

# Galatians 6

---

*A Translation with Interpretation by James Garriss*

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Paul Described Christian Living</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Galatians 6:1-6</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Galatians 6:7-10</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Galatians 6:11-18</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	<b>25</b>

# Paul Described Christian Living

## Galatians 6:1-6

### Limits of the Text

This section describes the how a spiritual believer carefully restores another believer discovered in sin.

### Translation

1 Brothers, if a man is discovered in any sin, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, watching out for yourself so that you yourself are not also tempted. 2 Bear **the burdens of one another**, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if someone, being **nothing**, is thinking *himself* to be something, he is deceiving himself. 4 But let every one test **his own work**, and then he will have the right to boast only in himself and not in the other. 5 For every one will bear his own burden. 6 And let the one being taught the word share in all good things with the one teaching.

### Interpretation

1 Ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν καὶ προλημφθῆ ἄνθρωπος ἐν τινι παραπτώματι, ὑμεῖς οἱ πνευματικοὶ καταρτίζετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος, σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς.

1 Brothers, if a man is discovered in any sin, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, watching out for yourself so that you yourself are not also tempted.

Paul began this new section with a third class conditional clause, depicting what was likely to happen: A member of the church would be discovered in sin. Discovered (προλημφθῆ) is the main verb in the conditional clause, and it means to detect or catch.<sup>1</sup> "In sin" (ἐν...παραπτώματι) refers to the state or condition<sup>2</sup> of walking the wrong way; the imagery here is taking a wrong step and losing one's footing<sup>3</sup> as opposed to walking on a straight path. It has the idea of wrong ethics and practice, not wrong doctrine and theology. Sooner or later the church was going to catch one of their own living a lifestyle characterized by the deeds of the flesh (5:19-21). What should they do?

Paul commanded the church to restore the sinning brother. To restore (καταρτίζετε) can the idea of making sufficient, furnishing completely, or mending. It means to

---

<sup>1</sup> Louw, 1:329.

<sup>2</sup> It is dative of sphere.

<sup>3</sup> Arndt, 770.

restore the sinning brother to his right, ethical behavior.<sup>4</sup> The pattern for this restoration is found in Mt 18:15-18. The goal in both passages is not excommunication or censorship, though that may unfortunately be the end result; the goal is restoration. While the Mt 18 text focuses on what to do, this text focuses on how to do it, specifically the attitudes and actions of those who will try to restore.<sup>5</sup>

Paul's command to restore has two qualifiers. First, restoration should be done by those who are spiritual. The word spiritual (πνευματικοὶ) is derived from *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), the word for Spirit, and means "one who has received God's Spirit and presumably lives in accordance with this relationship."<sup>6</sup> Does this refer to an elite bunch in the church (those who are spiritual), or does it refer to all believers (those who have God's Spirit and walk in him)? Given the context of the fruit of the Spirit, it would seem to refer to all believers who are living by the Spirit, walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. There doesn't seem to be any hint that restoring is reserved for super-Christians or leaders/pastors in the church.

Second, restoration should be done in a spirit of gentleness (with a gentle spirit). Gentleness (πραΰτητα) is one of the fruits of the Spirit (5:23) and has the idea of power and strength under God's control; it allows a person to deal with other people with humility and consideration. Apparently there was a tendency to respond wrongly to those who had sinned. Maybe other believers had responded in pride ("I would never commit that sin") or in harshness ("you're a lousy Christian since you commit that sin"). Paul wanted them to respond in kindness and mildness. The goal is restoration, not condemnation.

Paul clarified his command with a warning. As you restore, watch out so that you are not tempted! "Watching out for" (σκοπῶν) is a participle<sup>7</sup> that means "to be ready to learn about future dangers or needs, with the implication of preparedness to respond appropriately."<sup>8</sup> Paul warned that there is a danger when restoring a brother from sin to righteousness: The restorer might be tempted with the same sin as the fallen. The appropriate way to restore is in such a manner that the restorer has no chance of even being tempted to commit the same sin. It doesn't say to resist the temptation; it says to not even be tempted. This suggests that restoring a brother in sin must be done carefully and thoughtfully.

2 Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

**2 Bear the burdens of one another, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.**

---

<sup>4</sup> This is synonymous with the idea of correction in 2 Ti 3:16.

<sup>5</sup> Longenecker, 274

<sup>6</sup> Louw, 1:142.

<sup>7</sup> An adverbial participle of manner that answers the question "how?"

<sup>8</sup> Louw, 1:332.

In this verse Paul gave a second command: Bear the burdens of one another. Bear (βαστάζετε) means to carry a burden, where a burden refers to a “hardship [that] is regarded as particularly burdensome and exhausting.”<sup>9</sup> The emphasis of the word is on its heaviness or oppressiveness.<sup>10</sup> The particular hardship must be determined by the context, and in this context it refers specifically to the believer who has already sinned and been restored but will continue to be tempted. It also referred generally to any believer who was struggling with a temptation. The bearing of burdens was to happen in the church, a community that helps each other with sin.

Paul then connected bearing burdens to fulfilling the Law of Christ. When they bear, they fulfill. To fulfill (ἀναπληρώσετε) meant they carried out an obligation,<sup>11</sup> and the source of the obligation was the law of Christ, which refers to love. In 5:13-14 Paul said, “Do not convert your freedom into a convenient set of circumstances for the flesh, but serve one another through love. For the whole law has been summarized in one statement: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Similarly, Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another when he said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” Jn 13:34. The law of Christ is the command to love. His disciples were obligated to love their fellow-disciples, and they did so when they bore each other’s’ burdens.

3 εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν, φροναπατᾶ ἑαυτόν.

3 For if someone, being **nothing**, is thinking *himself* to be something, he is deceiving himself.

This verse begins with a first class conditional clause. Let’s assume that someone (who is nothing) is thinking that he is something; if that’s true, then he deceives himself. This may have been a general maxim<sup>12</sup> in the Greco-Roman world,<sup>13</sup> but whether it was or not, it certainly has a sense of conceit about it. Someone who thinks (δοκεῖ) like this regards his own importance as true; it has the feel of presumptuousness, bordering on arrogance. The mindset of a conceited person is to think more highly of himself than he should. Such a person is deceiving (φροναπατᾶ) himself, having “misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth.”<sup>14</sup>

This verse is connected to the previous verse by “for,” so it gives the reason the Galatians were to bear burdens. If the Galatian believers would bear the burdens of one another, it would keep them from becoming conceited like this. Bearing burdens builds humility and caution. When we are denying ourselves and praying for and

---

<sup>9</sup> Louw, 1:242.

<sup>10</sup> Zodhiates, 323.

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, 70.

<sup>12</sup> A maxim is “a short, pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct” (<http://www.aphoropedia.com/>).

<sup>13</sup> Longenecker, 276.

<sup>14</sup> Louw, 1:366.

encouraging others, we will realize that we too could (and do) sin, and we'll keep a proper perspective of ourselves. So bearing burdens fulfills the law of Christ (6:2), but it also gives us a proper perspective of ourselves.

4 τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος, καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἔξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον·

**4 But let every one test his own work, and then he will have the right to boast only in himself and not in the other.**

In this verse Paul gave his third command to the Galatians: Test your own works. To test (δοκιμαζέτω) means “to make a critical examination of something to determine genuineness.”<sup>15</sup> The object of this testing was their own works, which refers back to restoring (6:1) and bearing (6:2) in particular, but also to any ministry in the church or service for Christ. While working, test your work to see if it's genuine.

The verse does not describe how they were to test their works, but the context is helpful. Genuineness must be tested against an absolute standard, which is the law of Christ<sup>16</sup> (verse 2) and the control of the Spirit (chapter 5). Was the work done in love? Was it led by the Spirit? Does it demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit? The focus of testing is not so much the result of their works, because results belong the Lord, but rather the way in which the Galatians accomplished their works. The real question is this: Were they faithful and obedient?<sup>17</sup> If so, then the work was genuine. Paul wanted to remind the Galatians, particularly those who might be conceited, that it was more than possible for their works for the Lord to not be genuine and perhaps even to be sin.

If their works proved to be genuine, then the Galatians would have the right to boast (καύχημα). Boasting has the idea of being proud in something, glorying in something, exulting in something, and even trusting in something. It can be good or bad,<sup>18</sup> depending upon what is being boasted in. To boast in God is to admit one's dependence upon God, which is a good thing (Php 3:3); to boast in oneself is to assert one's dependence upon oneself, which is not a good thing (Pr 27:1). In this verse, the Galatians' right to boast would be good.

How does this verse fit into the context of restoring and bearing burdens? While restoring and bearing, we test our works. We carefully examine ourselves to see if we are restoring and bearing for the right reasons and in the right way. If genuine, then boasting is allowed. It's helpful to interpret this verse in light of related verses, such as 2 Co 10:12-18 and Ro 15:17-19; both remind us that any success in ministry is ultimately due to Christ working in us and through us. All boasting is thus really boasting in what

---

<sup>15</sup> Arndt, 255.

<sup>16</sup> George, 417.

<sup>17</sup> MacArthur, 181.

<sup>18</sup> See Gal 6:13 for an example of bad boasting and 6:14 for one of good.

he has done. When people are restored from their sins, we should brag on Jesus, letting people know what he has done!

While the Galatians could boast in their own genuine works, Paul said they could not boast in the other. This is a prohibition against comparing their works to the works of others. They were to boast in Christ when he was working in their lives, but they were not to boast that they were superior to those around them. They were not to boast that their works were more effective or more genuine than others. Sure, God chooses to use some more than others, but so long as we are being faithful and obedient, we boast only in what God is doing.

Ἐκάστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.

**5 For every one will bear his own burden.**

At first glance it appears that this verse contradicts 6:2, which says we are to bear the burdens of one another. The verb, “will bear” (βαστάσει), is even the same verb used in 6:2 and has the same idea of carrying a burden. But there is no contradiction, only a continuation of the previous verses; those who restore not only bear the burdens of another, they will bear their own burdens as well. The word burden here (φορτίον) is not the same word for burden used in 6:2. Some writers lay great emphasis on the fact that these are not the same word and thus arrive at the conclusion that they must have completely different meanings. Though the words are different, they are nearly synonymous;<sup>19</sup> the difference seems to be that the word used back in 6:2 (βάση) emphasizes the oppressiveness of the burden. If these words have different meanings, that must be derived from the context, but the context here brings them together. Those who are restoring and bearing the burdens of another should test their own works, because they will have their own temptations to sin. That seems like an obvious statement, and in fact Longenecker believes Paul to be quoting a maxim (which would account for the different use of the word for burden).<sup>20</sup> Restoration is for the spiritual (6:1), those who can bear their own burdens—handle their own temptations—while also bearing the burdens of another. This is not easy.

The verb “bear” in this verse is in the future tense: Every one *will bear* his own burden. This tense has begs the question, “How far in the future is the bearing of this burden? Is it future still living on the earth? Or is it future some time in heaven?” There are multiple interpretations of the verse based upon this tense:

1. Longenecker believes that this is a statement about living life now.<sup>21</sup> The idea is this: While we are restoring and helping others with their temptations to sin, we should not be arrogant but should test our own works to make sure they are

---

<sup>19</sup> Kittel, 1:596; Longenecker, 278; Lightfoot, 217; Zodhiates, G941.

<sup>20</sup> Longenecker, 277.

<sup>21</sup> Longenecker, 277-278.

genuine. Why? We test because we have and will continue to have our own temptations, which could cause us to sin, just like the brother from verse 1 that we helped. The strength of this interpretation is that it is closely tied to the immediate context, and thus I believe it is best interpretation.

2. Bruce and George believe that this is a statement about future judgment at the bema seat.<sup>22</sup> The basis for testing is God's standard. Although believers test themselves, final judgment on the quality of our works belongs to God alone (1 Co 3:10-15, 4:5; Ro 14:10-12). While we can help each other's temptations here on earth, we will not be able to compare our works against others' works at the bema seat and say, "I'm ok because I'm better than he is!" We will bear our own burdens. George further argues that this verse must be interpreted in light of 1 Co 11:27-32. If we would examine ourselves at the Lord's Supper, the Lord would not judge us at it. Similarly, if we test our own works now, we will not be judged at the bema seat, where we will bear our own burden. The strength of this interpretation is that it is accurately related to the broader Pauline context on examination and judgment.
3. From what I can tell of their brief comments on this verse, MacArthur and Lightfoot believe that burden here is synonymous with Jesus' words in Mt 11:30, "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." So burden would refer to the ministries and obligations that Jesus gives to each believer, which they alone can do. The difficulty with this interpretation is that it is not particularly faithful to the text and does not consistently interpret the words "burden" and "works."

6 Κοινωνεῖτω δὲ ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς.

**6 And let the one being taught the word share in all good things with the one teaching.**

This is one of the more challenging verses in the book. One commentator wrote, "the exhortation of v 6 is the most puzzling of all Paul's directives in 6:1-10 – or for that matter elsewhere in his Galatian letter."<sup>23</sup> While the basic idea of the verse is simple, its meaning is determined by its context, and it doesn't seem to fit into the context of restoring and bearing burdens. As Bruce put it, "The relevance of this injunction in the present context is not immediately obvious."<sup>24</sup>

Most commentators make no attempt to connect this verse to the previous or following verses. It's as if Paul had a sudden, random thought and wrote it down in the middle of his letter. When ripped free of the context, this verse seems to command Galatian churches to support those who were teaching them. If so, then the teachers probably refer to pastors and the learners to church members. The pastor's teaching takes much

---

<sup>22</sup> Bruce, 263; George, 418.

<sup>23</sup> Longenecker, 278.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce, 263.



time and effort and thus necessitated financial support to continue. This interpretation would be consistent with Jesus' teaching (Mt 10:10) and Paul's later writings (1 Co 9:14; 1 Ti 5:18).

The problem, of course, is that such an interpretation does not fit into the context, and thus is unlikely. So how do we understand this verse in view of the context? Part of restoration is teaching the word, thus the one teaching is the spiritual brother (6:1) who is doing the restoring. The one being taught the word is the brother discovered in sin (6:1) who is being restored. Sharing is thus the fourth command in the series.<sup>25</sup> The verb share (Κοινωνεῖτω) is related to the noun *koinonia* (κοινωνία), which has the idea of participating and partnering together. So to share doesn't so much mean one person is giving to another as it does one person is sharing together with another; there is a sense of mutual activity. This idea can be seen in 1 Ti 5:22, for example, where Paul uses this same verb when he commands Timothy, "Don't share in the sins of others." What good things are they sharing? The context is not about sharing money, food, or other possessions, but the teaching of the word, so "all good things" is most likely all the good things of the word. This is a command about spiritual good things, not financial good things. "The spiritual Christian who has picked up and held up his fallen brother also builds him up in the word, in whose good things they fellowship together."<sup>26</sup> This is the result of a successful restoration.

---

<sup>25</sup> Restore (6:1), bear (6:2), and test (6:4) are the others.

<sup>26</sup> MacArthur, 182.

## Structural Diagram

if a man is discovered in any sin  
you who are spiritual restore such a one

Bear **the burdens of one another**

and

you will fulfill the law of Christ

For

if someone, being **nothing**, is thinking to be something  
he is deceiving himself

But

let every one test **his own work**

and then

he will have the right to boast only in himself

|

and not

|

in the other

For

every one will bear his own burden

And

let the one being taught the word share

in all good things

with the one teaching

## Tracing the Argument

**External** – In the second half of chapter 5 Paul described a Spirit-controlled lifestyle that demonstrated love and gentleness (among other virtues). In chapter 6, he gave a concrete situation of where the church could put their love and gentleness to work: Restoring a sinning brother.

**Internal** – Paul gave 4 commands that drive the text: Restore, bear, test, and share. While restoring, the spiritual believer bears burdens and tests his own work. The result is sharing together.

## Textual Outline

1. Paul commanded the Galatians to restore those who are living in sin while watching out for themselves (6:1).
2. Paul commanded them to bear the sinners' burdens in order to fulfill the law of Christ (6:2-3).
3. Paul commanded them to test their own works while restoring knowing they would have to bear their own burdens (6:4-5).
4. Paul commanded them to share the good things of the word together (6:6).

## Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Galatians 6:1-6 in order to teach the Galatian churches how to carefully restore those who are living in sin.

## Teaching Outline

God does not want his people living in sin, so he wants to use us to carefully restore those who are sinning to doing what is right. From our text in Galatians, we are going

to see 4 aspects of careful restoration:

1. Restore the one who sins while watching out for yourself (6:1)
2. Restore the one who sins while bearing their burdens (6:2-3).
3. Restore the one who sins while testing your own work (6:4-5).
4. Restore the one who sins while sharing all good things (6:6).

## Galatians 6:7-10

### Limits of the Text

This section relates back to the previous section on restoration, yet it focuses upon the principle of sowing and reaping.

### Translation

7 Do not be deceived: God is not to be treated with contempt. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap; 8 because he who sows to his flesh will reap destruction **from the flesh**, but he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life **from the Spirit**. 9 But let us not be discouraged **while doing good deeds**, for we will reap **in due season** if we do not give up. 10 Now therefore while we are in *this* season, let us do good to everyone, and especially to the homes of faith.

### Interpretation

In this section, Paul answered a question: Why is it so important to restore a sinning brother, bear his burdens, and share the good things of the word (6:1-6)? It is important because of the reality of sowing and reaping; a believer cannot sin without consequences. God is holy, and he will not let sin reign unchecked in the life of a believer.

7 Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται. ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπείρη ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει·

7 Do not be deceived: God is not to be treated with contempt. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap;

Paul began this section with an interjection: Do not be deceived. This interjection appears before several warnings in the New Testament:

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Co 15:33)

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Co 6:9b-10)

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (Jas 1:16-17)

This interjection is a literary device, a common way to introduce a warning.<sup>27</sup> So what was Paul warning them about? He warned his readers that God is not to be treated with contempt (μυκτηρίζεται). This verb means to "turn up one's nose in scorn and

---

<sup>27</sup> Longenecker, 279.

hence to mock<sup>28</sup> or to ridicule in a sneering and contemptuous way.<sup>29</sup> How might some in the Galatian churches have been treating God with contempt? If we look ahead to verse 8, we see that some were sowing to their flesh. If the Galatian believers assumed that they could live their lives to satisfy their flesh and yet still receive eternal life, then they would have been treating God with contempt.

God is not to be treated with contempt, because whatever a man sows, that will he also reap.<sup>30</sup> Longenecker believes this to a maxim; it is quoted in a variety of literature types in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>31</sup> The point of this maxim is simple and clear: There are well-known, immutable rules that God has established in his universe. They apply to things like agriculture. If I plant lettuce seeds in the ground, I will grow lettuce. If I plant green peppers, then I will get green peppers. And these rules also apply to life. If I live my life to satisfy my flesh, I will reap damnation.

These rules cannot be broken or bypassed. God cannot be fooled or tricked into ignoring this rule. He will not let any believer live a life of sin and get by with it. "Men may fool themselves, but they cannot fool God."<sup>32</sup> To think I can fool God is to treat him with contempt.

8 ὅτι ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς θερίσει φθοράν, ὁ δὲ σπείρων εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος θερίσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

**8 because he who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.**

Here Paul combined his teaching on the flesh (5:13-21) and the Spirit (5:16-18, 22-25) with the principle of sowing and reaping to give his main point. Those who live a life of self-satisfaction will be eternally damned (5:21b); those who live a life of obedience to the Holy Spirit will be eternally rewarded.

The Bible has several passages with similar ideas:

Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness. (Ho 10:12 NASB95)

"According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it." (Job 4:8 NASB95)

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good. (Ro 2:9-10a NASB95)

What does Paul's main point have to do with restoring brothers discovered in sin (6:1)?

---

<sup>28</sup> Zodhiates, G3456.

<sup>29</sup> Louw, 1:434.

<sup>30</sup> The Jewish people had a similar saying, "They sow the wind, and so they will reap the whirlwind!" (Hos 8:7, NET).

<sup>31</sup> Longenecker, 280.

<sup>32</sup> Stott, 166.

If a church member can sin and continue in sin, then there is the risk of destruction (eternal damnation). Continuous sin demonstrates that a person does not possess the Holy Spirit and does not have Jesus as Lord. But when a person repents of his sin and is restored, he gives evidence that he is walking by the Spirit and will receive eternal life. No church should want destruction for its members, so they are diligent to restore.

9 τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν, καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι.

**9 But let us not be discouraged while doing good deeds, for we will reap in due season if we do not give up.**

Paul exhorted the Galatians to not be discouraged. To be discouraged (ἐγκακῶμεν) means to “to lose one’s motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity.”<sup>33</sup> It’s an emotional word blending determination and motivation. Do not lose your enthusiasm. Do not lose heart. Do not give up.<sup>34</sup>

When might the Galatians have become discouraged? We might expect Paul to mention persecution here, but he said, “While doing good deeds.” Specifically Paul was referring back to the work of restoring sinning brothers (6:1-6). Restoration can be discouraging and wearisome, especially when change happens slowly (or not at all!). This exhortation is also generally applicable to any Spirit-led activity (5:16-18, 22-25) we might do. When we are not seeing the spiritual progress we want in the lives of believers around us, we tend to stop walking in the Spirit, we tend to stop looking for ways to help other believers, and we tend to focus inwardly and become self-centered and proud. But we cannot stop. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Co 15:58, NASB95).

In the second half of the verse, Paul explained why they should not become discouraged. They will reap in due season, if they do not give up. Longenecker believes this is another maxim. When a farmer plants, he knows when the crops will come up. Paul’s point was spiritual, not agricultural. Christians will reap a heavenly reward when Christ returns; though we don’t know when, his return is as certain as a farmer’s crops.

Paul intended this reminder about Christ’s return to be a source of motivation and enthusiasm for discouraged Christians. He wanted them to take their eyes off of their discouraging circumstances and put them back on the certainty of long-term reward. Paul told the Philippian churches, “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Php 3:13-14 NASB95).

---

<sup>33</sup> Ardnt, 272.

<sup>34</sup> Louw, 1:318.

10 Ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκεῖους τῆς πίστεως.

10 Now therefore while we are in *this* season, let us do good to everyone, and especially to the homes of faith.

In this verse Paul concluded not only the restoration section (6:1-10) but also the entire ethical section (5:1-6:10). He continued the thought of a season from the previous verse while also repeating the idea of serving one another through love from 5:13.

Paul exhorted the churches to do good to everyone. This is a broad summary of Christian ethics. We love people by doing good to them. Paul qualified his exhortation in two ways. One, when do we do good? Two, to whom do we do good?

Paul wanted the Galatians to do good while there were in this season. Season (καιρὸν) is the same word used in the previous verse where Paul said, “We will reap in due season.” It has the sense of a period of time, though it can also mean a favorable or appropriate period of time, which is why many translations use the word “opportunity” here. This season refers to life as a follower of Jesus; now until we die is the right time to do good every chance we get. The translation “opportunity” might suggest that we only have to do good if perhaps some chance, favorable occasion comes our way, but “Paul’s word should certainly not be understood as an endorsement for a lackadaisical approach to ethical living.”<sup>35</sup> We should be looking to do good.

Paul wanted them to do good to everyone, especially to the homes of faith. God shows no favoritism to man (2:6), and neither should his children, and so we should love everyone. Even so, Christians are to show more love to other Christians. “Especially” (μάλιστα) is an adverb that means “to an unusual degree.”<sup>36</sup> Christians go above and beyond to help, serve, and take care of one another. This statement has the same idea as fulfilling the law of Christ in 6:2 and serving one another through love in 5:13. Paul’s writing agrees with the teaching of Christ when he said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12 NASB95), and, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35 NASB95).

---

<sup>35</sup> George, 427.

<sup>36</sup> Arndt, 613.

## Abridged Structural Diagram

God is not to be treated with contempt  
For  
whatever a man sows,  
|                   that  
|                   he will also reap  
|                   because  
|                   he who sows to his flesh will reap destruction  
|                   but  
|                   he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life  
But  
let us not be discouraged  
for  
we will reap **in due season**  
  if  
  we do not give up.  
Now therefore  
let us do good to everyone, and especially to the homes of faith

## Tracing the Argument

**External** – In the previous section Paul described how a believer restores a sinning brother. In this section, he explained why restoration is so important

**Internal** – Paul warned that the law of sowing and reaping could not be avoided and its impact was eternal. This motivates believers to do good to others (e.g., restore sinners) and to not give up.

## Textual Outline

1. Paul warned them that God is not to be treated with contempt (6:7).
2. Paul gave the law of sowing and reaping (6:8).
3. Paul exhorted them to not be discouraged but to do good (6:9-10).

## Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Galatians 6:7-10 in order to teach the Galatian churches about the law of sowing and reaping.

## Teaching Outline

Our lives are governed by the law of sowing and reaping, and today I want you to live with this law in mind. From our text in Galatians 6, we are going to see 4 impacts of the law of sowing and reaping.

1. We reap what we sow, so don't treat God with contempt (6:7).
2. We reap what we sow, so understand the consequences (6:8).
3. We reap what we sow, so don't be discouraged (6:9).
4. We reap what we sow, so do good to everyone (6:10).



## Galatians 6:11-18

### Limits of the Text

This section begins and ends with common elements of a conclusion; in between these Paul highlighted the differences in motivation between the Judaizers and himself.

### Translation

11 See what large letters I have written to you with my hand. 12 As many as want to make a good impression in the flesh, these are compelling you to be circumcised, so that they might not be persecuted **because of the cross of Christ**. 13 For even those who are circumcised are not observing **the law themselves, but** they want you to be circumcised, so that they might boast **in your flesh**. 14 But may it never come to be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified **to me** and I to the world. 15 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are anything, **but being a new creation is important**.

16 And *may peace be* upon as many as will conform **to this standard**, and *may mercy also be* upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on let no one cause me troubles! For I myself bear the brand of Jesus on my body. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with your spirit, brothers. Amen!*

### Interpretation

This section concludes Paul's letter to the Galatians, and like his introduction it has both common and uncommon features. He began with an autographed greeting (6:11), added a benediction (6:16), and ended with another benediction (6:18), but he did not include other typical elements of fellowship and thankfulness, such as a greeting to believers or a commendation to co-workers.<sup>37</sup> Instead, he summarized the main points of his letter by contrasting the motives of the Judaizers with his own.

11 Ἴδετε πηλικοῖς ὑμῖν γραμμασὶν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ.

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

This sentence serves two purposes. First, as a literary device, it signals the move from the body of the letter to the conclusion. Second, as an authenticity device, it lets the readers know Paul dictated the majority of the letter to his amanuensis<sup>38</sup>, and at the end he validated what had been written by using his own handwriting. Presumably at this point in his letter, Paul stopped dictating, re-read the letter to make sure the amanuensis got everything right, then took up the stylus and finished it himself. In some letters, Paul's amanuensis is known,<sup>39</sup> but for Galatians he is not known. It is also

---

<sup>37</sup> Longenecker, 288.

<sup>38</sup> An amanuensis is an assistant who can take dictation, copy documents, and so on.

<sup>39</sup> For Romans it was Tertius (Ro 16:22).

not known how much editing and correcting his amanuenses did when scribing, but “the impassioned nature of Galatians suggests that Paul’s secretary...did little in this letter either to moderate the apostle’s expressions...or to buffer his emotions.”<sup>40</sup>

Why did Paul write in big letters? Others have proposed numerous possibilities. Perhaps he had bad eyesight. Perhaps there was something wrong with his hand. Perhaps he wanted to make his writing easier to authenticate. In the end, these are all just guesses; we don’t know why Paul wrote like this.

12 Ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται.

**12 As many as want to make a good impression in the flesh, these are compelling you to be circumcised, so that they might not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ.**

At this point Paul returned to the main thrust of the letter, countering the false teachings of the Judaizers, those who were compelling the Galatians to be circumcised. Paul made four attacks against them, all regarding their motives. In his first attack, Paul accused them of wanting to appear righteous. He said the Judaizers wanted to make a good impression in the flesh. To make a good impression (εὐπροσωπῆσαι) is a verb that comes from the words “good” and “face” and has the idea of putting on a good face or making a good showing. George calls it “spiritual self-aggrandizement.”<sup>41</sup> This good impression was in the flesh, referring to obeying the Mosaic Law as a means of righteousness (3:3). The motivation of the Judaizers was to appear externally righteous before others. Jesus warned about this when he said, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 6:1, NASB95). Upon whom were the Judaizers trying to make a good impression? They were probably trying to impress other Jews back in Jerusalem; part of their motivation for proselytizing among the Gentiles was bragging rights.

In his second attack, Paul accused them of self-preservation. He said that one of the reasons for their actions was so that they might not be persecuted (μὴ διώκωνται). This seems strange until a little bit of history is explained. There was at this time in Israel a rising tide of Jewish nationalism. The Zealots were antagonizing everyone “who had Gentile sympathies and all who associated with Gentile sympathies.”<sup>42</sup> So it may have been that the Judaizers were attempting to circumcise the Galatian believers in order to avoid these attacks; they wanted to show “that belief in Jesus as Messiah involved no breach of the Mosaic law or the sacred ceremonies of the Jewish people.”<sup>43</sup> One might

---

<sup>40</sup> Longenecker, lxi.

<sup>41</sup> George, 433.

<sup>42</sup> Longenecker, xcvi

<sup>43</sup> George, 435.

object that traveling all the way to Galatia just to instruct someone in the law was unreasonable, yet it was not unknown. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees on this very matter when he said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Mt 23:15, NASB95).

The cross of Christ is emphatic in this clause. Paul emphasized that the central message of the cross is that faith alone saves, and this message is antithetical to being righteous by external activities and is a complete breach from dependency upon obedience to the law.

13 οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται.

**13 For even those who are circumcised are not observing the law themselves, but they want you to be circumcised, so that they might boast in your flesh.**

In his third attack, Paul accused the Judaizers of being hypocritical. They were requiring the Galatians to obey the law by being circumcised, yet they themselves were not observing (φυλάσσουσιν) the law, meaning they failed to avoid breaking a law or commandment. Paul did not specify how the Judaizers were not keeping the law. Perhaps he knew of something specific they failed to do, something the Galatians were well aware of, or perhaps he was just making a general statement along the lines of 3:10-11, “For as many as are *righteous* by works of law, they are under a curse, for it has been written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is not continuing in everything which has been written in the book of the law, to do them.’ And *it is* obvious that no one has been declared righteous **in the law** in the sight of God.” In either case, Paul knew their actions made them hypocrites.

In his fourth attack, Paul accused them seeking glory. He said they wanted to boast in the Galatians’ flesh. Although Paul used this same word (καυχῶνται)<sup>44</sup> in a positive sense in 6:4 and in 6:14, he used it in a negative sense here. The Judaizers expressed confidence in themselves, took pride in their actions, and bragged upon their accomplishments; they wanted everyone to know what a great job they had done. This attack is similar the first attack in the previous verse.

14 Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι’ οὗ ἔμοι κόσμος ἐσταύρωται καὶ γὰρ κόσμῳ.

**14 But may it never come to be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.**

In contrast to the Judaizers’ boasts of their proselytizing results, Paul took pride only in

---

<sup>44</sup> This is the verb form; in 6:4 it was the noun form.

the actions of Jesus upon the cross; he wanted no glory for himself but wanted glory for Jesus. He realized that it was a cross-bought salvation that changed him, not his own self-will or self-discipline, and enabled him to preach the gospel. There is no reason for self-boasting,<sup>45</sup> but there is definitely a reason to boast in what Jesus has done for us through the cross. Paul later wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that Jesus is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; therefore, if a person is going to boast, boast in the Lord (1 Co 1:30-31).

Because of Jesus' death on the cross, Paul said the world was crucified to him and he to it. In this sense, Paul did not use the verb "has been crucified" (ἐσταύρωται) in a literal sense but a metaphorical sense. As crucifixion destroys the connection between the body and this life, so Paul said that the cross destroyed the connection between him and the world.<sup>46</sup> The verb here is in the perfect tense, which means that while this severing of the connection took place in the past at his conversion, it remains in effect in the present; his relationship with Christ continued to supercede it. The result is that the power of sin over his life was broken; the world still influenced him, to be sure, but it no longer had dominion over him. It was for this freedom that Christ set Paul free (5:1).

The message of the gospel is that Jesus' death on a cross breaks our connection with sin and the world and brings us freedom.

15 οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστὶν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις.

*15 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are anything, but being a new creation is important.*

Paul was crucified to the world because external actions, like circumcision, are not important; only being a new creation is important. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision can free a person from the power of sin; neither can make him righteous before God. Circumcision, and by extension obedience to the Law, are just not important. Doing good works is not that important, and not doing good works is not that important; Paul said neither provides righteousness.

The second half of this verse lacks a verb; it literally reads "but a new creation." The idea, however, is clear enough. Though circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, being a new creation is something; it's important.<sup>47</sup> Paul said something very similar

The idea of a new creation (καινὴ κτίσις) begins in Ge 1-2, where God created man sinless. Yet when Adam sinned, mankind became sinful and estranged from God, so now God recreates those who have faith in Jesus. Being a new creation is the result of that part of salvation known as regeneration. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 says,

---

<sup>45</sup> Cross references: Ro 3:21-27 and 1 Co 1:26-29.

<sup>46</sup> Ardent, 941.

<sup>47</sup> As the italics indicate, the words "is important" are implied, though they are not in the Greek.

“Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” In 5:6 Paul wrote, “In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love;” from this we can see that a new creature is one who has faith in Jesus that results in loving both God and man. Jesus said that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3). Paul would later write that if anyone is in Christ, then he is a new creation (2 Co 5:17). This verse is a one-sentence summary of the entire book.

In summarizing Paul's thoughts, Longenecker wrote, “All external expressions of the Christian faith are to be understood as culturally relevant but not spiritually necessitated, for all that really matters is that the Christians be ‘a new creation’ and that he or she express that new work of God in ways reflective of being ‘in Christ’ and directed by ‘the Spirit’.”<sup>48</sup>

16 καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ’ αὐτούς καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ.

16 And *may* peace *be* upon as many as will conform to this standard, and *may* mercy also *be* upon the Israel of God.

This verse is a benediction, a common concluding element in letters; it expresses a desire for a blessing to be upon someone. The blessing that Paul desired was peace and mercy, but the grammar is ambiguous, making the verse a bit difficult to translate. It might be that Paul desired peace and mercy upon those who conformed and upon Israel. The NET translates it as, “And all who will behave in accordance with this rule, peace and mercy be on them, and on the Israel of God.”<sup>49</sup> Or it might be that Paul desired peace upon those who conformed and mercy upon Israel. The HCSB translates it as, “May peace come to all those who follow this standard, and mercy to the Israel of God!”<sup>50</sup> The ambiguity has to do with the third *kai* (καὶ) in the sentence, which could be translated as “and” or as “also.” Two factors suggest to me that “also” is preferred, though neither is a cause to be dogmatic:

1. The “upon them” (ἐπ’ αὐτούς) appears between peace and mercy, not after; this is not normal word order. If καὶ is “and,” then a literal translation would “peace upon them and mercy and upon the Israel of God.”
2. Peace and mercy are out of their usual order; that is, the result (peace) is placed before the cause (mercy); so probably they are heading in two different

---

<sup>48</sup> Longenecker, 296.

<sup>49</sup> Similarly NASB95, ESV, LEB.

<sup>50</sup> Similarly ISV.

directions. To those who have mercy already (believers) he wishes peace; to those who do not have mercy yet (Israel), he wishes mercy.

Whichever translation is correct, the meaning of the benediction is not significantly different. The first group that Paul desired to receive God's blessing is as many will conform to this standard. Standard (κανόνι) refers to "a rule involving a standard for conduct"<sup>51</sup> and is a reference back to being a new creation in the previous verse. It was a way of referring to all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, who lived according to their faith in Jesus. The second group is Israel, his fellow countrymen.

17 Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω.

**17 From now on let no one cause me troubles! For I myself bear the brands of Jesus on my body.**

As he finished the letter, Paul pleaded for the Judaizers to stop causing him problems by leading his churches astray. The reason for this command is that he bore the brands of Jesus. Brand (στίγματα) referred to the practice of masters putting brands or marks on their slaves or of religious tattooing,<sup>52</sup> but in calling them the brands of Jesus he was probably referring to the visible marks of persecution that he had from his mission endeavors (Ac 14). His brands appear to be a contrast to circumcision. The Judaizers were proselytizing the Galatians and requiring that they be marked by circumcision, claiming that such marking produced a genuine godliness. Paul countered that he had been marked, not with circumcision, but with persecution, the genuine demonstration of godliness (2 Ti 3:12).

18 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί· ἀμήν.

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

This is another benediction, a grace benediction. It was a very standard element that appeared in nearly all of Paul's letters. It served as one final reminder that everything his readers have comes by grace. Grace is central to understanding this book, because justification is not by works, but by grace through faith in Jesus alone.

---

<sup>51</sup> Louw, 1:426.

<sup>52</sup> Ardent, 945.

## Structural Diagram

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

As many as want to make a good impression  
these are compelling you to be circumcised  
so that  
they might not be persecuted  
|  
| who are circumcised  
For |  
even those are not observing **the law themselves**  
**but**  
they want you to be circumcised  
so that  
they might boast **in your flesh**  
But may it never come to be that I would boast  
| except  
| in the cross  
For  
neither circumcision  
nor  
uncircumcision are anything  
**but**  
*being a new creation is important*  
And  
*may peace be upon as many as will conform to this standard*  
and  
*may mercy also be upon the Israel of God*

From now on let no one cause me troubles  
For  
I myself bear the brand of Jesus on my body

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with your spirit*

## Tracing the Argument

**External** – In the previous sections (5:1-6:10) Paul gave the practical applications of the theology. In this section, he concluded the letter.

**Internal** – Paul personally wrote the final paragraph of his letter. He attacked the motives of the Judaizers and then contrasted them with his own desire to boast only in the cross. He summarized the entire book by saying that the only thing that is important is being a new creation. He then finished with two benedictions.

## Textual Outline

1. Paul finished the letter by hand (6:11).
2. Paul attacked the Judaizers' motives (6:12-13).
3. Paul contrasted his own motives (6:14-15).
4. Paul closed the letter with two benedictions (6:16-18).

## Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Galatians 6:11-18 in order to contrast the motives of the Judaizers with his own motives.

## Teaching Outline

God wants us to exalt Christ in the ministries we do as a church, and so today I want to encourage you to have Christ-exalting motives for your ministry. In this final section of Galatians, we are going to 5 ways to exalt Jesus in your ministry.

1. We exalt Jesus when we rest in his righteousness (6:12a).
2. We exalt Jesus when we are willing to be persecuted (6:12b).
3. We exalt Jesus when we are authentic (6:13a).
4. We exalt Jesus when we are humble (6:13b).
5. We exalt Jesus when we boast in the cross (6:14-15).



## Works Cited

Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. 1982.

George, Timothy. *Galatians*. The New American Commentary. 1994.

Kittel, Gerhard. ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964.

Lightfoot, J. B. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*. 1865.

Longenecker, Richard. *Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary. 1990.

Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989.

MacArthur, John. *Galatians*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. 1987.

Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Galatians*. The Bible Speaks Today. 1984.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. 1993.