

Lesson Eleven

Expectations for Those Led by the Spirit (6:1-10)

“Brethren” indicates a softening of Paul’s tone toward the Galatians; he appeals to them on an equal plane (6:1). In this section, “you who are spiritual” likely refers to those who have not succumbed to the “bewitching” of the Judaizers (recall 3:1) but are walking by the Spirit. “Trespass” may refer to the sin of legalism, but the expression here can include *any* trespass (or fault). “Restore such a one”—the ultimate goal of *all* discipline within the church must be that of *restoration*, not excommunication, and never vengeance. Even in the case of restoring an errant brother, the mature Christian will exercise a “spirit of gentleness [or, meekness]” since this is a fruit of the Spirit (recall 5:23). Meekness is not weakness, but is the willingness to patiently suffer injury or loss without seeking retaliation. “Each one looking to yourself...”—i.e., guarding against the temptation to sin (yourself) while dealing with someone else’s sin. This may refer to the temptation to: seek vengeance; boast in the fact that he [the restorer] has not sinned in the manner of his erring brother; become ensnared by the same sin as his fallen brother; etc. Dealing with sin requires mature experience, humble spirit, and proper self-examination. It is not a job for novices.

Instead of burdening themselves with the “yoke” of other men’s impositions, the Galatians are to help bear the burdens of their struggling brothers and sisters in Christ (6:2). Instead of taking upon themselves the Law of Moses, they are to fulfill (or complete) the “law of Christ.” While the Law of Moses had over 600 specific laws to observe, the law of Christ has essentially two: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind; and love your “neighbor” (and specifically, your brother in Christ) as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40, Romans 13:8-10). In other words, to fulfill the law of Christ is far easier (and more profitable) than trying to fulfill the Law of Moses. Just as Christ has borne all of *our* burdens (Romans 15:1-3), Christians are to help bear the burdens of their brethren.

Arrogance or self-righteous indignation toward those who have sinned is itself a sin; thus Paul sternly warns against this (6:3; see 1 Corinthians 8:2-3). If a Christian focuses on his own work (rather than comparing himself to the one caught in a trespass, for example), then he will not boast “in regard to another” (6:4). Paul’s comment, “then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone,” must be understood as an exaggerated statement, not as a worthwhile instruction. Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that no believer should boast, except in Christ (Romans 3:27, 1 Corinthians 1:31, Galatians 6:14).¹ In a sense, he is saying, “If you could make yourself perfect, then you would have something to boast about—but this will never happen.” “For each one will bear his own load” (6:5)—on the surface, this seems to contradict what he just said in 6:2. Yet the focus here is on personal self-examination (and the recognition of one’s own moral responsibilities) rather than what he has to offer his brother in Christ. In other words, we help each other when we can and while we can; but none of us is exempt from moral responsibility, and each of us will be held personally accountable for our actions (2 Corinthians 5:10). This is as true for the erring brother as it is for the one who

¹ “Paul does not say, ‘For if anyone imagines that he amounts to something he is deluding himself.’ He says, ‘For if anyone imagines that he amounts to something, *while he amounts to nothing*, he is deluding himself.’ Paul is attacking the spirit of overconfidence in oneself” (Hendriksen, 233).

attempts to restore him.

“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him” (6:6). The word “share” implies fellowship, communication, partnership, and a sharing of material possessions (as in Philippians 4:15). It seems that Paul meant any or all of these ideas: the recipient of the good news of salvation ought to reciprocate by blessing the one who brought him that message. In other words, no one is to take the (sharing of) the message for granted, but ought to support the teachers of that message.

“Do not be deceived” (6:7)—deception is warned against numerous in the New Testament:

- ❑ Those who cause dissensions and hindrances within the church are those who “deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Romans 16:17-18).
- ❑ Those with inflated egos and who rest upon their own knowledge deceive themselves (1 Corinthians 3:18).
- ❑ “Do not be deceived”: the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).
- ❑ “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- ❑ Those who allow themselves to be deceived with “empty words” incur the wrath of God (Ephesians 5:6).
- ❑ “Let no one in any way deceive you” into thinking that Christ will come before the appointed time (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).
- ❑ Evil men and impostors are those who both deceive and are deceived (2 Timothy 3:13).
- ❑ Enemies of the church are rebels, empty talkers, and deceivers (Titus 1:10).
- ❑ “Do not be deceived”: God does not tempt men to sin, but each person is tempted by the lust of his own heart (James 1:13-16).
- ❑ One who claims to be religious but does not bridle his own tongue deceives himself (James 1:26).
- ❑ John’s first epistle was written in response to those who were trying to deceive Christians (1 John 2:26).
- ❑ One who does not *practice* righteousness cannot *be* righteous; it is a deception to believe otherwise (1 John 3:7).
- ❑ Those who deny the divinity of Jesus are deceivers and “antichrists” (2 John 1:7).
- ❑ Satan (the “great dragon”) is the one who “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).
- ❑ Those who succumb to Satan’s deceptions will join in his ultimate demise (Revelation 19:20, 20:10).

While these strong and persistent warnings certainly pertain to unbelievers, they are *given* to believers. Part of teaching the salvation and blessings of the gospel includes teaching its warnings and admonitions. “God is not mocked”—this does not mean people will not mock God, but that their mocking does not injure Him but will most certainly lead to their own ruin. To “mock” God means to (attempt to) pervert His system of justice by seeking to gain an advantage from evil conduct. In the natural world, this does not work: whatever plant’s seed is sown brings that same plant out of the ground. In the spiritual realm, the principle is the same: whatever “seed” a person sows in his heart brings forth a spiritual character consistent with that seed. Engaging in “deeds of the flesh” will never bring about “fruit of the Spirit”;

likewise, the Galatians cannot live by self-justification and expect to be saved by grace (6:8). No one mocks God with impunity. In the end, God will destroy the mockers, unbelievers, and disobedient (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Sowing seed is one thing; having the patient endurance to wait the final result (or harvest) of what is sown is quite another (Hebrews 10:35-39, James 5:7-11). As in any other difficult endeavor, many begin the journey with good expectations, but do not persevere until the end (6:9-10). Therefore Paul encourages the Galatians (and all believers) not to “lose heart” (or, “grow weary”) of doing good: the harvest will come in due time, and those who have sown to the Spirit will reap that which the Spirit has safeguarded for them (Ephesians 1:13-14, Hebrews 13:16). Believers cannot afford to succumb to discouragement or despair, since this will forfeit their grand reward. Life is short, however, and no one knows his or her earthly future; the right thing to do, then, is to “do good” at every opportunity. “To all people” means: regardless of whether or not one is a Christian. “But especially...of the faith”—as members of the spiritual family of God, believers have a *special* obligation to help those of like faith. If a believer is unwilling (or neglects) to help his own brother or sister in Christ, his religion is worthless (James 1:22-27, 1 John 3:17-18).

Questions:

- 1.) Why should inexperienced Christians not be involved in the restoration of believers who are guilty of trespasses (6:1)? (Consider 1 Timothy 3:6, Hebrews 5:13-14, and 2 Peter 3:14-18 in your answer.)

- 2.) Christians are to “bear one another’s burdens” (6:2), but we are *never* told to bear another person’s *cross* other than our own (Luke 9:23). What is the difference? *Why* does this difference need to be clearly understood?

- 3.) Paul wrote, “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (6:3). What does this mean, exactly? What is the “something” that a person might think himself to be?

4.) Ideally, God expects a *reciprocation* of blessing from those who are taught the Word of God (6:6; see Romans 15:26-27). Why is this?

- a. What is this reciprocation supposed to produce in the heart of the one who has been taught?
- b. What does the *absence* of reciprocation imply?
- c. Can this expected exchange be abused—especially by the one who does the teaching (see 2 Corinthians 2:17, for example)?

5.) What does it mean to sow to one's own flesh (6:8)? What does it mean to sow to the Spirit? Even though a person does the "sowing," what is the source of *power* that brings about the growth of each seed?

6.) Paul warns believers not to "lose heart in doing good" (6:9). What are some reasons why Christians *can* "lose heart" (or, "grow weary")? What must be done to prevent this loss or weariness?