

PRACTICAL: A Defense of Christian Liberty (Chapters 5:1-6:10)

This section of Paul's Epistle is concerned with the relationship between liberty/freedom, license, law, & love. Having defended both his authority as an apostle (chs. 1-2) and the doctrine of justification by faith (chs. 3-4), Paul turned to defend the life of Christian freedom. Would the apostle's teaching lead the Galatians into lawlessness or into godliness? *The Christian life is described as* - (1) A life apart from LAW (5:1-12); - (2) A life apart from LICENSE (5:13-15); - (3) A life according to the SPIRIT (5:16-26); and finally . . .

4. A Life of _____ (5:26-6:10)

A. _____ - _____ (5:26-6:5)

1) How Christians *should not* treat each other (5:26): _____ and _____.

2) How Christians *should* treat each other (6:2-5)

a) The principle: _____ one another (vs. 2; cp. John 13:34, 35)

"Carry each other's burdens, & in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ". The "**burdens**" spoken of are moral burdens or weaknesses (ver. 1; Rom. 15:1-3). For "**the law of Christ**" see 1 Cor. 9:21 - "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I'm not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law." See John 13:34-35.

b) The problem of _____ (vss. 3-5)

The prob. that occupies Paul's attention while addressing restoration is pride on the part of the restorer. Pride is wrong (v. 3), and each restorer should check himself or herself out (v. 4a) & not find personal status by comparing themselves with others, esp. with sinning brothers and sisters (v. 4b). In the final analysis, each person is responsible before God for what he or she has done (v. 5).

3) An _____ of burden-bearing (6:1): Someone is "caught (overtaken) in a sin".

a) _____ to do

Restore = "to set him back on the right path." The Greek for this vb. (**καταρτίζω katartizō**) is used elsewhere for setting fractured or dislocated bones, mending nets, or bringing factions together. See Mark 1:19. We're not told in Gal. 6:1 how precisely we are to restore our fallen brother/sister, but we can learn this from the more detailed instructions of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17.

b) _____ is to do it

It is 'mature' or 'spiritual' Christians who are to do this, whom he is later to describe more fully in 1 Cor. 2: 14-3:4, and whom he has already begun to portray in Gal. 5:16-25. All Christians are indwelt by the Spirit, but 'spiritual' Christians are also 'led by the Spirit' and 'walk by the Spirit', so that 'the fruit of the Spirit' appears in their lives. Indeed, this loving ministry of restoring an erring brother is exactly the kind of thing that we shall do when we are walking by the Spirit. It is only the 'spiritual' Christian who should attempt to restore him. *This leads to . . .*

c) _____ should it be done

"A spirit of **gentleness**" - One of the reasons why only spiritual Christians should attempt the ministry of restoration is that only the spiritual Christian is gentle (see 5:23).

A spirit of "**watchfulness**" - This suggests that gentleness is born out of a sense of our own weakness and proneness to sin.

B. _____ and _____ (6:6-10)

The apostle Paul is nearing the end of his letter. His main themes have by now been expounded. All he has left are a few final admonitions. At first sight, these instructions and exhortations appear to be very loosely connected, even totally disconnected. But a closer look at his instructions reveals the connecting link. *It is the principle of sowing and reaping* (vs. 7). There are three spheres of Christian experience in which Paul sees the principle operating.

1) Christian _____ (vs. 6)

He who is taught the word should help to support his teacher. So, a minister may expect to be supported by the congregation. He sows the good seed of God's Word, & he reaps a livelihood. The biblical principle is emphasized many times. The Lord Jesus said to the Seventy whom He sent out, 'The laborer deserves his wages' (Lk. 10:7). And Paul makes explicit use of the sowing and reaping metaphor to teach the same truth: 'If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?' (1 Cor. 9:11). See also Romans 15:26-27 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18. This principle can be abused in two possible ways: (1) It can be abused by the minister; and/or (2) abused by the congregation.

2) Christian _____ (vs. 8)

There are two kinds of sowing that are possible; namely, (1) sowing to the flesh, and (2) sowing to the Spirit. To "sow to the flesh" is to pander to it, to indulge, spoil, cuddle and stroke it, instead of crucifying it. To "sow to the Spirit" is the same as 'to set the mind on the Spirit' (Rom. 8:6) & to 'walk by the Spirit' (Gal. 5:16, 25). We are to 'seek' & to 'set our minds on' the things of God, 'things that are above, not ... things that are on earth' (Col. 3:1, 2; contrast Phil. 3:19) by the books we read, the company we keep and the leisure occupations we pursue we can be 'sowing to the Spirit'. Then we are to foster disciplined habits of devotion in private & in public ... in daily prayer and Bible reading, and in worship with the Lord's people on the Lord's Day. All this is 'sowing to the Spirit'; without it there can be no harvest of the Spirit ... no 'fruit of the Spirit'.

3) Christian _____ - _____ (vss. 9, 10)

The subject changes a bit from personal holiness to doing good, helping others, engaging in philanthropic activity in the church or community. Some incentive is needed in Christian well-doing. Active Christian serving is tiring, exacting work. We are tempted to become discouraged, to slack off, even to give up. So incentive is needed. If we persevere in sowing, then "in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart." If the sowing is the doing of good works in the community and the church, what is the harvest? Paul does not tell us, he leaves us to guess. But the patient doing of good in the church and/or the community always produces good results.

CONCLUSION (6:11-18)

As Paul bro't. the Galatian letter to a close, he again emphasized some of the great issues discussed throughout the epistle. The conclusion contains a summary & final statement of the issues the apostle felt so strongly about.

1. Paul's _____ (6:11)

It's my view that at this point Paul took the pen from his scribe & wrote the concluding paragraph in "large letters" for at least two purposes: (1) to authenticate the letter, a practice he often followed (cp. 1 Thess. 5:28; with 2 Thess. 3:17-18; also 1 Cor. 16:21 and Col. 4:18); and (2) to emphasize his main points. By taking the pen and writing in "large letters" Paul makes it clear that he has something important to write in conclusion; that he's not going to end the letter in a conventional manner. He wrote for emphasis: "DON'T MISS THIS!"

2. Paul's _____ (6:12-13)

Paul does not have anything good to say about the legalist. He describes him and his kind in four ways.

A. They are _____ (6:12a, 13b)

Their main purpose was not to win people to Christ, or even to help the believers grow in grace. Their chief purpose was to win more converts so they could brag about them. They wanted to "make a fine impression outwardly" even though they did no good inwardly. Their work was not done for the good of the church or for the glory of God; it was done for their own glory.

B. They are _____ (6:12b)

Why did they preach & practice circumcision and all that went with it? To escape persecution. Because Paul preached "Christ crucified"—salvation by the grace of God and salvation apart from human merit, he was persecuted (5:11). The legalists avoided persecution by preaching circumcision and the Law.

Warren W. Wiersbe:

"We are prone to look at the cross (and crucifixion) in a sentimental way. We wear crosses on our lapels or on chains around our necks. But to the first-century citizen, the cross was not a beautiful piece of jew-

elry; it was the lowest form of death and the ultimate in humiliation. The proper Roman citizen would never mention the cross in polite conversation. It stood for rejection & shame. When Paul trusted Christ, he identified himself with the cross and took the consequences. To the Jew the cross was a stumbling block, and to the Gentile it was foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18–31). The legalists, emphasizing circumcision rather than crucifixion, won many converts. Theirs was a popular religion because it avoided the shame of the cross.

C. They are _____ (6:12a)

“Those who . . . are trying to **compel** you to be circumcised” (cp. 2:14 - same word). While it does not mean “to force against one’s will,” it is still a strong word. It indicates that the Judaizers were great persuaders; they had a “sales talk” that convinced the Galatian believers that legalism was the way for them. Whenever Paul presented the Word, it was in truth & sincerity, and he used no oratorical tricks or debater’s skills. See 1 Cor. 2:1–5 and 2 Cor. 4:1–5 to see how Paul presented the Word to his listeners. Paul was not a politician; he was an ambassador.

D. They are _____ (6:13)

The legalists belonged to the same group as the Pharisees about whom Jesus said, “They say & do not” (Matt. 23:3). Of course, Paul is not suggesting that the Judaizers should keep the Law, because keeping the Law is neither possible nor necessary. Rather, he’s condemning them for their dishonesty; they had no intention of keeping the Law, even if they could. Their reverence for the Law was only a mask to cover their real goal: winning more converts to their cause. They wanted to report more statistics & get more glory.

3. Paul’s _____ (6:14-16)

A. Verse 14 –

The contrast (with v. 13) is vivid as Paul declared his boasting to be **in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**. For the Judaizers the Cross was an object of shame; for Paul it was the object of glorying. They gloried in the flesh; he gloried in the Savior. The “Cross” speaks of the atonement of Christ with which Paul was identified (cf. 2:20) and by which **the world** was **crucified to Paul and he to the world**. The world system with all its allurements, fleshly displays, and religions of human effort was cast aside by Paul. He looked at the world as if it were on a cross — and the world looked at Paul as though he were on a cross.

B. Verse 15 –

In view of the Cross of Christ and a believer’s new position with respect to the world, no outward religious symbol or lack of it means anything as a way of salvation (5:6). The only thing that matters is to be a part of the **new creation** by the new birth (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).

C. Verse 16 – “Peace and mercy” from God are available to those who walk according to “this rule” = according to the message of salvation by grace through faith alone. This blessing is pronounced on believing Galatians (Gentiles) AND on believing Jews. [The NIV errs in trans. “even to the Israel of God” rather than “and upon the Israel of God” as in the NASB.] While some believe that the “Israel of God” is a reference to the church, and therefore the church has permanently replaced the nation of Israel in the program of God, the evidence does not support such a conclusion.

1) The repetition of the preposition (“upon” or “to”) indicates groups are in view.

2) All the 67 other occurrences of the term “Israel” (Ἰσραὴλ *Israēl*) in the NT refer to Jews.

3) Paul elsewhere referred to 2 kinds of Israelites—believing Jews & unbelieving Jews (Rom. 9:6)

So that it would not be thought that Paul is anti-Semitic, he demonstrated by means of this benediction his deep love and concern for true Israel, that is, Jews who had come to Christ.

4. Paul's _____ (6:17-18)

Paul's calling as an apostle & the message he preached had been challenged by the Judaizers. He asked for an end to such trouble, & he offered as a final proof to his critics the marks of Jesus on his body. These "marks" (στίγματα *stigmata*) meant signs of _____ such as were branded on slaves and cattle. Paul referred to the scars on his body, which were caused by persecution for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 4:10–11; 6:5, 9; 11:24–25), because they demonstrated he was a slave of Christ & not just a people-pleaser (cp. 1:10). "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant (δοῦλος *doúlos*) of Christ."

FINAL THOUGHTS

Who are the primary targets of Galatians in our world today?

1. The answer is not a _____ group(s).
 - A. Protestant Liberalism
 - B. Cults: Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, etc.
 - C. Roman Catholics
 - D. Dominion Theology, Theonomy, Christian Reconstructionism
 - E. **Etc. (*et certera*)** — from Middle English and from Latin — means "and the rest" or "and other things".

It does no good just to point fingers at others. The real problem is _____ than that.

2. The target of Galatians today *is anyone who depreciates Jesus Christ as sufficient Savior and minimizes the power of the Holy Spirit as sufficient guide. ... Whoever minimizes the sufficiency of Christ or discounts the power of the Spirit finds the finger of Paul pointing right at him or her.* - Scot McNight, NIVAC: Galatians, (1995); pages 310, 311

"To find contemporary analogies to the legalism of the Judaizers we must find more than identical features (circumcision, food restrictions, calendars) of regulated behavior among Christians. We must be in search of practices and features of modern Christianity that debunk the sufficiency of Christ and relegate the Holy Spirit to a non-essential feature of Christian living. We must become systems analysts, examining what we teach to see if it roots everything in Christ or whether it has traits of the Christ-plus-something system." (35)

"If our perception of Paul's essential points is correct, namely, that Judaizing legalism was wrong because of its weakening of the centrality and sufficiency of Christ and the Spirit, we are left with all kinds of applications—in all contexts of the church in the Western world. Christ has been pushed to the side & the Spirit has been neglected as much in evangelicalism as they have been in the German state church, the Anglican communion of Great Britain, and the mainline denominations of the United States." (38)