

Galatians 6¹ “Preaching the Gospel to the Saved”²

The entire letter of Galatians is directed toward the error which can be summed up in 3:2-3 “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

In other words, the Galatians had begun in the Spirit (by grace through faith, Eph.2:8-9), but were afterward seeking to be perfected by the flesh, which quite clearly in context refers to obeying law.

This is the MAIN error in the church today. People are born again by grace through faith, but then exposed to a series of “disciplines”, formulas, and expectations by which to “mature” (or even more subtle: “to *please* God”). As “foolish” as the Galatians, we also believe the lie that we can, through our own efforts (which Paul calls “flesh”), be improved. Paul says that when we seek to be justified by the law then Christ died in vain, we become estranged from Christ (not benefitting from Him), and fall from grace.

Galatians 2:21

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

Galatians 5:4

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Paul is emphasizing this truth through each and everything he says. He continues his argument in chapter 6. Unfortunately, because the church quite nearly as a whole has not understood the intent of neither Galatians nor the clear comparison to our methodology today, we continue to misunderstand what Paul is saying. This was true of chapter 5, but even more so of chapter 6.

¹ Brethren, 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.

- 1. Taken in context, Paul is addressing the Galatians believers who had not yet come under the law to restore their brothers and sisters who had. The “spiritual” ones are those who are walking in the Spirit (by grace through faith). The ones who need restoration are those walking in the flesh (perfection by laws). Those of us who understand the gospel of grace are to restore those who are not “IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS”, as it would be entirely ridiculous for someone touting grace to be ungracious or appear prideful.*

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is taken from the *New King James Version (NKJV) Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.*

² In this lesson, the number of the point corresponds with the number of the verse.

- a. The core problem that needed to be addressed is clear, and yet, when someone wanders off into law, sin often follows, because the strength of sin is the law. A believer once back under the system of “trying hard” to live right, often succumbs to the sin from which he was freed under grace. Restoring someone who has fallen into sin should include restoring that person back to faith. For as long as someone is still under law, he will not be truly free from sin since the very reason we are free from sin is because we are under grace.

1 Corinthians 15:56

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

- b. While it is true that many people who embrace law become prey to sin, we see another group of people under law, who still reject sin in their lives. These believers, when sensing that things aren't the way they were when they first believed, tend toward seeking out methods to get that joy back, usually through additional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading the Bible, fasting, and ministry involvement (a never-ending list). These miserable believers, while not having obvious sins in their lives, are seeking diligently to become perfected through their own efforts which amount clearly to law. Their motives and efforts are sincere, but they are still deceived and need to be helped.

The **spiritual** among the Galatians, namely, those who were still living their lives in **dependence upon the Spirit**, are exhorted to restore those Galatians who had abandoned that method for the one taught by the Judaizers. The word restore is from *katartizo*. This word has the following meanings: "to repair, **to restore to a former good condition**, to prepare, to fit out, to equip." It is used of reconciling factions, of setting bones, of putting a dislocated limb into place, of mending nets, of manning a fleet, of supplying an army with provisions. It is used by Paul usually in a metaphorical sense of setting a person to rights, of bringing him into line. Those Galatians who had not abandoned their dependence upon the Holy Spirit, now are asked by Paul to set those Galatians right who had been seized unawares by sin because they had deprived themselves of the ministry of the Spirit. **The primary thing that they needed to be set right about was not the act of sin which they committed, but that they had wandered off the right road of grace and were stumbling in the quagmire of self-dependence and legalism.** To set the sinning brother right with reference to his act of sin would be helpful, but that would still leave him on the wrong road with the result that he would go on being surprised at the entrance of sin into his life. Thus, the Galatians who had not become infatuated with legalism, were exhorted to bring back those who had, **into the grace way of living the Christian life.** That would repair the damage caused by the Judaizers in his life, and equip him to go on living his life in the right way. He would be restored to his former good condition. This was the apostle's attempt to repair the damage caused by the Judaizers, using those Galatians who had not succumbed to their wiles. -Wuest

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.

2. Keep in mind as you read chapter 6 that the verses relate to each other. Paul has just told them to restore the erring ones in a spirit of weakness. He continues his plea here by telling them to bear each other's burdens.
 - a. Our former understanding of this verse was only in the context of helping each other either practically or emotionally. However, Paul is still speaking in reference to those who had fallen from grace in the true sense. Those of us who have been restored back to grace need to reach out in love to those who are heavy-laden with laws.
 - b. "The law of Christ" is referring to the commandment He gave prior to His death. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another," (Jn. 13:34)*. If our brother or sister has fallen from grace, restoring them is to follow the law of Christ. It is the quintessential example of "speaking the truth in love".
 - i. It is also difficult and can bring on persecution. Still, if we love, we will reach out to God's beloved sheep who have been estranged from Him through seeking to be made perfect through their own "spiritual" effort (which Paul calls "the flesh").
 - ii. The one who understands grace will deal with the one who is caught up in a specific sin differently than someone who is a legalist. The legalist will approach with an attitude of superiority. He will try to use the law to get the person to conform. The one who understands grace will bend down to help with an attitude of humility and will realize that the law gives power to sin. To help someone in the area of sin, we must first set them free from the law. This is opposite of what we usually do.

3. To whom is Paul referring in verse 3, those under law who thought they were something when they were nothing, or someone who understands walking in the Spirit being prideful about his understanding and not willing to help his brothers and sisters?
 - a. Commentators tend toward the latter explanation.

If one has the conceited idea that he is morally and spiritually superior to what he actually is, this tends to make him unwilling to take the burden of responsibility for the restoration of a sinning fellow-saint. A Christian of that character, so far from fulfilling the law of the Christ, is deceiving himself as to his true status in the Christian experience. -Wuest

Paul is saying that if anyone thinks he is too important to stoop down and help others with their burdens, then he is deceived about his own importance. None of us is anything of ourselves. None of us has any good excuse for not helping restore our fellow believers. -Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary.

- b. The other viewpoint, that Paul is addressing the legalists, might also have some merit. The one who is receiving law into their Christian experience would have the tendency to see themselves as superior to those who relied only on faith. They might think themselves to be something when they are not. They have adopted a trust in themselves obeying the law, and might have been looking down upon the others.

Luke 18:9

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt.

- c. The one who actually needs help is the legalist, and yet there exists the possibility that the ones who were walking in truth might not humble themselves to help the others. So, it's possible that this instruction goes both ways: to the legalist who finds his "enlightened" views superior, and to the one who is rejecting legalism, who might be tempted to not stoop down to help his erring brothers.
- d. When we see our good works in truth, we will boast in His goodness and grace in our lives knowing that if we do anything good at all, it is purely by His grace.

Galatians 6:14

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.

Romans 3:27-28

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Romans 7:18

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells .

Philippians 3: 8-10

. . . I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;¹⁰ that (in order that³) I may know Him . . .

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves

- 4. Verse 4 exhorts those who are helping restore someone to examine his/her own work.

Here is the case of the self-deceived man of the previous verse, who boasts of his own superiority when he compares himself with the Christian brother who has fallen into sin. He has a ground for boasting only in respect to his much-vaunted superiority to his inferior brother. But the man who puts himself to the test without comparing himself with others, bases his appraisal of himself on an absolute rather than a relative foundation, upon himself alone.-Wuest

- 5. Again, verse 5 is commonly taught as being responsible for our own lives, and we could hardly deny that each person should take on such responsibility. However, it is more likely in immediate context that Paul is continuing what he's been saying since he starts this sentence with "for" which would refer back to what he just said. We are to have the attitude of helping others when they fall short of grace (bearing each other's burdens), but also "consider ourselves lest we also be tempted" and thus bear our own burdens (be responsible for our own shortcomings in the area of grace verses law and how we live out our lives).

- a. The word "load" here is the same as the word "burden" when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The burden we are to bear is Christ's, which is "light". If we take on other burdens that are not Christ's we will have to bear them. If we live under law, we will bear that burden and likely fall prey to sin. If we live under grace, we will bear the burden of Jesus, which is light.

³ Word in parenthesis is author's commentary.

⁶ Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; 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.

6. Our previous understanding of this verse was that Paul was talking about giving. While we do agree that it is scriptural for one who is taught to share practically with the one who teaches (1 Cor. 9:11), we do not think this is what Paul is referring to in this context.

a. It is important to understand that when Paul says “the word”, he is referring to the true gospel (the one that is NOT “another). No one had a Bible like we do today. Preaching “the word” was a common way to express teaching the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ. Here are some examples of the term “the word of God” used in reference to hearing or receiving the gospel.

Acts 11:1

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

Acts 12:24

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Acts 13:5

And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

1 Peter 1:23

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God (the gospel) which lives and abides forever,

Acts 13:46

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

Romans 10:14-17

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

¹⁶ *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”

¹⁷ *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Christ).*

b. There is a widening chasm in these last days between what is taught in some books, TV and radio, from the pulpit, and truly teaching the word. Be careful what you hear (and teach). Evaluate what is taught. Don’t accept everything you hear. Match it up with the word of God (the gospel).

- c. Of course, the other important thing to keep in mind in understanding verse 6 is the context. Paul was writing to the Galatians who had been taught by Paul the gospel of grace not law. He had left them with spiritual overseers who continued to teach that gospel. Yet, some of them had forsaken the teaching of Paul and their overseers' and were listening to the Judaizers.

*The word communicate⁴ means "to share, to be a partner in a thing with a person," here "to hold fellowship with another person." That in which the person holds fellowship with another is designated by the context. **The one who is taught should hold fellowship with his teachers in all good things.** What the good things are is defined by the context. In verses 1-4, Paul exhorts the Spirit-filled saints in the Galatian churches to take upon themselves the responsibility of restoring to the right method of living a Christian life, those who had put themselves under law.-Wuest*

*Now, the Judaizers had precipitated a situation in the Galatian churches in which those who followed their teaching broke fellowship with the true teachers of the Word. **Paul is exhorting these to resume their fellowship with their former teachers and share with them in the blessing of grace which their teachers were enjoying.** The exhortation is that the disciple should make common cause with the teacher in everything that is morally good and which promotes salvation. This breach that had interposed itself between some of the Galatians and their teachers who had taught them grace (Paul included), could not but interfere with their moral and spiritual life. **The Galatians' growth in grace was largely dependent upon their attending the means of grace afforded by the presence and ministry of the teachers in their midst who had taught them grace.** Furthermore, the work of the churches was hindered by this disruption. The disciple is not to leave the sphere of the morally good as Paul taught it, to the teacher alone, and go off to the Judaizers. He is to work in common with his teachers and so promote the spiritual life of the churches.-Wuest*

- d. Another argument against verse 6 referring to giving goods or money is again context. If it did refer to giving, the topic has come out of nowhere. The least of Paul's concerns in the letter to the Galatians is that they give to those who teach them. He is seeking to restore them back to Christ, to restore them to a proper understanding of the gospel of grace instead of law. It makes more sense that he is encouraging them to also return to the fellowship of those who taught them the true gospel (and away from those who seek to deceive them) than to think that he would suddenly talk about giving.
- e. The word used for "share" is *koinoneo* which is from the same Greek word as *koinonia*). It is more likely in context of Paul seeking to restore the Galatians that he would now encourage them to return to fellowship-participation-communication-association with their teachers.
- i. Both words are from *koy-no-nos'*; a sharer, that is, associate: - companion, fellowship, partaker, partner.
 - ii. *koinōneō*; to share with others (objectively or subjectively): - communicate, distribute, be partaker.

⁴ The KJV uses the word "communicate" instead of "share".

- iii. *koinōnia*; **partnership, that is, (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction: - (to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-), distribution, fellowship.**
- iv. **Wuest concurs using the following reasoning:**

*The interpretation that makes the one taught assume the responsibility for the financial welfare of his teacher is not possible in this instance of the use of the word *koinoneo*. This is the word Paul uses in Philippians 4:15, where he speaks of the obligation of the one taught to make the financial needs of his teacher his own, thus sharing with his teacher his earthly goods inasmuch as the teacher has shared with him his heavenly blessings. But Paul does not use it so here, and for the following reasons:*

- *First⁵, the context which speaks both of the evil (6:1-5) and the morally good (6:9, 10), is against the interpretation that financial support is in the apostle's mind here.*
- *Second, the context defines the good things as being of a spiritual, not a material nature.*
- *Third, it would be the height of folly for Paul to inject such a delicate subject as the pocket book of the saint (delicate in some circles) into the already discordant atmosphere of the Galatian churches, especially when the whole trouble revolved around heretical teaching and not around the finances of the churches.*
- *Fourth, if Paul were exhorting the saints to contribute financially to the support of their former teachers, the Judaizers would be quick to say that the apostle was attempting to win the Galatian saints back to grace for financial reasons, since he himself was one of their former teachers. One of the favorite methods of attack adopted by the enemies of Paul was to charge him with commercializing his ministry. He would not lay himself open to this charge by such an unwise act as in the present circumstances exhorting the Galatians to resume their financial responsibility with reference to the material needs of their former teachers.- Wuest*

- 7. **It is apparent that Paul does not change subjects between verse 6 and 7, but we need not only verse 6, but also verse 8 to understand verse 7.**
 - a. **The language in verse 7 is strong. Don't be deceived! God is not mocked!**
 - i. **Don't be deceived refers back to those who were deceiving them. He had warned that those who preach "another" gospel would be accursed. Now he is warning them. If they kept having fellowship-participating (*koinōneo*) with these deceivers, IT WAS GOING TO AFFECT THEM. They would reap what they sowed.**
- 8. **Verse 8 brings the whole truth to light and ties in what he is saying with all he has said. He who sows to his flesh (in context this must refer to what he has been saying all along...if you continue to seek perfection via the flesh-if you submit yourself to law in order to be perfected), you will from that reap corruption (decay, ruin). If you sow to the Spirit (live by grace through faith) you will of the Spirit reap everlasting life⁶.**

⁵ Bulleting author's

⁶ Since Paul uses terms that only refer to believers throughout, even of those who were in error, verse 8 is not referring to heaven and hell. Born again believers who are seeking to be made perfect by the flesh will not experience the ever-lasting life that Jesus offers as they are not benefitting from it.

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.*

9. The “good” the Galatians are not to grow weary doing would refer to what he just taught them. He assures them that if they continue sowing to the Spirit they would see results. So, they were to continue:
 - a. Restoring those who had been caught up in a trespass (v 1).
 - b. Bearing each other’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ (v 2).
 - c. Staying in fellowship-participation with those who taught them the truth (v 6).
 - d. Sowing to the Spirit not the flesh (v 8).

*In verse 8, Paul exhorts the Galatians to govern their lives with a view to the Spirit's control over them. Now, he exhorts them not to become weary in that course of action. The words "be weary," are from *egkakeo* which was used of husbandmen who are tempted to slacken their exertions by reason of the weariness caused by prolonged effort. The word faint is from *ekluo* which was used of reapers overcome by heat and toil. The word means "to relax effort, to become exhausted physically." The incentive to keep on working was, that at the right time they would gather the harvest. -Wuest*

10. Previously, we only saw verse 10 as Paul encouraging the Galatians to give to all especially the household of faith. While this is a truth, it is not likely to be the whole truth in this case given the context.
 - a. “The word **good** is preceded by the article. It is not merely what may be good in character as judged by anybody's standards, but the good spoken of in the context, good which is the product of the work of the Holy Spirit through the saint.”-Wuest
 - b. The Amplified Bible, taking from Vincent’s Word Studies translates verse 10 this way: *Let us do good [morally] to all people [not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith [those who belong to God's family with you, the believers]. -Amplified*

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

11. There are differing opinions about what is being said in verse 11. Here are our views.
 - a. Most likely Paul wrote the entire letter himself not just the closing lines (as was his custom) since here he uses the past tense and in other letters the present when referring to his closing lines⁷.
 - b. The large letters likely refer to “the literary uncial (style of Greek writing) which consisted of inch-high letters formed singly and with no connection with other letters.”⁵
 - c. Why he did this is debated. We believe he wrote this letter himself using the larger letters to convey his passion for and to emphasize what he was saying.

⁷ Wuest

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.

12. Those of the law delight in “making a good showing in the flesh”. They diligently seek to “convert” believers to a law system. They boast in their following. They aren’t doing it for the good of those who follow but for their own. They do not want to be persecuted for living by grace through faith alone, so they add law in order to be more acceptable and avoid persecution for sticking strictly to the cross of Christ.

a. Religion demands outward actions motivated and empowered by the flesh.
Grace RESULTS in outward actions motivated and empowered by the Spirit.

13. Paul exposes the deeds of those who have sought to deceive them. They don’t even keep the law; they just want bragging rights for converting the believers to Judaism.

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. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

14. Paul now drives his point home. The Judaizers were boasting in the flesh (literal and spiritual) of the Galatians. Not Paul. He would boast in nothing but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was through this cross that Paul was crucified to the world and the world was crucified to him (NOT through laws and not through the flesh).

15. Once in Jesus, being or not being circumcised means nothing. What matters is that we are new creations.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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

16. What “rule” is this? Simply stated, the “rule” of walking according to the Spirit, glorying in nothing but the cross of Jesus, recognizing that it is because we are new creations that we are acceptable and not because we are perfected by the flesh.

- a. Paul pronounces a blessing on these, peace and mercy. This is in sharp contrast to the curse he spoke over those who were preaching “another” gospel.
- b. The Israel of God refers to those who have received the Messiah.

Those therefore, who order their lives by the Holy Spirit's control, constitute the true Israel of God, not the Jews who have the name of Israel but are only children of Abraham after the flesh. The Greek word for "and" also has the meaning of "even" in some contexts. We translate here, "even the Israel of God" as identifying those who "walk according to this rule." Translation: "And as many as by this rule are ordering their conduct, peace be upon them, and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.-Wuest

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

17. This refers to those who claimed to have more authority than Paul and who were trying to subvert the faith of the Galatians. They taught another gospel and did so for their own glory and to avoid persecution. Paul bore in his body the scars of the persecution he had suffered for leaving the law and turning fully to the cross of Christ. His critics had no such proof.

Amplified

From now on let no person trouble me [by making it necessary for me to vindicate my apostolic authority and the divine truth of my Gospel], for I bear on my body the [brand] marks of the Lord Jesus [the wounds, scars, and other outward evidence of persecutions--these testify to His ownership of me]!

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

18. What a comfort to the straying Galatians it must have been for Paul to call them “brethren”, to call Jesus Christ “our” Lord, and to pronounce this blessing of God’s undeserved favor upon them.
- a. Yet, much like his introduction, his farewell is brief, unlike his other epistles (see Romans 16 for example). This would likely continue to convey the seriousness with which he wrote his letter.