

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 6TH-7TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

CARRY ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS (GALATIANS 6:1-5)

Perhaps an unfortunate byproduct of the legalism that had been placed on these Galatian Believers was a culture and atmosphere of judgmentalism and competition ("...you bite and devour one another," 5:15).

- A heavy emphasis on rule-following and legalism can create a climate of Believers who are "conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (5:26).

If we're trusting in Christ (not in our works) and we're walking by the Spirit (not in our flesh), how will we respond when we see another Believer who has fallen into sin and wrongdoing?

- We see truly spiritual, the attitude of our heart towards that brother or sister will be to restore them in a spirit of gentleness (vs. 1).
- We won't take a proud delight in shaming them or comparing ourselves to them.

To "restore" is to mend, put in order, or to heal—not to destroy, belittle, or shame.

- To "restore" also means to help bring back to a healthy and holy place—that person's sin can't be downplayed, ignored, or disregarded.
- A truly spiritual person will help restore a person while also being fully aware that they themselves can fall into the same sin if they're not careful. We're not better than they are!

If we're trusting in Christ and walking by the Spirit, we're also free to help carry other Believers' burdens (vs. 2).

- Sometimes, we fall into sin, discouragement, and heartache, and we carry the burdens of life like a heavy load that weighs us down.
- It's the job of the Christian community to spot those under a heavy load and help them carry it through encouragement, prayer, and support.

In carrying the burdens of other Believers, we fulfill the law of Christ—to love one another (Jn. 13:34).

- The only way we can truly support others selflessly is if we have an appropriate estimation of our own status (vs. 3).
- Sometimes we deceive ourselves into thinking we're better than other people—we're not! The ground is level at the foot of the cross!

Comparison is perhaps the rottenest fruit of legalism, and comparison is a giant distraction to us having an accurate assessment of how we're really doing spiritually.

- We're to examine our spiritual lives and not compare ourselves with anyone else (vs. 4).
- If we're being self-aware and humble, we'll realize that we don't have time to worry about being other peoples' personal Holy Spirit.

While the Christian community is to support each other and help carry one another's burdens, at the end of the day we are all individually accountable before God for our own spiritual lives and work (vs. 5).

- We will all stand before Christ (Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10) to have our works and lives examined.
- You can't blame your spiritual lethargy on church hurt, busyness, or bad examples.

GENEROSITY (GALATIANS 6:6-10)

Legalism always asks the question, "What's the bare minimum I have to do to keep the rules and get favor from God?"

- Spirit-empowered, grace-based living asks the question, "What do I get to do, or what can I do to serve God and bless others?"
- Why does Paul bring up sharing/generosity? How we approach money and giving is a very accurate litmus test of the state of our heart.

To that end, Paul encourages the Galatian Believers to be generous financially and share with those who teach them the Word (teaching elders/pastors, vs. 6).

- There are a lot of ways Christians can and should be generous (missions, non-profits, those in need, etc.), but biblically speaking, our generosity should always begin in the local church (1 Cor. 9:11, 1 Tim. 5:17).

"DON'T BE DECEIVED: GOD IS NOT MOCKED. FOR WHATEVER A PERSON SOWS HE WILL ALSO REAP" (GAL. 6:7)

The general principle is that there are natural consequences to our actions—every time we make a choice, we're also choosing the consequences of that action.

- If we sow selfishness and greed, we will receive what those things naturally produce.
- Good things don't grow overnight. We must be patient as we do good and wait to see fruit.

If you see financial giving and being generous to your church or to the work of the Lord as a "waste," you're deceived, and you're mocking God.

- Why? Because you're not throwing away your money when you give to God. You are investing it into something with eternal value, like planting a seed in the ground (vs. 7).
- To give is to have faith in God's unseen Kingdom.

Someday, the kingdoms, economies, businesses, governments, and bank accounts of this world will be completely gone.

- The only Kingdom that will remain is God's. Right now, we have an opportunity through faith to invest our resources (money, time, energy) into God's unseen Kingdom, believing His work and Kingdom are more precious and valuable than the stuff of this world.

You will get what you grow! If you plant seeds of generosity into this spiritual Kingdom, someday you will reap eternal reward.

- But if you simply live for yourself and sow according to the flesh, you will reap destruction. Everything you own will someday end up in a landfill, and if you've built your life on nothing but entertainment and selfishness, you may find out you are not even in the Kingdom.

Investing our resources (money, time, energy) into the unseen Kingdom of God often can be wearisome because we don't see immediate results (vs. 9).

- We must be patient and trust in God's perfect timing.
- We will someday reap at the proper time, if we keep going and don't give up (Matt. 24:13, Heb. 12:1).

As God gives us the opportunity, we're to work for the good of all (vs. 10).

- God has not given you the same opportunities to do good as the person sitting next to you. He has simply called you to be faithful in doing good in the opportunities He has given you.

- We are to do good to and serve all people, but that service should begin in the local church ("the household of faith").

ALL ABOUT JESUS (GALATIANS 6:11-18)

Many theories abound as to why Paul points to the "large letters" he's writing with his own hand (perhaps it's his bad eyesight, vs. 11).

- Most scholars agree that Paul's postscript (vs. 11-18) that he's writing with his own hands is a personal touch to authenticate the letter and show the Galatians his heart for them as a spiritual father.

Paul's going to keep it real and reveal the true intentions of the Judaizers (vs. 12-13).

- In the early church, most of the persecution came from the Jewish religious establishment.
- Persecution of Christianity also came from the Romans, but Judaism was a protected religion in the Roman Empire.
- So how could you still be a "Christian" and avoid persecution from both Jews and Romans?

Water down the gospel to where you get accepted by the Jews (because you still keep the law of Moses) and the Romans (because you just appear to be another sect of Judaism).

- That's the real reason the Judaizers were preaching and teaching circumcision! They didn't even keep the law themselves, yet they were zealous in making disciples of their "order" so they could boast in the flesh.

How can you be a "Christian" in our nation today and avoid persecution/criticism from both religious AND secular people?

- Water down the gospel: make it more about tradition/heritage/religion/culture than it is about living for and proclaiming Jesus and His truth.
- Religious people will accept you because you look the part and conform, and secular people will not criticize you because you are not a threat.

As for Paul, he's not interested in making a show of his work or getting acceptance from any particular group or party (vs. 14).

- Paul will only boast in the cross, and the world with all its accolades and glory has been crucified to him. It's dead to him, and he doesn't care.
- Paul doesn't want glory or acceptance: he wants Jesus to get the glory and for people to receive Jesus into their hearts and lives.

The religious ritual of circumcision and its invitation into living under the law doesn't matter anymore in making us right before God.

- What matters now in our lives is whether we have been made into a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).
- To be made right with God, we must be "born again" (John 3:3), regenerated and renewed (Titus 3:5), and be given a new heart and nature by the Holy Spirit (Ezk. 36:26).

When we call upon the name of Jesus in repentant faith and place our trust fully in Him (and that is our standard for being made right with God), we have peace with God and receive His grace (vs. 16).

- That's what it means to belong to the "Israel of God"—we're grafted into God's family as a result of our faith in His Messiah, Jesus.

"...LET NO ONE CAUSE ME TROUBLE..." (VS. 17)

Paul wasn't scared of a little criticism or persecution from these false teachers—he has seen and endured worse.

- "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus..."—like a slave who had been branded by the marks of his master, Paul had scars from his time in ministry.
- These scars ("the marks [brand] of Jesus") were a sign of Paul's complete allegiance to His King.

PAUL'S RESUME (2 COR. 11:23-28)

- Whipped with 39 lashes (5 different times), beaten with rods (3 different times), stoned.
- Shipwrecked (3 different times), adrift at sea (1 night and 1 day), lots of travel.
- Frequent danger from rivers, robbers, Jews, Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea, from false brothers.
- Toil, hardship, sleepless nights, cold, exposure.

On top of all of this suffering, Paul experienced the pressure of anxiety for all the churches (daily)!

- Paul wasn't serving Jesus in ministry for popularity, fame, acceptance, or religious clout.
- It was so others could experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ with their spirit as they put their hope and trust in Him (vs. 18).
- This is the message of the cross and the good news of what Jesus brings.

FREEDOM FROM THE SLAVERY OF SELFISHNESS.

- At its root, legalism is simply self-focused effort to earn God's favor, love, and salvation.
- At its root, sinfulness is self-focus that causes us to think only of what we want instead of what God wants and says is good.
- The gospel frees us from self-focus in all its forms; it frees us to live lives of goodness, generosity, beauty, and selflessness.

FREEDOM TO BEAR OTHERS' BURDENS.

- Other peoples' struggles, hurts, and heartaches are just as important as yours, but do you notice them?
- Other peoples' sins are not somehow worse than yours, even if they are different, but are you gentle, merciful, and gracious towards them?
- What's one practical thing you can do this week to help bear someone else's burden?

FREEDOM TO LIVE AND GIVE GENEROUSLY.

- If everyone in the Church practiced your level of financial generosity and service, what would happen to the Church?
- Giving generously to Christ's Kingdom is not a waste. It may get wearisome sometimes, but God sees, and He will reward in His timing.
- Living for yourself and investing solely in this life is most certainly a waste—it leads to destruction.

FREEDOM TO SERVE GOD WITH PURE MOTIVES.

- What matters most is the gospel and living to see as many people as we can come to know Christ and experience His grace and glory.
- What does not matter is religious performance or the acceptance/approval of others.
- Has Christ made you a "new creation?"
- Have you and the world had your "break-up?"