

Galatians 6

- Our final lesson in Galatians covers the end of Chapter 5 and all of Chapter 6
 - And it brings together everything Paul has taught in this letter – and in a sense, it is a fitting conclusion to all four books of the New Testament in this series (*1&2 John, Jude, Galatians*)
 - In his final section of the letter, Paul emphasizes walking in faith, not by works of flesh
 - He stresses the freedom we have to follow Christ, yet to do so in keeping with the commandments of Christ
 - He emphasizes discernment among believers, to know that those who do disobey these truths are not to be trusted
 - He counsels on the rewards that await those who are diligent
 - Many of these themes appeared in John's letters and in Jude's letter
 - We've already heard teaching on being wary of false teachers
 - Not falling for teaching that appeals to the flesh through unnecessary constraints or excess liberties
 - Concerning ourselves with our reward, so that we will not lose it in the day of our judgment
- So we'll start tonight as Paul ended last week, reiterating the important point that makes all that follows possible

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

- The human experience exists as a dichotomy
 - Either we are led by the Spirit, or we are led by the flesh
 - Believers are led by Spirit, while unbelievers are led by their flesh
 - Believers are not under Law, that is it has no jurisdiction over us
 - While unbelievers stand condemned by Law
- Therefore, Christians have positional righteousness because of our faith in Christ

- We are righteous by faith, in that we have been promised to receive the righteousness of Christ
- We received the Spirit as a down payment on that promise of righteousness
- And one day we will receive a body that is righteous
- As Paul said the true Christian is one who hopes for righteousness based on God's promise
- So Paul reiterates the truth of our current position before the Lord
 - We are led (or we could say carried) by the Spirit
 - Though our English Bible may say "if" you are led but the Greek word carries a meaning of "since" you are led...
 - Every Christian is led by the Spirit
 - That leading comes in place of Law
 - The Law no longer guides our life because we have the very Author of that Law living in us
 - So our faith has already granted us positional righteousness
 - And now the Spirit lives in us to lead us into experiential righteousness
- With this statement, Paul launches into his final section of the letter
 - He's going to make application from all the doctrine he's provided in the past chapters
 - That's the natural and proper thing to do
 - We learn doctrine to better understand Christ and ourselves
 - And then we work to apply what we learn so that we can become less like ourselves and more like Christ
 - Paul turns to helping us apply the truths he has taught
 - Equally importantly, we'll notice Paul continuing to drive a wedge between the Judaizers and the Galatian church
 - He's going to expose their motives

- And he's going to remind them once again of his sincerity and authority

[Gal. 5:19](#) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

[Gal. 5:20](#) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

[Gal. 5:21](#) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[Gal. 5:22](#) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[Gal. 5:23](#) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

[Gal. 5:24](#) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[Gal. 5:25](#) If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

[Gal. 5:26](#) Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

- To properly understand and interpret this passage, we need to remain focused on the contrast Paul is painting
 - For example, the list begins with a mention of the deeds of the flesh
 - That reference is contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit in v.22
 - When the word "flesh" and the word Spirit are contrasted, they become labels for two kinds of people
 - Flesh stands for unbelievers
 - While spirit stands for believers
 - Notice also in v.21 Paul says that those who practice deeds of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom
 - This would confirm that the first group are representative of unbelievers
 - While the second group are described in v.24 as those who belong to Christ, confirming they are believers
- So immediately, we see that these two lists are a contrast between the behaviors that characterize unbelievers living according to their flesh and believers living in the Spirit

- And when we try to interpret Paul's point, we must take note of three points concerning these two lists
 - First, it's clear these lists are not intended to be all inclusive
 - The characteristics that identify the unbeliever include 15 distinct behaviors
 - But certainly there are more than 15 ways unbelievers demonstrate their fleshly nature
 - Where is murder, theft, etc?
 - So we must conclude Paul's list was merely representative of this group's nature
- Secondly, when we look at the list of nine "fruits" of the Spirit, we cannot conclude that is an all-inclusive list either
 - There are other ways the Spirit manifests Himself in our lives
 - Where is charity, self-sacrifice, wisdom, etc?
 - So the second list represents behaviors that characterize the life of a believer living under the influence of the Spirit
- Finally, these lists are not mutually exclusive either
 - A believer can exhibit behaviors more typical of the flesh
 - Believers get angry, jealous, drunk and the like
 - And an unbeliever can exhibit a behavior typical of a believer
 - They can show patience, kindness and the like
 - That's why in v.21 Paul uses the word "practice" in describing these traits
 - Taken together, the flesh produces a lifestyle of these behaviors
 - And since the unbeliever only has the flesh, then these behaviors will be the norm
- So then what is the point of this list?
 - Paul's first point is that over time a Spirit-led life should produce in us a degree of experiential righteousness

- We already have positional righteousness based on our confession of faith
- But we've also been given the means for pursuing experiential righteousness by following the leading of the Spirit
- And following the Spirit will produce fruitful evidence of the Spirit's work in our life
 - That evidence can't be measured in discrete terms
 - It is measured on balance and over time
 - Just as the unrighteous "practice" unrighteousness, the believer will come to demonstrate more and more evidence of righteousness
- When we follow the Spirit, we'll find that more and more our thoughts and behaviors will align with the Lord's desires
 - And the evidence of that change will be patience when before we had outbursts of anger
 - Faithful reliance on the Lord where before we engaged in idolatry or sorcery
 - Strife and disputes fade and in their place we find peace and joy
 - Immorality and impurity and drunkenness are replaced by self-control
 - Hatred and selfishness is replaced by sacrificial love
- But if we resist the leading of the Spirit, then we will largely remain where we started
 - Since our flesh continues to dominate us, then the behaviors we exhibit will continue to mirror those of unbelievers
 - That's why Paul says in v.25 that since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in that same manner
- Paul's second point emphasizes that this transformation is reserved for the believer, because it depends on the Spirit
 - In v.21 Paul reminds the church how he taught earlier that the unbelievers will not have the power to make this transition

- It cannot happen for those who lack the Spirit
- We can tell this list was a veiled reference to the Judaizers
 - Notice Paul included such behaviors as disputes, dissensions, and factions
 - Those were the sins of the Judaizers in splitting the church
- These men were unbelievers, and so their lives testified to the absence of the Spirit
 - And Paul wanted the church to understand who they truly were
- But it's equally important for a Christian to remember that living under the Law of Moses is also powerless to produce the fruit of righteousness
 - Notice at the end of v.23 Paul says that the fruits of the Spirit are not "against" the law
 - The Greek word translated against is *kata*, which can also mean "according to"
 - So we should translate the phrase "there is no law according to such things"
 - There are no laws that produce these positive outcomes
 - The Law merely prohibited certain behaviors and mandated other behaviors
 - Love, patience, joy and the like never entered into equation
- So while many teachers like to dwell on the two lists of fruit and passions, I think the real value is found in stepping back and considering Paul's argument overall
 - Paul's concern is whether we are taking advantage of our freedom to experience righteousness
 - Will we follow the Spirit and enjoy a taste of righteousness now
 - For it's a sweet thing to act in righteous ways
 - It is a taste of heaven that only the believer can experience
 - Or will we remain living in our flesh, satisfying our fleshly desires?

- Or even worse...will we get sidetracked in pursuing a dead and useless law in an attempt to produce self-righteousness?
 - Neither will bring us the fruit of the Spirit
 - And what a shame to waste our time in such things
- So that's why Paul ends in v.26 saying let's not become boastful and competing with one another
 - He's referring to competition of the flesh that results from attempts to follow the Law
 - We call it legalism
 - When we try to pursue self-righteousness, we immediately begin to compare our performance with others, always looking for a standard we can beat
 - It's fleshly, selfish and counter to true sanctification
 - That's what the Judaizers were encouraging, in the tradition of the Pharisees
- So leaving Chapter 5, Paul insists that Christians put aside the Law and thoughts of self-righteousness and pursue living by the Spirit, seeking to experience a measure of righteousness
 - But we all know that no Christian will follow the Spirit perfectly
 - Sin is still an ever-present reality this side of Heaven
 - So now Paul develops further what Spirit-led living looks like given the reality of a church made up of sinful people

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal. 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Gal. 6:4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

Gal. 6:5 For each one will bear his own load.

- To the church, Paul says when one is caught in any trespass, we are to restore such a person, not condemn them

- First, let's notice Paul describes someone caught in a trespass
 - But Paul doesn't mean we catch the person sinning
 - Paul is describing someone who is entangled or falls into sin
 - In other words, these instructions apply to someone who has a bad moment, or bad day, and they succumb to temptation
 - They were caught by their flesh and now they need restoration from that sin
 - Perhaps they fell into gossip, or lying
 - Perhaps it was more serious, like sexual infidelity
 - But Paul says "any" trespass so long as it was the product of a weak moment of the flesh
- But this description would preclude someone who sins repeatedly and unrepentantly
 - Christians who sin in that way are placed outside fellowship, as we learned before
 - Restoration is for those who want to be better
- And restoration refers to restoring fellowship in the body of Christ
 - The person is already forgiven by faith alone
 - But they want and need the benefit of a body to support them in their walk of faith
 - And that fellowship depends on a common walk in the Spirit
 - So they are to be restored
- Then next we notice that the responsibility for the restoration belongs to you who are spiritual
 - The term spiritual describes a person walking in the Spirit and not giving in to the flesh
 - We can presume Paul is describing the leaders in the church
 - Those who have been entrusted with leadership precisely because they show fruit of the Spirit in a consistent way are the ones to restore a weak brother or sister

- This is so unlike the way the Law regulated conduct
 - If we were to live according to the Law, then when one of our group sinned, we would be forced by the Law to exact a price from that person as a condition of restoration
 - But under grace, we don't exact anything except a repentant heart
 - Instead of judgment and condemnation, Paul says give a spirit of gentleness
- Finally, Paul warns those who guard the flock and act to restore fellowship that they not become haughty like the Pharisees did
 - They cannot forget they are also sinners who are caught in trespasses from time to time
 - No one is free from such stumbles, so we must maintain a healthy self image
 - Paul says keep looking at yourself, meaning continually examine your own heart
 - So you will not be tempted to think yourself better than you are, and thereby fall into even greater sin
 - The effect of this grace oriented approach to sin in the body is that we bear one another's burdens
 - When you sin, you come to me and confess and I restore you based on grace
 - And when I sin, I come to you and you grant me restoration as well
 - In the course of that exchange, we are encouraging and exhorting each other to do better
 - In that way, we bear other's burdens
 - What a wonderful difference from a church living under the condemnation of Law...but we're not without law
- Paul says that when we live this way, we are fulfilling the Law of Christ
 - The Law of the Christ is the law written on our hearts that Jeremiah promised would come with the New Covenant

- This Law replaces the Law of Moses
- This is why we say that Christians still live by rules and standards
- But those standards aren't found in reading the Ten Commandments or any other part of the Law of Moses
- They are found on our heart and directed by the Holy Spirit
- That's why I can't give you a list of the Laws of Christ
 - Our flesh loves to see things written in black and white
 - But in His wisdom, God chose to right His Law in blood on our hearts where we can't see it
 - Instead, we can only follow Him in spirit and truth – if we follow Him at all
- The Law of Christ can be summarized though, because Jesus did it for us

[Luke 10:26](#) And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"

[Luke 10:27](#) And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

[Luke 10:28](#) And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."

- So Paul says that when we bear each other's burdens and restore one another without judgment, we are fulfilling the Law of Christ
- We are to love our neighbor as we love ourself
- And we are doing these things because of our love for God
- When we live by a legalistic code of rules, we begin to deceive ourselves Paul says
 - We come to think ourselves better than we truly are simply because we begin to meet some standard
 - But we forget that for every standard we do meet there are a thousand we don't
 - So we deceive ourself through selective rule keeping
 - Moreover, we grow into life inspectors

- We will soon begin to evaluate everyone else to decide if they are measuring up to our rules as well
 - When we do this, we find it easier to boast about ourselves in relationship to others
 - All this energy is wasted and worthless
 - Paul says we should focus on examining our own lives, not others' lives
 - And we will have reason to boast concerning ourselves in the future
 - The future Paul is thinking about is our judgment day when we stand before the Lord
 - So he says in v.4 that our judgment won't come in relationship to other men...it comes in relationship to the Lord's desires
 - And in that sense, each man will bear his own load
 - On our judgment day, we will bear personal responsibility for what we have done
 - And in that moment, comparisons we made between ourselves and others won't matter
- Now Paul brings his argument to a conclusion

Gal. 6:6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Gal. 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Gal. 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Gal. 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- How can a church be successful in this pursuit of experiential righteousness?
- In light of our common struggle against sin and the universal call to follow the Spirit and considering our coming judgment before Christ, how can we help each other be successful in that moment?

- First, Paul says the teaching and receiving of the word is our first priority
 - There will be those teaching good things to the body of Christ in the hope of stimulating the body into greater obedience to the Spirit
 - The teacher is bearing the burdens of the church in the sense of the work, diligence and sacrifice that is required to become knowledgeable of the word of God
 - Speaking from experience, there is no more difficult task
 - The Lord simply doesn't reveal His word to those who approach Him without sincerity, commitment and diligence
 - So the teacher has lifted that weight off our shoulders and assumed it upon their own
- Meanwhile, those who receive the benefit of such teaching are then expected to share good things with the teacher
 - Sharing good things means material support so that the teacher might be able to do even more teaching
 - This is a tangible means of bearing another's burdens
 - There is real financial sacrifice required to pay another's way
 - But in eternal terms, it's a bargain
 - There is also a time commitment on the part of the student to sit and listen patiently, and that is a burden they bear as well
- Secondly, Paul says the church can't expect to mock God and get away with it
 - Paul is referring to a Christian who chooses to live in the flesh without regard for the consequences
 - Repeatedly giving in to the flesh and living without regard for the consequences for sin is mocking God
 - We mock His tolerance and patience
 - We mock His role as Judge
 - Imagine walking into a court room and telling a judge you plan to keep speeding as much as you want

- What would that judge do to put you in your place?
 - So imagine what God will do with us when we live that way?
- Paul says we will reap what we sow
 - The agricultural metaphor is easy enough to understand
 - When you plant corn seed, you get corn stalks
 - When you plant wheat grain, you get wheat stalks
 - So when you sow sin, you will receive discipline
 - And it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God
- Likewise, Paul says in v.8 that how we invest our time will be reflected in how the Lord rewards us
 - If we live a life in the flesh, then we will reap corruption in many forms
 - The corruption begins here and now, but it doesn't end here
 - We will also corrupt our eternal inheritance, our reward
 - But if we sow obedience to the Spirit, then we reap eternal life
 - Paul doesn't mean salvation, since obviously we do nothing to earn salvation
 - He means we will receive our reward in eternity
 - As well as experiencing a taste of righteousness now
 - I should also note in passing that this verse is saying nothing about money or personal riches
 - Unscrupulous men and false teachers have twisted this verse and others like it to suggest that we can manipulate the Lord for profit
 - That if we give (sow) money to a ministry, then we will receive (reap) financial reward
 - We can see clearly in this context that Paul is not teaching a principle about money or giving

- So to use this verse in that context is a complete misuse of scripture
- Finally, the road of walking with the Spirit is a long journey, and the reward only comes at the end
 - So Paul says to the church we must not lose heart in doing good
 - Doing good doesn't merely refer to acts of charity
 - Paul means in the sense of living in the Spirit, following His leading and living to please the Lord
 - There is no such thing as retirement from a Spirit-led life
 - We walk with the Lord for a lifetime and then eternally thereafter
 - Paul says there is a reward to be found for those who do not grow weary
 - Weariness in a Christian walk can appear in various forms
 - Christians who flame out in a blaze of sin and corruption, destroying their witness and perhaps their life as well
 - Christians who let life's distractions pull them away over time, slowly losing interest in the things of God
 - Christians who stumble in a moment of sin and never seek restoration, too proud and vain to humble themselves
 - Or Christians who sour to the message and its call to obedience, preferring the pleasure of sin
 - Instead, let us persevere in doing good, especially to those in the household of God
 - There is a priority for where to bring our acts of charity and our gifts of the Spirit
 - And that priority is to serve other Christians
 - While generally charity to the world is never a bad thing, we must be careful to ensure we never neglect the needs of the church
- Finally, we end the letter with parting comments on the Judaizers and on Paul's authority

[Gal. 6:11](#) See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

[Gal. 6:12](#) Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

[Gal. 6:13](#) For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

[Gal. 6:14](#) But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

[Gal. 6:15](#) For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

[Gal. 6:16](#) And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

[Gal. 6:17](#) From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

[Gal. 6:18](#) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

- As Paul begins the closing of the letter, he takes a second to note that he was writing the words at this point
 - Paul usually relied on a scribe to write his letters
 - He would dictate his thoughts in some way, while the scribe wrote them down
 - I would have loved to see the process
 - Did these words just flow off Paul's tongue under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?
 - Or did Paul suffer writer's block once in a while, revising his letter many times, crossing things out, etc.
 - In any case, here Paul must have taken the pen from the scribe and written out the last few lines of the text in his own hand
 - So he calls attention to the fact that he was the one writing the note at this point
 - He says look at the large letters I'm writing
 - This is another place some cite to argue Paul suffered from poor eyesight
 - His poor eyes required he write in large letters
 - It's not unusual for an author to write the conclusion himself
 - Paul did the same thing in numerous letters

- His reason was to authenticate the letter and to draw attention to his conclusion
- Looking at what Paul wrote, he begins to speak about the motives of the Judaizers
 - First, Paul highlights their egos
 - He says those who are disturbing the church with teaching on circumcision and the Law are simply looking for a way to show off their flesh
 - He means that these men sought to use legalism to prop up their own egos, just as Paul described earlier
 - They ride into town, teach that the law and circumcision was required for Christians, and then show off their own piety under the Law
 - In effect, they create their own game where the rules are rigged to favor them and their fleshly pursuits
 - Secondly, in the latter half of v.12 Paul says they are motivated by fear of persecution
 - If they were to preach Christ and grace in the proper way, they would face the same persecution that Paul received
 - This was persecution at the hands of the Jews, who hated to hear a message that invalidated their law
 - So to avoid persecution, they changed the message of the cross
 - They added back Law and circumcision, which appeased the Jews
 - And now Paul was exposing them for the cowards they were
 - Thirdly, Paul points out their hypocrisy in v.13
 - These men do not even keep the Law themselves
 - Paul is referring to their selective use of the Law
 - They kept the parts they liked and ignored the parts they didn't like

- Never mind the fact that no man can keep the Law perfectly anyway
 - These guys weren't even trying
 - They were hypocrites
- They only wanted to brag about their ability to convince others to their way of thinking
- Finally, Paul contrasts himself with these evil men
 - In v.14 Paul says he only boasts in the work of Christ, never in his own work
 - By the work of Christ, Paul says the word was crucified to Paul
 - He means that anything the world might offer to attract Paul died with Christ on the cross
 - And then he says that Paul was crucified to the world
 - Meaning anything in Paul that might have wanted to please the world was also put to death with Christ
 - So by process of elimination, the only thing that remains is Paul living for Christ
 - Being circumcised or not being circumcised is nothing
 - These things represent Jew and Gentile
 - So Paul is saying within the church that being Jew or Gentile is nothing
 - The only thing that matters is being a new creation in Christ, which we all become by faith
 - To those in the church who understand this truth and live according to it, Paul pronounced a blessing
 - Peace and mercy will rest upon us
 - We are at peace with our coming righteousness and with following the Spirit in the meantime
 - We know the mercy of the Lord and show it to others routinely

- And at the end of v.16, Paul pronounces a special blessing on the Jewish believers in the church
 - The Israel of God are the remnant of Israel
 - The believing Jews who have found Jesus as Messiah
- Paul's ending command to the church is an interesting one
 - He asks the church to defend him in the face of the Judaizers' attacks
 - Paul says let no one cause trouble for me
 - The church had a responsibility to uphold their leaders and their reputation
 - Paul's defense for his request is to remind the church that his own body bore the marks of suffering he received in the name of Christ
 - Those marks demonstrated his courage and sincerity to preach the true Gospel
 - The enemy attacks those who oppose him, and Paul's body bore the marks of that opposition
 - If Paul subjected his body to the attacks of Christ's enemies for the sake of the church, then the least they could do is defend him against those same enemies
- The letter ends in customary fashion
 - Paul extends the grace of the Lord to the spirit of every believer in the church
 - And it concludes with an Amen, which we all echo