

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 Galatians, St. Paul reminds us time and again that we have freedom in Christ. But freedom does not mean we can do anything and everything we feel like doing. With freedom comes responsibility. In today's passage Paul teaches us how to love one another practically in a Christian community (1-6). He also gives us a principle to guide our new lives in Christ (7-10). Let us open our hearts to hear the word of God!

I. CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS (1-6)

In Chapter 5, St. Paul told us to live by the Spirit so that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit. We should not abuse our freedom in Christ to indulge the sinful nature. But the reality is that one of us in the church is bound to commit sin. How should we, those who live by the Spirit, help those who are caught in sin? Look at verse 1. *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* Christians are not immune to sin. We are forgiven sinners. We still have the sinful nature within us and we do sin. Paul uses the expression, "if someone is caught in a sin." For a person to commit sin is sometimes like for a deer to get caught in a hunter's trap. It may happen even when we don't intend to do it. For example, you browse the internet searching for an item when you notice a photo or link that pops up to tempt you. Once you click on it, you may be taken to a porn site, even if you didn't mean to visit such site. Once you click on it and it may be a beginning of your porn addiction. Similarly, you may trip on sins such as jealousy, hatred, laziness, and others, all unintentionally. Satan tries to destroy us by using these sins. We have to be alert spiritually. Still, the reality is that someone in the church may be caught in a sin. The church is the body of Christ. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to help one another to be built up in Christ. This means to help those who are caught in a sin in order to restore him.

The word "restore" indicates that something is broken when a person is caught in sin. What is broken? It is the relationship between the person and God. Sin is a symptom of our broken relationship with God and others. Thus, to restore the person is to restore his or her relationship with God. How can we be restored? We must repent our sins! That is the only way our broken relationship can be restored. When we confess our sins sincerely and commit ourselves to change, God forgives us and restores us! (1Jn 1:9)



When a brother or sister of ours is caught in a sin, we should help him or her to be restored. Paul says we should do so gently. What does this mean? I believe it means we should rebuke the person gently, out of love, not like what the legalist would do. As I said several times in our Galatians study, the legalist delights in finding someone's fault. He wants to talk about it because it helps him feel better. But our motive in helping a person is to restore him in God. It should be out of our love for the person (2Co 2:6-7). Paul says in Romans 15: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up" (Ro 15:1-2). This is what Jesus did. He did not curse Levi or Zacchaeus for living a disgusting life of selfishness as bloodsuckers of their people. He did not say to the Samaritan woman he met at the well, "You, slutty woman! How many ladies have you made cry by stealing their husbands away from them?" Instead, he invited them to the Savior out of his love in order to restore God's image in them.

Following Jesus' examples, let us help each other to be restored in God whenever one of us is caught in sin. In Matthew 18, Jesus gives us the following guidelines in helping a brother in our community: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Mt 18:15-17).

One more thing we should be aware of, as we help each other, is the dangers of falling into temptations. It would not be good if you become addicted to gambling as you try to help a brother out of the addiction. But it can happen if we are not careful. We tend to imitate more easily those who are weak. We would say, "He did it; so why not I?" (But we are slow in emulating those with good examples before God.) So Paul says to us, "*But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*"

Let us read verse 2. *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* Paul says that we can fulfill the law of Christ by carrying each other's burdens. What is the law of Christ? Earlier, Paul said that *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself"* (5:14). He also told us that we should have faith that expresses itself through love (5:6). Here Paul teaches us that one way we can love our brothers and sisters is to carry their burdens. Then what are the burdens mentioned here? What comes to mind first is burdens such as financial difficulties, health problems, academic issues, and so on. Certainly, we should help each other when we go through rough times in life with these matters. But in the current context, the burdens that Paul mentions are the moral and spiritual burdens that arise because of our broken relationships with God and with others. Such burdens cannot be carried by a person alone. We should help each other.

Last week, I heard the news about the tragic death of a young British singer named Amy Winehouse. I did not know any of her songs, but apparently she was a very

popular singer who would sing her heart out about her personal problems and people loved her songs. She won many Grammy awards. Authorities have not determined what killed her, but she apparently had serious alcohol and drug problems. She was popular, but she was extremely lonely and shy. One of her songs was entitled, "You Know I'm No Good." Janis Joplin, another popular singer who died young with drug problems, once said that she made love to 25,000 people at her concerts, but went home alone. These singers made millions of people happy with their talents, but they had no one to help them when they needed. It was because they did not know Christ who loves us and they had no community of people who could help them. They cried out for help, but no one was there to share their burdens with them.

In reality, however, carrying each other's burdens is not easy. What mentality can hinder us from carrying others' burdens? Look at verses 3-5. *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.* A prideful attitude from selfish ambition and vain conceit can hinder us from carrying each other's burdens. A person who thinks he is something when he is nothing cannot help those who are spiritually in need. He only thinks of himself, not others. Similarly, when a person thinks he or she is better than others, the person will not accept others' prayerful encouragement or advice, let alone a rebuke. In humility, we should consider others better than ourselves. We should be humble before God so that we can look at the interests of others. The legalist is not interested in carrying others' burdens. Instead, the legalist put more burdens on others. This is what Jesus said about the self-righteous and legalistic Jewish leaders: "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Mt 23:4). We cannot carry each other's burdens if we are self-righteous legalists.

Then how can we help ourselves not to be like the proud and self-righteous Pharisees so that we can carry each other's burdens? Paul says that each of us should test our own actions. How? We can test our own actions by personally reflecting what we do in light of God's word and through feedback from other believers. The legalist tries to find some tiny faults in others while ignoring big problems of his own (Mt 7:3). We have to be objective in assessing our own actions so that we don't fool ourselves. We should not be conceited. We have to be responsible for our own actions. Our weekly scripture-based testimonies can be a way to test our actions based on the word of God. We should humbly and honestly look at our lives so that we can repent our sins.

Paul says that we don't have to compare ourselves to others. The legalist does that. When we compare ourselves to others, we tend to become proud if we think we are better than others and we despair when we are worse than others. Instead, we should come to the word of God honestly and seek God's approval. We can take pride in ourselves when we live a life that pleases God. When we do our best before God, we don't have to compare ourselves with others.

In verse 5, Paul says that each of us should carry our own load. We should help others. But we still have our own load to carry. This load is different from the burdens in verse 2. This load is our personal cross that Jesus wants each of us to carry as we follow him (Mk 8:34). Each one should carry his own load. No one can do this for us. For example, each of us should kneel down to pray to God personally. No one can do this labor for us.



To summarize, we should carry each other's burdens humbly in our community, while each of us carrying our own load. How can we do this? We have to remember that Jesus carried the burden of our sin. We have to think about others in our community rather than just our self or our family. We should pray for those who are weak spiritually. We should encourage them with the word of God. We should love them. We need to overcome our selfish nature to do this. Let us not be a person who sits in the corner and criticize others without pulling our own weight.

What we do as a Christian community requires a joint effort by our members. God wants us to work together, carrying each other's burdens. There is a Nigerian proverb in the Igbo dialect, "*Ora na azu nwa*" which means, "It takes a village to raise a child." We can apply this wisdom to our discipleship ministry. When one of our members takes care of a Bible student through prayer and Bible study, we should consider the student as our own spiritual son or daughter. We should also pray for her, invite him to our house to spend time together.

Paul also says in verse 6. *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.* Our Bible teachers deserve our respect and appreciation (1Ti 5:17-18). Paul says that we should also take care of the material needs of those who teach us (1Co 9:7-12). God blessed us through our shepherds and Bible teachers. They helped us to receive the grace of salvation and eternal life. Wouldn't we show our gratitude when someone helped us to get a good job? Eternal life is much more than a job! Let us learn to thank our Bible teachers and shepherds for their part in helping us spiritually, and share all good things that have happened to us because of them.

II. A MAN REAPS WHAT HE SOWS (7-10)

Look at verse 7. *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.* God cannot be mocked. He cannot be fooled. He knows everything. He knows what is in our hearts. We already know this. So why does Paul bring this up suddenly? In this letter, St. Paul taught us that we have been saved by God's grace only. We cannot do anything to achieve our salvation. Some people may misunderstand this teaching and think that whatever we do does not matter. But this is a deception. A man reaps what he sows. Farmers know this well. If you sow corn, you will reap corn, not wheat or soybeans. *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life*

(8). Those who commit adultery, for example, destroy not only their own careers but also their families. Their children would suffer. On the other hand, those who sow to please the Spirit will reap eternal life. Our every action has results. When we begin our day by meditating on the word of God, the Spirit helps us to bear the fruit of God's truth. On the other hand, if we constantly think about how to please ourselves, we end up hurting us and others. Those who sow complaint reap bitterness. Those who sow thanksgiving reap joy. We cannot always blame others for the bad fruits in our life. It is us who sow the seeds, whether good or bad. If you point a finger at someone else, you thumb your nose at God, and three fingers come back at you.

How can we apply the principle, "A man reaps what he sows," to our life of faith? Let's read verse 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 light of Paul's previous teachings, what did he mean by "doing good"? Doing good is to love our neighbor as ourselves (5:14). It is having faith that expresses itself through love (5:6). But what are some specific things that we should do in order to be doing good? Anything that builds others up in Christ is good. Carrying each other's burdens is good. Above all, we should think about what Jesus did because all things that Jesus did were good. He healed the sick. He had compassion on the poor and the downtrodden. He shared the good news of the kingdom of God with those who had no hope. We can also do good by following his examples.



But doing good or living a life of faith and mission is not easy. Our good deeds may not be appreciated by others. We may not see the results of our effort immediately. Instead, we may be persecuted. When this happens, we get discouraged. We become weary. We are tempted to give up. We ask the question, "How long, Lord?" as many servants of God did (Isa 6:11; Hab 1:2). But Paul encourages us in verse 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.* Harvest time will surely come, as farmers know. We have to be patient. We should not give up because in God's time, we will reap a harvest. Paul adds in verse 10. *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* We should do the work of God faithfully until Jesus comes again to take us to the kingdom of God (Jn 9:4). Paul says that we should do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Why to our spiritual family members especially? Well, how can we do good to others, if we cannot do good to our own spiritual family members?

We are saved by grace alone, but we would fool ourselves if we thought our actions do not have consequence. We are forgiven sinners. What we do matters before God. God is watching. He cannot be mocked. He wants us to build up each other in love. He wants us to carry each other's burdens while pulling our own weight. We should not to give up in doing good, knowing that we will reap our fruit in God's time.