

Galatians 6:7-18

Overview:

5:24 – Crucify the sinful nature’s passions and desires

5:25 – Keep in step with the Spirit

5:26 – Conceit will cause you to provoke some (‘lesser’) and envy others (‘greater’ than you)

6:1 – Spiritually mature gently restore the fallen. But, watch yourself!

6:2 – Carry each other’s burdens

6:3 – Mislabeled spirituality, fake fruit or imitation maturity is still nothing

6:4 – Test your own fruit, but do it without using other people as the measuring stick

6:5 – Carry your own load

6:6 – Support your source of spiritual growth

6:7 – You get what you sow; you reap where you plant; your heart is where your treasure is

6:9 – It is going to take time to mature. Do not get weary or look for an easier way to mature

6:10 – As you grow and have opportunities start doing good things.

6:12 – Fakers want you to practice faking. Posers feel uncomfortable around the genuine.

6:13 – Fakers want numbers (converts; disciples) to justify their emptiness.

6:14 – Boast only in Jesus since the only thing that counts is the production by new creation

6:15 – Don’t mess with Paul! His body is scarred by faithfulness not religious hypocrisy.

Paul’s examples of the Spiritual Man

1. 6:1 – The spiritual man restores the one taken in sin.
2. 6:2 – The spiritual man helps carry others overbearing burdens if they are in the spiritual, physical or emotional arena.
3. 6:3, 5 - The spiritual man knows his spiritual gift and responsibility and operates without comparing himself to “lesser” servants nor to “greater” servants.
4. 6:4 – The spiritual man can judge his own heart (motives, attitude) from the position of the renewed mind. He can be ruthlessly honest with himself about himself and find the strength to make corrections.
5. 6:5 – The spiritual man carries his own spiritual “backpack” of responsibilities that come with his unique calling and that for which he has been given unique “measure of faith” that separates him from anyone else’s responsibility.
6. 6:6 – The spiritual man supports the stream of teaching that makes numbers 1-5 possible in his life. The carnal man is going to spend his financial resources on carnal things. The spiritual man is naturally going to spend his finances on spiritual things.

6:7, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

Point: God is not fooled and he sees clearly. The basic principle of sowing and reaping cannot be fooled. In other words, if you sow weeds (legalism, imitation) you are going to reap works of the flesh. But, if you sow truth you are going to reap the fruit of the Spirit.

If someone does not believe in sowing and reaping they are mocking God, or treating him with contempt.

This is a principle that is true in every area of life.

Job 4:8 (Eliphaz says) “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”

Proverbs 22:8, “He who sows wickedness reaps trouble”;

Hosea 8:7, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.”;

Mark 4:4, 14, “A farmer went out to sow his seed...The farmer sows the word.”;

Matthew 7:16-20, “Watch out for false prophets...By their fruit you will recognize them....”;

2 Corinthians 9:6, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”;

6:8, “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction;

Sowing to please the sin nature is legalism, and the works of the flesh are the fruits or destruction.

Romans 8:13, “If you live according to the flesh you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.”

The lifestyles that Paul is contrasting in Galatians is spirit vs. flesh, truth vs. legalism, grace vs. law, etc Paul is not contrasting wicked, sinful, immoral behavior with religious, moral, ascetic behavior

6:8, “the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Pleasing the Spirit is to sow the fruit of the Spirit into your behavior and life.

“Eternal Life” is the resurrection life of Christ.

This is also the basis for our judgment at the Bema seat of Christ in 2 Cor. 5:10, where we will “receive good or evil, according to the deeds done in the body.”

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.”

Two phrases in the imperative:

- 1) Do not become weary
- 2) Do not give up.

Paul may be including himself in this since he switches to the first person plural.

Paul has been laboring with the Galatians and has seen little fruit.

But, this spiritual principle is true for Paul’s labors also.

He cannot get discouraged and give up. The Galatians will produce fruit in their lives!

2 Thess. 3:13, “Never tire (or, “grow weary,” “lose heart,” of doing what is right.”

Luke 18:1, “Always pray and not give up”

2 Corinthians 4:1, “Since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”

6:10

This is the closing of the letter. It is a letter focused on one issue. Paul does not distract from the issue he has been dealing with the whole letter even in his closing. In fact, he appears to grab the writing utensil out of the scribes hand to finish it himself and review the whole case.

6:11, “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand.”

Paul takes the pen to authenticate the letter as his

- a. 1 Corinthians 16:21, “**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. If anyone does not love the Lord – a curse be on him. Come, O Lord.**”
- b. Colossians 4:18, “**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.**”
- c. Romans 16:22, “**I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.**”
- d. 2 Thessalonians 3:17, “**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**”
 - i. 2 Th. 2:2, “**We ask you brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you.**”

“large letters” - **πηλικοις γραμμασιν** “palikois grammasin”

The reason for Paul calling attention to the size of the letters is to draw attention to the fact that the lettering style had changed. Up to this point in the letter a trained, professional scribe was doing the writing. The letters would have been small, neat, and almost appeared to be typed. When Paul started writing this professional style changed to his individual handwriting. This does not mean his handwriting was sloppy, but that it was not of the quality of the professional scribe.

Other reasons used for explaining the large letters:

- a) Some say it should be translated, “See what a large letter I have written. . .”
- b) Paul was a laborer at the time of this writing and the years of hand labor had affected his writing.

- c) Paul was making an emphasis in his closing comments and was using large letters like WE WOULD USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS!!!
- d) Paul had poor eyesight which resulted in larger letters. The eye problem relates back to the illness he had when he first preached in Galatia (Gal. 4:13) and it had to do with his eyes (Gal. 4:15). Some think this was his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7)

6:12, “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised.”

The legalizers were motivated by one thing: Outward appearance and what impressed others.

So, the legalizers could only focus on one thing: Outward appearances. Here, circumcision.

“**to make a good impression**” is the translation of the Greek word, **εὐπροσώπησαι** “euprosopesai” means “to play a good role, to please, to make a fair appearance.” This Greek word also has with it the attitude of playing the role and making a fair appearance in insincerity.

They appeared to have your best interest at heart, and their teaching seemed to be holy and focused on the Bible, but that was all an appearance for another underlying motive.

“**outwardly**” is the Greek word **σαρκι** “sarx” and is most often translated “flesh”.

The good impression they were trying to make was **ἐν σαρκι** or “in the flesh.”

This is in contrast to “in the heart” where the new nature is and the Spirit of God abides.

An impression in the flesh has done nothing but change the flesh.

An inward change will do the same thing.

The outward change only in the flesh is a camouflage of the true nature inside.

Jesus said, “**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**” (Matthew 23:27,28)

People who settle for a mere outward appearance of religion or holiness are destined to end up in wickedness and sin because you need an inward power of God’s righteousness to produce lasting change.

John addresses this issue when he mentions some of the students that had gone out from his school and his training of young men to carry on the apostolic tradition when he says:

“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

1 John 2:19

It is not a matter of losing salvation, but a matter of individuals trying to imitate it and being unable to maintain it without the presence of the new nature and the Holy Spirit.

6:12, 13 gives us two reasons why they insisted on:

- 1) a legalistic **standard** for spirituality and
- 2) a legalistic **sign** for spirituality

Reason Number One:

“Avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

Reason Number Two:

“That they may boast.”

6:12, “The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

By keeping the religious experience in the natural realm they can avoid a confrontation with “the cross of Christ.”

The “cross of Christ” is a reality because of these truths:

- 1) Man has a sin nature and is a sinner
- 2) Man is outside of God’s favor and stands rejected, condemned and cursed by God.
- 3) Man is helpless before God outside of Christ work on the cross where he bore our sins and placed man in a position of favor with His work on the cross.

The “cross of Christ” makes circumcision, along with every other work of man, pointless, useless and insignificant.

Anytime the “cross of Christ” is embraced the importance of man and his achievements takes second place.

The promotion and the acceptance of the “cross of Christ” will always bring persecution from the creature it steals the “glory” from. The creatures that lose their glory is men.

Men decide to live under the rule of circumcision or the rule of the cross.

6:13, “Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.”

The point continues, even those who reject the cross and embrace legalism are knowingly failing. Here we bring up the good, but insincere, impression of 6:11.

Why would men who realize their method is not working continue to spread their legalism?

Or, to say it another way, why would they continue to take foreskins? The answer: They want to boast about the numbers of converts.

They know it isn’t working but they must get their numbers.

Reminiscent of David verse the Philistines isn’t it:

“Then Saul ordered his attendants: ‘Speak to David privately and say, “Look, the king is pleased with you, and his attendants all like you; now become his son-in-law.”’ But David said, ‘Do you think it is a small matter to become the king’s son-in-law? I’m only a poor man and little known.’ When Saul’s servants told him what David had said, Saul replied, ‘Say to David, “The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins. . .’ When the attendants told David these things he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king so that he might become the king’s son-in-law.”

The legalist want to win Galatia for Judiasm for the sake and glory of the Judizers.

Paul wants to win Galatia for Jesus Christ for the sake of the Galatians and for the glory of God.

Today it is sometimes easy to see the same “conquering” of people for the glory of the ministry. People get into legalistic tendencies like raising hands, coming forward, getting baptized, joining the membership, building bigger barns (buildings), giving more money, etc. All these are modern manifestations of the outward forms of legalism.

It can be the same in modern Christianity:

- 1) Insincere
- 2) Merely outward
- 3) Avoid the preaching of the cross of Christ
- 4) Avoid persecution from men
- 5) Boast of the numbers, size and amount

But what change has occurred? Is it only an outward change that will soon be engulfed by the wickedness left undealt with on the inside? Or, are the numbers, size and amount a manifestation of the work of the Spirit on the inside of people.

If it is an inward change then we will see:

- 1) Continued growth in the word and in holiness
- 2) Fruit of the Spirit
- 3) No need for manipulation of unspiritual believers by unspiritual leaders
- 4) A continuation in the:
 - a. Apostles doctrine
 - b. Apostles way of life
- 5) The effect of the true church (salt and light) in the society

6:14, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul will not let himself get into legalistic boasting.

His boast is in the sufficiency of the cross, not in the sufficiency of man.

Note concerning “cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”:

- 1) The “cross” speaks of the salvation required to deliver man from sin
- 2) “Lord Jesus Christ” speaks of the God who became a man to save us from sin and lead us into an everlasting kingdom.
- 3) The use of the word “our” makes it personal and indicates the necessity of us individually embracing the truth of the cross and the person of Jesus for our own deliverance.

Paul boasted in this truth which left no need to boast in legalistic practices or ministry successes.

Look at Paul’s portfolio of boasting in Philippians 3:3-6 before he embraced the cross:

6:14, “. . .through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Paul’s relationship to the world and the world’s relationship to Paul has been severed.

It goes both ways. The feelings are mutual.

- 1) There is nothing in the world that Paul wants to boast about.
- 2) But also realize, there is nothing in Paul that the world will consider worthy of boasting.

They have rejected each other. There is nothing to attract Paul to the world and nothing in Paul to attract the world. The relationship is dead, crucified.

6:15, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.”

The question is not which form of legalism should we follow?

Or, what religious practice is right?

Nothing in the world counts.

The only thing that matters is that you have been born again and have a new nature and a favorable standing with God.

6:16, “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”

“Peace and mercy” are two nice church sounding words but they do have their opposites or antonyms.

The opposite of peace is war, hostility and conflict.

The opposite of mercy is vengeance, judgment, punishment.

Paul is saying, then, that those who do not follow this rule will receive hostility and judgment from God.

“rule” is the Greek word κανον or “kanon” and it means “rod, measuring rule, standard.” This “rule” or “standard” that has been set and must be followed is found in the verse right before it. The “standard” that must be met to receive “Peace and mercy” is the “new creation.” The new creation is the only “standard” that will allow you to escape a conflict with God that will result in your eternal punishment.

“Israel of God” is a reference to “believers” of all time. Paul is using the term “Israel of God” to disassociate the legalistic Judiazers from God’s chosen people. God’s people are those who accept the Messiah. This includes both Jews and Gentiles. This does not include non-believing Jews nor non-believing Gentiles. Paul is not identifying with this statement two groups of Christians: Jewish and Gentile.

6:17, “Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”

“Finally” means “in respect to the remaining time”

“Trouble” refers to the fact that Paul has labored and toiled to get them this far. Now it is time for the Galatians to resist the world, the devil, the legalist on their own. Paul has already fought his share of the battle. 6:5 “each one should carry his own load.”

“marks” is the Greek word στίγμα “stigma” and means “mark, brand. It was the custom to mark slaves by scars. Religious tattooing also played a great role in antiquity.” (Lingustic Key, Rogers & Rogers)

See the source of Paul’s scars in 2 Corinthians 6:4-6; 11:23-30.

These were the genuine marks in a believer’s body, not self-inflicted circumcision.

6:18, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.