

Let Us Not Become Weary in Doing Good
Galatians 6:1-10
Key Verse: 6:9

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

In this passage Paul sets forth the practical application of his teaching to the Galatians. Compared to the application sections of other epistles, it is short, but very meaningful. As we study this passage, it is imperative that we keep in mind what we have learned thus far. Paul has emphasized that we are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, not by observing the law; we are saved only by God's grace, not by our own works. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law and set us free from the demands of the law. Moreover, God adopted us as his beloved children and gave us the Spirit of his Son. Now we can cry, "Abba, Father." We have become heirs of God. We are free to come to God, and to serve one another in love. Still, there are two forces within each of us: the Holy Spirit and the flesh. We must live by the Spirit of God to maintain our freedom. Then we bear good fruit; we can please God, bless others, and be happy. In today's passage Paul teaches us how to love one another practically in community (1-6). He also gives us an important principle to guide our new lives in Christ (7-10).

I. Carry each other's burdens (1-6)

Chapter 6 begins with practical teachings of how to love one another in Christian community. Many people think of love as a feeling. Yet love is more than a feeling. Paul uses action verbs: "restore," "carry," and "share," to explain how we Christians are to love one another.

First, restore gently those caught in sin (1). Verse 1 says, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted." Sin problems arise in the church, since it is a gathering of forgiven sinners. God's children may be enticed by Satan's temptation, stumble, and fall under the power of sin. The immediate cause may be alcohol or drug abuse, internet pornography, rebellion toward authority, jealousy, domestic violence, or any other work of the flesh. Whatever the means, sin enslaves a person and they become the prey of Satan. They lose joy, stop growing, and become a threat to others, for through them, Satan works to destroy the church. So Paul charges those who live by the Spirit to pay attention to sin problems in the Christian community. We cannot neglect or ignore them. We must deal with them properly for the good of everyone in Christ.

Paul says "restore that person." The word "restore" has the meaning of "mending what has been broken." It refers to restoring one's relationship with God, and with the Christian community, and helping them return to a useful position in the body of Christ. For this to happen, the sin must be confessed, repented and forgiven. When someone is "caught" by the power of sin, they need help to escape. The prophet Nathan helped King David to

confess his sin before God, which was the first step in obtaining freedom from it. This required great courage and wisdom on Nathan's part. Though sin must be dealt with clearly, the goal is restoration, not condemnation.

Paul included the word "gently," which implies the mind of Jesus Christ. Jesus called Matthew, a public sinner, to restore him to God and make him great. Matthew brought his friends--fellow public sinners. Jesus ate with them gladly and served them. Then the Pharisees criticized Jesus for associating with sinners. They saw sinners as incorrigible and useless, good for nothing, and to be cut off from fellowship. At that moment, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17). Jesus saw sinners like a doctor sees sick patients: If only they were healed from their sins, they would be useful to God. So Jesus humbled himself and served them patiently, until they were healed. For example, after Peter had denied him three times, Jesus visited him first and spoke the truth with grace, until Peter was restored (Jn 21:15). When we see someone caught in sin, we should restore them gently.

In dealing with others' sin problems, we must watch ourselves, or we too, may be tempted. It is easy to laugh at others who have fallen on the ice. But a similar thing may happen to us. So we must watch ourselves. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pe 5:8). Without exception, we are all vulnerable to Satan's temptation. So we must be humble and prayerful in dealing with the sin problem.

Second, carry each other's burdens (2-6). Let's read verse 2. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Here the Greek word for "burdens" is "baros." It is different from the Greek word for "load" in verse 5. That word is "phortion," which means a person's pack, like a backpack. Baros indicates a burden which cannot be carried by one person, especially a moral or spiritual burden. Fundamentally, the Bible tells us to bring all our burdens to Jesus. Jesus bore our sins in his body on the cross (1 Pe 2:24). Jesus invites us, saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). The Bible urges us to cast all our anxiety on God because he cares for us (1 Pe 5:7). However, Paul here urges us to carry each other's burdens. This fulfills the law of Christ. Jesus said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (Jn 13:34). When we share the burdens of fellow Christians, we practice the love of Christ. To do this effectively, we should develop genuine friendships in the body of Christ, as Jesus did with his disciples (Jn 15:14). When we have friendship, trust grows between us and we can share burdens together. On the other hand, if we are suspicious or judgmental, friendships will not develop and relationships will be broken.

How then can we share burdens with one another? First of all, we need to know that others have a burden and understand what that burden is. This calls for sensitivity and compassion. We Americans have a tendency to be individualistic. We easily focus on our own goals and pursuits, and ignore others around us. Frankly speaking, our lives are busy and hectic. We have no room in our hearts to embrace others. However, let's remember that Christian life is not individualistic; it is community life. We are a body. Each

member is closely related to the others (1 Co 12:12). When we take care of others, we are actually taking care of our own bodies. So we need to be concerned with others. When someone rejoices, we should rejoice. When someone mourns, we should mourn together (Ro 12:15). When a weak brother or sister stumbles, we should bear with them until they prevail (Ro 15:1). Then we can share victory together for the glory of God.

We should also share our needs and prayer topics with others. When we need prayer support, we should ask for it humbly and boldly. Last fall, Daniel Seo Jr. in Washington had a swimming accident and was taken to a hospital. His pastor, Jacob Lee, thought there was little hope of recovery. Still, he sent an urgent prayer request to the UBF website. Many people around the world prayed for Daniel. Within three days, he made a full recovery. When P. Jacob visited him in the hospital, Daniel sat up and said, "I want some pizza." So we were surprised, relieved, and thankful to God.

Carrying each other's burdens also has a ministry dimension. We in UBF focus on disciple-raising. Sometimes we assume that a one-to-one Bible teacher can do everything necessary to raise his sheep as a disciple of Christ. But this is not true. It is a heavy burden for anyone to raise one person as a disciple. As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child," so, "it takes a Christian community to raise a disciple of Jesus." To raise disciples in our community, we must recognize that Jesus' sheep belong to him, not me. We must acknowledge the spiritual gifts of others whom God wants to use to raise his disciples. We should help others' Bible students sacrificially. When we work together, many disciples of Christ can be raised in our community.

Verse 3 warns of a mentality that hinders us from bearing others' burdens. It says, "If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves." We should guard against a proud mind. A proud mind produces vain conceit and selfish ambition which make us feel superior and self-absorbed. We become blind to the needs of others (Php 2:3-4), and cannot carry others' burdens. In order to carry others' burdens we need to learn the humility of Jesus (Php 2:5). When we do this, we can fulfill the law of Christ, and establish a community which reveals Jesus' love (Jn 13:35).

Look at verses 4-5. "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load." Paul tells us how to avoid self-deception. We should test our own actions in regards to carrying our own load, that is, our own cross (Mk 8:34). Jesus gives each of us a cross, which we alone can bear. We are uniquely responsible for bearing our cross; no one can bear it for us. If we carry it successfully, we find full satisfaction. We do not need to compare ourselves with others, which leaves us feeling either superior or inferior. Instead, we can be proud of ourselves, in a good sense. We should evaluate our actions--not just our thoughts. We should be objective and factual. This may include writing a journal to keep track of how we use our time, and examining our bank statement to see how we spend our money. It may also include getting honest feedback from our family members and Bible students to see if they feel loved by us to the degree that we think they are. In any case, we should not neglect our own cross with the excuse

that we bore other's burdens. We must carry our own cross faithfully with a thankful heart. Otherwise, we will burden the body of Christ.

Look at verse 6. "Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with his instructor." Paul emphasized that we Christians should recognize a debt of grace to our spiritual mentors. We received the priceless word of God through them. The word of God gives us eternal life and is the fountain of all our blessings. As we are blessed, we should share all good things with our teachers. This includes reports of how God has worked in us and through us, as well as all good things. Respecting spiritual mentors is a secret to sustaining one's spiritual growth. It is also an important element in forming a healthy Christian community.

II. A man reaps what he sows (7-10)

This part should be understood in the context of Paul's entire letter to the Galatians. Paul has strongly emphasized that we are saved only by God's grace. In terms of our salvation, Christ has done everything for us and we can add nothing to it. Some people may misunderstand this and assume that the way they live their lives no longer matters. This is a deception. Paul teaches us here that we must know who God is. We must also live by the universal truth which governs all creation, including all human endeavor.

First, the universal principle (7-8). Look at verse 7. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." The phrase "A man reaps what he sows," expresses a universal principle. We see this principle at work in nature. A farmer sows his seeds faithfully and diligently in the spring, expecting that he will reap a good harvest in the fall. He knows that he will reap what he sows. This universal principle has not changed throughout history, no matter who the farmer was. It applies to any seed, regardless of its kind, quantity and quality. If we sow wheat, we will reap wheat; if corn, then corn. If we sow many seeds, we will reap a large harvest. If we sow few seeds, we will reap a small harvest. If we sow good seed, we will harvest a good crop; bad seed will yield a bad crop. Jesus said, "People do not pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles" (Mt 7:16).

This principle governs our moral and spiritual lives. Verse 8 says, "Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Job 4:8 says, "As I have observed, those who plough evil and those who sow trouble reap it." If we curse out of anger, we will reap curse. If we bless, we will reap blessing. It is like an echo. If we go up on a mountain and shout, "I hate you," then we will soon hear, "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you." If we shout, "I love you," we will soon hear, "I love you, I love you, I love you." If we hold thankfulness in our hearts, we will reap the fruit of joy. If we hold complaints in our hearts, we will reap the fruit of bitterness.

Many people blame others when their lives produce bad fruit. They blame their parents, a faulty school system, or a traumatic event in their past. They never take responsibility for the fruit they have born. However, a man reaps what he sows. We are not spectators in this process. We are sowers in our own lives. Ultimately, it is each of us who decide what

kind of seed is planted in our minds, hearts and souls. We are who we are precisely because of the seed that has grown in us. Joseph in Genesis received God's dream for his life when he was just a young boy. He nurtured this dream and held on to it even though he was persecuted, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned. He believed that God is almighty, good, and faithful no matter what events he had to go through. He did good for God and for others in any situation. In the end, he bore the good fruit of faith and was raised up as one of the greatest and most influential men of his time. We cannot blame others or the situation when we produce bad fruit. We must take full responsibility. If we are bearing bad fruit, it is because we are sowing to please the flesh. We must come to God and ask his help to start sowing to please the Spirit.

Behavioral science teaches us that thoughts guide behavior, behavior forms our habits, habits develop our character, and character shapes one's personality. The seed we sow in our own minds has tremendous power in our lives, and in the lives of others. If we indulge in lustful thoughts and petty pleasures, then our personalities will be distorted and our lives ruined. On the other hand, when we meditate on the word of God day and night, our personalities develop in the image of Christ and we will be healthy and happy. We reap a harvest of righteousness and peace. A man reaps what he sows. This is a universal truth. Anyone who sows to please the flesh, yet expects spiritual fruit, deceives himself. He is ignorant of God. Many people sow recklessly. They plant harmful thoughts or words with no sense of responsibility. They will reap what they sow. A mother repeatedly told her son, "Go out and die," when she was burdened by him. One day, he took his life tragically. She didn't mean it. But her words bore the fruit of death.

This principle of sowing and reaping reveals God's character. God is faithful to his word. God is just; he does not show favoritism. God is living. God is watching. No one can escape God's watch. So we should not be deceived. There was a devout Christian man who was offered a bribe. But he refused to take it saying, "Someone is watching us." The briber claimed, "No one sees us." Then the Christian responded: "Three people see us. You see and I see, and especially God sees us." And he did not take the bribe. When we fear God, sensing that God is watching us, then we cannot be deceived. We will live before God and we will live according to the truth to please God.

Second, do good to all people, especially the family of believers (9-10). Let's read verse 9 together. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Here the seed is good deeds. "Doing good" means the acts of love Paul described in verses 1-6. It also includes helping the poor, comforting the distressed, and feeding the hungry. More than that, it means to help people suffering in sin to receive life in Jesus' grace. It is to help those who are wandering without truth to know God and find the meaning and purpose of life. It is to lead others to eternal life by helping them believe the promise of God. Planting the seed of God's word in one person's heart may be the best good deed one can do. But it is not easy to persevere in this. It may require going through hardships, even pains of childbirth. When we labor without seeing any visible fruit, we are tempted to give up. However, we must remember God's promise: we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. We need faith in God's promise. We also need patience. The harvest is in God's hand. It may take one year, ten years or thirty

years. But it will surely come. In the plan of God, we may reap what others have sowed in previous generations. In the same way, we may sow what will be harvested by future generations. The one thing we can be sure of is that there will be a harvest if we do not give up. Angus Buchan is a farmer in southern Africa. He had to be tough to survive the violence of recent decades. However, his anger got out of control to the point that his wife was scared. One Sunday, she dragged him to church. He accepted Jesus and gave his life. Shortly, he began to experience the power of God. As he shared the gospel, some believed and he became a shepherd in his community. Through his prayers, unseasonal rainfall ended a drought, and a dead woman was raised to life. During the most severe drought in recent memory, he planted potatoes by faith. To everyone's surprise, he harvested a great crop. All his fellow farmers were encouraged to have faith in God. Mr. Buchan compared faith to potatoes. The power of faith works invisibly, just as potatoes grow unseen under the surface. But in due time, a tremendous harvest is produced.

Verse 10 says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." We should see doing good as sowing seeds. God will bless our labor of sowing and we will have a wonderful and bountiful harvest in the future. This makes us eager to do good at every opportunity. We must be especially eager to sow God's word and God's love in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Not only will they receive benefit directly, but God will bless our act of sowing by producing abundant spiritual fruits. The result of these fruits is the growth of a beautiful spiritual community, which has a good influence on neighbors, and renders glory to God. Let's keep on doing good until God raises a generation of priests and missionaries for his world mission purpose.