect for what is beautiful, good and true, especially in days when standards are slipping fast.*
 - e) *And it will bring good to the doer as well—not indeed salvation (for this is a free gift of God), but some reward in heaven for faithful service, which will probably take the form of yet more responsible service.*

C. Freedom to serve everyone (10), ***So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.***

1. Take every opportunity to serve everyone.
 - a. *so then*
 - 1) It introduces the logical conclusion to the preceding statement in verse 9.
 - 2) Don't give up in doing good.

 - b. *Opportunity*
 - 1) It means *right, proper, favorable time.*
 - 2) It would be praying for the privilege to serve others.
 - 3) Ephesians 5:16, *making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*
 - 4) Ronald Fung, . . . *the believer has "the ethical responsibility to make sensible use of the time" at his disposal.*

 - c. *Do good to everyone*
 - 1) It may mean material or spiritual deeds.
 - 2) Richard Longenecker, *Since before God there is no partiality, there cannot be partiality in the Christian's attitude towards his fellow man.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *There are those in this world who do evil (Ps. 34:16); in fact, there are those who return evil for good (Ps. 35:12). Most of the people in the world return good for good and evil for evil (see Luke 6:32–35; 1 Thes. 5:15). But the Christian is supposed to return good for evil (Rom. 12:18–21) and to do this in a spirit of Christian love.*
 - 4) The Christian's good works are spiritual sacrifices to God, Hebrews 13:16, *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

2. Especially, look for ways to serve other Christians.
 - a. *Household of faith* is a beautiful description of the church. 1 Timothy 3:15, *if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*
 - b. Thomas Constable, *As in a home, family needs come first, then those of the neighbors.*
 - c. This is in line with Jesus' command to love one another, John 13:34-35, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*
 - d. Ronald Fung, *Christians in financial difficulties could hardly expect assistance from their pagan friends, because they had departed from the religious traditions of their neighbors, but their pagan friends would, however, expect Christians to help one another.*
 - e. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Extend your love, your charity, to all mankind, but let the center of that circle be in the home where God has placed you—in the home of His people. They have a first claim upon us. They are nearest of kin. They are our brothers in Christ.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Examine your spiritual condition under the light of God's word.
- B. Serve those physically who serve you spiritually.
- C. Keep sowing because harvest time will come.
- D. Serve everyone but especially the household of faith.
- E. Christians are free to serve everyone.