Sunday, May 26, 2019

Lesson: Galatians 6:1-10; Time of Action: 48 A.D.; Place of Action: Paul writes to the churches in Galatia from Syrian Antioch

Golden Text: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

I. INTRODUCTION. The focus of this week’s lesson is putting the gospel in action. For sure, the gospel doesn’t mean anything if it isn’t seen in the way Christians live. Unbelievers often don’t pay us any attention when we talk about the gospel because too often we don’t practice what we preach. As a result, we are often called hypocrites. If we want people to take our faith seriously, we have to take it seriously ourselves by putting it into action. The lesson this week will remind us that as Christians our faith calls us to reach out not only to those in our church, but also those in our communities and beyond.

II. BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. Paul and Barnabas had just completed their first missionary journey (see Acts

13:2-14:28). They had visited Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities in the Roman province of Galatia, which is now present day Turkey. Upon returning to Antioch, Paul was accused by some Jewish Christians of diluting Christianity to make it more appealing to Gentiles. These Jewish Christians disagreed with Paul’s statements that Gentiles did not have to follow many of the religious laws that the Jews had obeyed for centuries. Some of Paul’s accusers had even followed him to those Galatian cities and had told the Gentile converts that they had to be circumcised and follow all the Jewish laws and customs in order to be saved. According to these men, Gentiles had to first become Jews in order to become Christians. In response to this threat, Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian churches. In it, he explains that following the Old Testament laws or the Jewish laws, will not bring salvation. A person is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and nothing else. Paul wrote this letter about 48 A.D. shortly before the meeting of the Jerusalem council which settled the law versus grace controversy (see Acts chapter 15). After a brief introduction (see Galatians 1:1-5), Paul addresses those who were accepting the Judaizers’ perverted gospel (see Galatians 1:6-9). He summarizes the controversy, including his personal confrontation with Peter and other church leaders (see Galatians 1:10-2:16). He then demonstrates that salvation is by faith alone by alluding to his own conversion (see Galatians 2:17-21), appealing to his readers’ own experience of the gospel (see Galatians 3:1-5), and showing that the Old Testament teaches about grace (see Galatians 3:6-20). Next, Paul explained the purpose of God’s laws and the relationship between law, God’s promises, and Christ (see Galatians 3:21-4:31). The Apostle then builds
his case for Christian liberty or freedom in Christ. We are saved by faith, not by keeping the law (see Galatians 5:1-12). Our freedom means that we are free to love and serve one another, not to do wrong (see Galatians 5:13-26). Our lesson continues with Paul discussing how believers are to treat each other.

III. CHRISTIANS FULFILLING LOVE’S LAW (Galatians 6:1-5)

A. Christians must show compassion to those falling into sin (Galatians 6:1). In this verse Paul writes, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” The use of the word “brethren” refers to other believers. All of us are capable of being “overtaken in a fault” or committing sin. To be “overtaken in a fault” can mean that the one “overtaken” or commits an error of fault, was either surprised by the fault itself and did not mean to fall into the sin, or it can mean the person was surprised when his or her sin was found out. In either case, the person Paul is talking about who has fallen into sin is a Christian and his or her fellow believers must restore them. The phrase “ye which are spiritual” identifies those who demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit by living a Spirit-led life. Those who are “spiritual” are to “restore” the person to fellowship with the body of believers. The word “restore” translates a medical term meaning “to mend” or “to put a dislocated part
The word “restore” gives a beautiful picture of the body of Christ repairing itself. When this restoration takes place, Paul said that we should do it “in the spirit of meekness” or gentleness. Here is a direct application of the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:23). “Meekness” or humility, not arrogant superiority is needed when dealing with a wayward brother or sister in Christ. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees who brought the adulteress to Jesus (see John 8:1-11), Paul said that we are to “restore” a sinning brother or sister “in the spirit of meekness considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” This simply means that we have to treat the sinning brother or sister kindly knowing that no one is exempt from, or immune to sin. Even those who are spiritually mature can be tempted (see I Corinthians 10:12-13) and fail. **Note:** What Paul is describing here are more mature or spiritual believers restoring a sinning brother or sister to fellowship and usefulness in the church. This affirms that Christians, in fact do sin at times. It also tells us that although all believers should exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, there are still different levels of fruitfulness and maturity or growth among Christians. This is because the Christian life is a continuing process of growth and development of Christlike character (see I Corinthians 3:1; I Peter 2:2). The process of restoration must first involve bringing the sinner to acknowledge his or her fault and repent of it. When this is done, the sinner can be reassured of God’s love and received back by God’s people. We must take note that Paul’s words involve the actions believers must take toward another believer who has fallen into sin and not a habitual,
unsaved sinner. Paul’s point is that those who are more mature in the faith are to look out for those who are struggling with sin, and they are to restore them in a spirit of humility and meekness while being aware that they themselves are capable of sinning no matter how spiritually mature they may be.

B. Christians must follow Christ’s law (Galatians 6:2). According to this verse, those who are spiritual must also “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” The word “burdens” refers to heavy loads one cannot bear alone. Those loads may be temptations or trials. “Burdens” also include weights upon the soul—discouragement, anxiety, depression, and pain. Paul commands that believers enter sympathetically into these “burdens” with the sufferers and do whatever we can to help them. This may require prayer, admonition, instruction, reassurance, or physical help. Giving physical aid and spiritual support is vital when our fellow believers are grieving, or ill, or jobless, or are in some other kind of difficulty (see Romans 15:1). When we help others with their “burdens,” Paul said we “fulfil the law of Christ” or the law of love which is “love one another” (see John 13:34; 15:12). Paul had already discussed the law of love in Galatians 5:14, and now he is applying it. Too often even believers fail to help people with their “burdens” or troubles because they believe that the troubles are deserved. The believer will often say, “If they had made the right decision they wouldn’t be in this situation. It’s not my responsibility to help them through it.” But remember, we are our brother’s keeper whether he or she is right or wrong (see
Note: A loving concern for our brethren, as their keepers, is a great duty, which is strictly required of us, but is often neglected by us. Those who are unconcerned about the affairs of their brethren, and don’t help when they have the opportunity to prevent them from hurting their bodies, their goods, or their reputation, are actually speaking Cain’s language (see Leviticus 19:17; Philippians 2:4).

C. Christians must avoid foolish thinking (Galatians 6:3). In this verse the Apostle said, “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” Paul’s warning is that we must be careful not to think that we are better than others. It is a warning against pride. Pride or conceit can interfere with Christians acting in a compassionate way to bear the burdens of fellow believers. When we think so highly of ourselves that we refuse to help another person who is trapped in sin, we are deceiving ourselves, for we are no better than the sinning brother or sister. In reality, all of us are nothing before God (see Isaiah 40:17; Daniel 4:34-35). For sure, we didn’t contribute anything to our salvation (see John 3:27). If we have any measure of spirituality, it has been given to us and maintained by God. So then, why should we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are too good to help others bear their weights? Note: It’s worth saying that the church is a unique place. A person who has not achieved much success in the secular world may find himself or herself elevated to an important position in the local church. This shows that God can empower and enable His people regardless of their backgrounds,
but it can also expose one to pride. The most confident and proud people are the most likely ones to fall (see Proverbs 16:18). Every believer needs to do an honest and thorough self-examination to avoid self-deception which is the worse deception.

D. Christians accept frank advice (Galatians 6:4-5).

1. (vs. 4). Instead of deceiving ourselves, in this verse Paul said, “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” This is Paul’s warning to believers to avoid arrogance and to stop comparing ourselves with others. The word “prove” means “to put one’s work to the test.” The phrase “let every man prove his own work” means that everyone must stand back and test or evaluate his or her actions objectively, using God’s Word as the yardstick, not the actions of others. Simply put, each person must be sure that he is doing his very best, carefully examining his own actions, attitudes, and behavior to be sure that they line up with God’s Word. If a person does this, “then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” The person who measures his or her actions by God’s standards will find their works or actions to be acceptable and can rejoice in their achievements without worrying about someone else’s actions. On the other hand, the person who glories in how much better he or she is than someone else is boasting about another person’s less than perfect actions. Therefore, his own actions bring him or her no satisfaction or joy. The believer should examine themselves to see if they
are accomplishing what God wants them to do, and as the last part of this verse says, “then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” Note: Paul advised everyone to prove his or her own work, meaning our own actions or behavior. The Apostle directs us as believers to prove our actions by seriously and impartially examining them by God’s Word, to see if what we are doing is agreeable to it. Instead of being quick to judge and censure others, we should search and try our own ways (see Romans 14:4). Paul’s point is that if each believer would focus on his or her own actions and deeds, they might easily discover their own defects and failings which would convince them that they don’t have any reason to be conceited or severe in judging others. So, the best way to keep us from being proud of ourselves is to prove or evaluate our own selves. The better we know our own hearts and ways, the more likely we are to show compassion and help others with their weights and sins (see Hebrews 12:1). If we don’t examine our actions during this life, we will be profoundly embarrassed at the judgment seat of Christ (see II Corinthians 5:10). There won’t be anyone whose deeds or actions we can hide behind or blame for what we’ve done. Therefore, we would be wise to develop the habit of examining ourselves in front of the mirror of God’s Word.

2. (vs. 5). This verse goes on to say, “For every man shall bear his own burden.” The word “For” could be translated “because,” indicating that Paul was about to give a reason for his previous statement. The reason we
cannot rely on comparing what we do with others is because “every man shall bear his own burden.” At first glance, this verse may appear to contradict verse 2. But Paul uses a different Greek word for “burden” here from the one in verse 2 which refers to a heavy load too great for anyone to carry alone; they need help. “Burden” in this verse refers to a lighter load, and was often used to describe a soldier’s backpack, something that an individual can carry alone. Some “burdens” are our responsibilities and must be borne or carried alone while others can be shared (see Romans 15:1). Here “burden” probably does not refer to sin or its consequences as in verse 2, but to the work Paul mentioned in verse 4, the normal duty which falls upon every man or woman to prove or examine themselves. Jesus used this same word to speak of His “burden,” which is “light” (see Matthew 11:30). The point is that ultimately, each person is responsible for his or her own individual actions before God whether good or bad; some burdens must be carried alone.

IV. CHRISTIANS CARE FOR FAITHFUL INSTRUCTORS (Galatians 6:6). This verse says “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” One way that we can fulfill our own responsibility and at the same time help carry another’s burden (see Galatians 6:2), is to give support to our spiritual leaders. The word “communicate” here means “to share.” In this verse, it refers to giving financial support to “him that teacheth in all good things” meaning those who faithfully teach us spiritually from God’s Word. Believers
are to freely share our material blessings with pastors and teachers who faithfully teach God’s Word (see I Corinthians 9:11-14; I Timothy 5:17-18; Philippians 4:14-19). In the early church, Christians voluntarily gave financial gifts to support their spiritual leaders. Today’s church must follow their example. Those in the church who devote themselves to teaching the saints are worthy of support (see I Corinthians 9:6-11, 14; Philippians 4:15-18; I Timothy 5:17-18). Paul’s rationale was very simple: the teacher shares good spiritual things from God’s Word, so the hearer should share good material things with him or her. However, the phrase “all good things” can include any service that believers receive not just teaching and preaching. Many Christians serve as volunteers while others have devoted themselves to full-time ministry, and they too should be compensated by the other members of the flock. But be warned, financial gain should never be the reason for people to serve God and the body of Christ (see I Peter 5:2). Note: Paul didn’t usually accept financial support, but he did encourage the churches to support those who labored in “word and doctrine” (see I Timothy 5:17), that is in preaching and teaching. He told the Corinthians that “the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live (or be supported) of the gospel” (see I Corinthians 9:14). When Jesus sent His disciples on a preaching tour, He told them not to take anything with them but to rely on others to supply their needs (see Matthew 10:7-10), for as Jesus said, “The labourer is worthy of his hire” (see Luke 10:7). On some occasions, however, Paul did receive financial support (see II Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 4:15), but he usually supported himself as a tent maker (see Acts 18:3; II Thessalonians 3:8-10). In
essence, those who have answered God’s call to ministry or missions should be supported by the rest of God’s people. If God has blessed an individual with financial resources so that such support is not necessary, we should praise God for His provision. However, we should not speak against those who cannot serve unless they have the financial backing of their fellow Christians. This is another way God’s people can bear one another’s burdens.

V. CHRISTIANS WILL RECEIVE A FINAL HARVEST (Galatians 6: 7-10)

A. Christians must avoid deception (Galatians 6:7-8).

1. (vs. 7). This verse says “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Here Paul continues his exhortation about the necessity of material support of the gospel, and those who taught spiritual things. The Galatians had no problem honoring the false teachers who were deceiving them while they mistreated the faithful teachers of God’s Word. So Paul’s words, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” were undoubtedly spoken to warn those who didn’t want to do their duty of supporting their godly ministers that they were mocking God, or treating Him with contempt. God will not tolerate such mockery. The word translated “mocked” comes from the Greek word for “nose” and means “to turn up the nose at” or “to treat with contempt.” If we
think this principle of reaping and sowing does not work in every area of our lives, then we are deceiving ourselves and making a mockery of God’s Word. We are really treating God’s Word with contempt if we think that we can refuse to invest in God’s ministry and still receive His blessing. Believe me, the chances of that happening are slim and none! Again, we would be deceiving ourselves. And as we said earlier (see note on verse 3), self-deception is the worst kind of deception! Paul went on to warn his readers what would happen if they “mocked” God. He said, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” This is one of God’s universal principles and it certainly applies to supporting spiritual leaders (see I Corinthians 9:10-11; II Corinthians 9:6). In farming, the phrase “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” means that you’ll only get what you plant. The law of sowing and reaping normally applied to farming, but in this verse it relates to sharing with those who are faithful in teaching. If the Galatian Christians didn’t “sow,” or give generously to support honest, faithful teachers, they could expect to “reap” emptiness and even hardship in their lives. So Paul said to his readers, “Be not deceived.” When people think and act as if they won’t “reap” what they have sown, or that they will “reap” something different from what they have sown, they are deceiving themselves and mocking God, and no one can mock God and get away with it. **Note:** There is a common tendency among some people to think that there is an exception to every rule even this universal principle. They say “This principle may be true for everyone else, but it’s not true for me. I won’t have to reap a harvest from the seeds I sow because I can sow whatever seed I
want and still expect a good harvest.” This way of thinking only proves the words of the prophet Jeremiah, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (see Jeremiah 17:9). God’s principle of reaping and sowing is true for everyone! For some reason, our capacity for self-deception is frightening. It’s amazing how blind so-called brilliant people can be to their own spiritual direction in life. In fact, the more brilliant people are, the more skilled they are at deceiving themselves and trying to hide from God. Paul’s warning against self-deceptions needs to be heard, and heard often.

2. (vs. 8). This verse says “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Here Paul returned to the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (see Galatians 5:16-25) using the principle of sowing and reaping. Paul pictures the “flesh” or our sinful nature, and the “Spirit” as two fields in which one can sow the thoughts, decisions, and actions of life. The apostle declared “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” The “flesh” by its very nature is corrupt; therefore, the harvest or what one reaps must be “corruption” or moral decay. This “corruption” begins to show itself in this life in the works of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-21). If a person “soweth to his flesh” by producing works or actions of the flesh, then “corruption” or moral decay will be the resulting harvest. By contrast, “he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Spiritual seed is first sown or planted when
we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is nurtured as
we walk in the Spirit’s strength, and it produces His fruit (see
Galatians 5:22-23). A Christian should be consistently
sowing to the Spirit, meaning that he or she should be
directing their lives toward the things of God, and the life
they live is evidence that they are followers of Christ and will
“reap life everlasting” or have eternal life. **Note:** We
should again be reminded that a believer can sin, but
he or she cannot continue in a sinful lifestyle if they
are truly born again. It is very important that the
Christian make daily choices to sow to the Spirit so that
his or her life reflects who he or she truly is in Jesus
Christ.

B. Christians must avoid fainting spirits
(Galatians 6:9-10).

1. (vs. 9). This verse says, “And let us not be
weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if
we faint not.” Sometimes we don’t immediately see the
reward for godly living and we are tempted to get tired of
doing good. Therefore, it was necessary for Paul to
encourage his readers saying “let us not be weary in well
doing.” This refers basically to our relationships and how
we treat people (see Galatians 6:2). The word “weary”
means “to grow tired” and the phrase “well doing” means
“to do good deeds” or “to treat people right.” Yes, even
Christians get tired of doing good and living right. **Note:**
One of the greatest obstacles to building and
rebuilding broken relationships is simply fatigue. We
can easily lose heart and get tired when we come up
against the same problems over and over again as we deal with others. Discouragement is one of the greatest tools of the devil and he wants us to think that we are not making a difference. Even Paul sounds discouraged when he talks about his efforts to rebuild his relationship with the Galatian believers: “I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you” (see Galatians 4:11, NIV). One of the greatest tools of the devil is discouragement. He uses it to make us think we are not making a difference in the world or the church. Paul’s advice was “faint not” or don’t give up. He recognized that fatigue and discouragement might cause Christians to throw in the servant’s towel and quit. So he presents an incentive to keep us from giving up when we grow weary of serving others in love. He said “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Sometimes the reaping of the harvest is experienced in this life. When we sow acts of love, we will “reap” a harvest of love in return. When we give generously and sacrificially to the needs of others, we will “reap” a harvest of gratitude as those needs are met. When we sow the seed of God’s Word into needy lives, we will experience the joy of their response. However, we must remember that reaping a harvest almost never happens on the same day that the seed is sown. We may not even see a harvest in this life from any good deeds we have sown. Nevertheless, we must never give up, because we know that “in due season” meaning “at the proper time in God’s plan” we will “reap” a harvest. Note: As we are obedient to this principle of reaping and sowing, God will honor our obedience and multiply our own harvest (see II Corinthians 9:8-11). The truth is, whether we receive the harvest from our
sowing in this life or not, we can rest assured that we will reap great rewards for our service to God and others when our Master returns and rewards those who have been faithful servants (see I Corinthians 3:13-15; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 22:12).

2. (vs. 10). Our final verse says “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Because of the world we live in, we will always have an “opportunity” or an occasion to “do good unto all men.” Since God has made it our duty to “do good” to others, He also provides us with opportunities for it (see Matthew 26:11). Whenever God gives us an “opportunity” to help others, He only expects us to be helpful based on our ability. The “opportunity” to “do good” is now, while we are alive which is the only season or time we have to “do good” to others. It’s always the season for sowing good deeds, and those who expect to enjoy the harvest season must not neglect those opportunities. We must sow good deeds over the whole field of our earthly existence. It’s not for us to decide who is worthy and who is unworthy of our good deeds. We should follow God’s example who sends the sun and rain on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust (see Matthew 5:43-45). As Christians, we have an obligation to “do good unto all men,” but as Paul declared, our good deeds are to be done “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” which is the family of believers. In other words, we are to come to the aid of our fellow saints first. Certainly, we can’t help everyone in the world, so we should be primarily concerned about our fellow believers,
especially those who are members of our own local church. Since we belong to Christ we belong to one another in one family (see I Corinthians 12:12-14). **Note:** We must use godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in exercising our charity or benevolence toward others, and particularly in choosing who we should be kind to. This is because no one who stands in need of us should be completely overlooked. However, if we use wisdom we will know when to put caring for fellow believers above caring for others including our family members if they are not saved. For sure, this lesson teaches that our loving concern is to be expressed for all people, but our special concern or priority should be to our fellow Christians.

**VI. Conclusion.** Many, if not all churches make it a point to care for the needs of their own members. However, when churches isolate themselves from their communities, our expressions of love are not seen by them. As a result, we are missing opportunities to show what Jesus is like to the world. Love is really not love until it is put into action. As Christians, we are called to be like Christ, and that certainly includes putting our love in action wherever we go, because people are always watching. In this week’s lesson, Paul challenged the Galatian Christians, and us, to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (see Galatians 6:10). Too often, we act as if this as an option, but it is not; it is a command. As Christians, we have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ which is based on love
(see John 3:16), and when we demonstrate that love we put the gospel in action.