

"Family Valued"

Galatians 6:1-10

During this time of Covid-19 social distancing, closing down of all public gatherings and restricted travelling, we are learning how to value people more, I believe. A lot of us have limited access to family, which is hard on us. But I also believe our limited access to each other as a church family has caused us to appreciate each other more. Our Zoom meetings have helped. It's been wonderful to see each other online; some times a little glitchy and stilted, kind of like those old martial arts movies that were in Japanese and they tried over-dubbing it with English voices! But, I find at the end of our Zoom meetings, once we all disappear, I feel a little empty. We miss being with people and we're learning to value family more. Our family units but also our church family.

When the apostle Paul started to wrap up his letter to his Galatian brothers and sisters in Christ, he concludes on our need to value Christian family. Why does he do that? In his letter he has been pleading with the Galatian believers don't be misled into thinking you need to become Jewish to please God. Paul himself was Jewish, who at one time believed that to please God he must meticulously keep all the laws of God. Once he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he realized he had been wrong because many of the 'laws' he was following were his own ideas about God's Laws not the Word itself. One simply needed to place his faith in Jesus Christ who died in our place for our sins, and rose from the dead proving He was indeed God's Son.

The church began predominantly Jewish but gradually the gospel spread to the Gentiles. Having been raised to believe one needed to keep the Law, it was still difficult for Jewish believers to stop observing Saturday as their Sabbath, to eat any meat which was now clean and that circumcision was no longer the sign of being in a covenant relationship with God. So there were some who felt they needed to keep doing things in order maintain purity with God. To the point where saved Gentiles were being pressured into adopting the practices of the Law as evidence you were walking with God.

Paul has spent the entire letter warning against this and pleading those who were leaning in that direction to come back. He had even spoken harshly at times against those who held to this belief. But in case he has been too strong and to make sure he doesn't create more division between these two camps of Jesus followers, Paul wants to bring them all together under the umbrella of grace and the Holy Spirit. How does he do that and how does that help us learn to value our Christian family more?

He reminds them we are one family with God as our Father, Jesus as our Saviour and Lord and the Holy Spirit as the sign that we are in a covenant relationship with God. He has been emphasizing the sign of the Spirit since 5:1 as the evidence (not circumcision) of our covenant relationship with God. And this evidence is producing the characteristics of God through self-giving acts of love toward one another. Resulting in internal joy and peace with God, patience, kindness and goodness expressed towards each other and faithfulness, gentleness and self-control describing our internal commitment to God's work in our life.

Therefore, 6:1 begins with a reminder that we are to

Care for our 'Siblings' Even When Confronting Sin
(6:1-5)

As 'brothers' (and sisters) in Christ and that we have a mutual responsibility toward one another:

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. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, ⁵ for each one should carry his own load.

Chapter divisions and verse numbers are great to help us locate Scripture, but can sometimes make us think that the subject has changed. This is a letter with pretty well one subject throughout and so the sin Paul is primarily referring to (although we can apply it to any sin we struggle with) is the drifting away from the true gospel. Now, based on the tone of Paul's letter we might expect his language to be stronger here. But it is not the language of condemnation but rather we are to approach our spiritual family members

In humility (v.1)

He says to do it with 'gentleness' meaning, do it the way God does it with you. Gentleness is the same word in the fruit of the Spirit meaning we are to approach one another with the patience and gentleness that God extends to us when we have unconfessed sin in our life. And the purpose is restoration.

The word for 'caught' in sin means surprised or overtaken by outward forces. In this case, some of these believers who were going back to the Law were persuaded by outside forces. They didn't know it was sin. There was a lack of spiritual maturity. There are different ways we sin. Sometimes we sin deliberately (whether we directly disobey or choose not to obey) but other times we sin inadvertently due to a lack of maturity. Here Paul implies to gently share the truth to those who didn't realize they were being wrongly taught and had fallen away from God's Word.

Another way we do this with humility is implied by 'those who are spiritual'. Now, this can become a great copout for many Christians who through false modesty will say 'Oh, I'm not so spiritual I can point out someone else's sins.' The phrase literally reads 'you who live/walk by the Spirit.' How do you know if you are walking by the Spirit? One way is that the Spirit helps you recognize sin in someone else's life.

But at the same time to '*watch yourself or you too will be tempted*'. Here's where maturity comes in. You need to make sure that this brother/sister has sin they are not aware of and that you can back it up with Scripture. Because it wouldn't be the first time when someone tried to correct someone else only to be persuaded that it isn't really sin and that they should join them and stop being so legalistic! We are all susceptible to sin so we need to be careful

What else helps us do this gently?

By sharing in their concerns (v.2)

² *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

The law of Christ, as we saw last week, is to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34-35). Sacrificially, at our cost (of time or resources) to meet their needs. It's important to ask ourselves

before we gently confront, 'Do I know the situation fully? Am I looking at this through their eyes? Is it actually sin or are they going through something else that may make it look like sin? How can I help them through this?'

All of us are too quick to make judgments about people based on what we see or hear (second or third hand!) only to find out later that we didn't know the whole story or it's not what we thought. This is why Paul is using family language so we valued one another properly before we confront them graciously.

While Paul already hinted at this in v.1 he comes back to it in vv.3-5 that when we gently want to restore a brother or sister from sin, we need to do it

While guarding our own heart (vv.3-5)

It's easy for us to think we are 'something' or above the one who has sin that they need restoration from. If we say to ourselves 'Well, I don't have that problem', we're no different than the Pharisee that Jesus pointed out who selfishly prayed
In Luke 18:11

'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

When we think we are better than others we deceive ourselves. Deceive means to lie. Don't you hate it when people lie to you? Yet we do it to ourselves at times thinking we're better or more mature than others. The problem with our eyes, as one commentator noted, is that they only see outward and not inward. Paul of course is talking about our need to make an internal examination of our own hearts and examine our own work.

Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,

Even the Bible points out that there is nothing wrong with taking pride in your own accomplishments as something you did and enjoyed as long as it wasn't done to make you look better in other's eyes. If you feel you always have to show someone what you've done it's because you're looking for human approval not God's. To enjoy your own accomplishments without the need for human approval (and a compliment is not a sin!) is to enjoy God's approval because He alone sees what we did. And I think that's what Paul means when he says *'for each one should carry their own load.'* The word 'should' is better translated 'will' as the ESV does translating it 'For each one will bear his own load' referring to the future assessment from God when our work on earth is over. Guard your heart before you confront because you've got stuff you're carrying that God will have something to say about. And we know Paul means this because he's going to come back to this in vv.6-10.

So if a Christian family member is caught in sin, especially when they didn't realize it was sin, we need to gently restore them. But even better and what might prevent each of us from getting seduced by sin, let's

Support our 'Family' who Serve With Us
(6:6-10)

⁶ Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ 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. 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. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Paul speaks about financial support numerous times in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 8-9 he spends quite a deal of time talking about the need for those who benefit from the ministry of others to support them financially. I am glad that when we give here we give to the ministry of the church, not to individuals. All of our giving is divided up proportionately as we have determined in our budget to go towards all ministries. Each time we give a, certain percentage goes towards myself, our missionaries, all ministry expenses and even the exciting things like hydro and taxes. So, essentially if you benefit from the church's heat, light, chairs, speaker system, washrooms, bulletins, potlucks, financial statements, missionary reports, music and messages you are obligated to show your thankfulness to God for how you were served. To show up and never give is like always eating the after church snacks but never taking your turn to make some for others. But it's not just how you are instructed and encouraged but also we are called to support

Those in our family like you wanting to apply the Word (v.10b)

These 5 verses are all about this. Look at v.10 again.

¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

We have a special obligation to do good and serve each other in our church family. That can happen in many ways. Normally we can have people in our homes, but for now we can keep in contact with them electronically or audibly or even distant visits. If you are not making any contact with anyone in your church family in between Sundays, you are disobeying God. You are not doing your part. And frankly that's sin to withhold your service from other believers. Perhaps this is something you just realized is a 'sin that you are caught up in', this form of selfishness. It's one we're all guilty of at times. Its so easy to be only self-focused and not larger family focused. Can I help you be gently restored today? Who did you contact this month in your church family? Some of you are very consistent that way but some of you probably haven't done anything. And some of you are thinking 'And no one contacted me either.' You're right. We need your forgiveness. We need to act better. What good can you do this week for someone in the church family? Make it your goal this week to encourage a few people this week, to do something good for the family of believers. And if we all do that then those of you who feel ignored will also be strengthened.

And Paul also said we're to

Support those formerly like us who haven't received the Word (v.10a)

¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people,

All of us at one time we're unsaved. Many of us can attest to the fact that our salvation began with a believer showing God's goodness to us. Doing something for us. Being kind, gracious, patient with us. Modelling God's joy and peace to us, which intrigued us. Maybe even loved us by serving us.

Is there a neighbor who needs to be shown God's goodness this week? Who around you or who do you know within your circle of influence needs to be shown God's goodness? Ask the Lord for His wisdom on who to reach out and how to do it this week. Pray that it will plant a seed in their life so that it will produce, one day, a saved soul.

And Paul uses this sowing and reaping language in the middle of all this to remind us why we are to support those who serve us, those we serve with and those who need the gospel:

Because we will be assessed by God for how we applied His Word (vv.7-9)

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ 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. 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.

Why does Paul warn us not to be deceived, God cannot be mocked? And that we reap what we sow. God alone knows how much or how little we support one another and serve the world we live in. Take a lesson from the land, Paul says. If you don't plant strawberry seeds you won't get strawberries. If we don't plant seeds of goodness in people's lives (believer or unbeliever), don't expect to receive many blessings. It doesn't mean we won't be saved. In 1 Cor. 3:12-15 Paul explained how spiritual sowing and reaping works:

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

There are some believers who will be saved and be in eternity but have very few rewards. If we don't sow we don't reap. That's why the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit is so crucial to our sowing God's goodness in people's lives. The fruit of the Spirit happens when we submit to God's Word and live out our life for Jesus. This life is demonstrated by serving others as Jesus did in acts of selfless love. When we do this God some-how brings blessing into our life (I believe primarily the joy of obeying God) and will reward us somehow in eternity. In the parable of the talents Jesus rewarded those who served Him well with greater responsibility in the future kingdom.

What goodness did we show others this week? Let me ask a different question: did we sense God's blessing/hand in your life this week? If I'm struggling to answer the second question it might be because my answer to the first question is I didn't sow any seeds (or very few) of God's goodness. Okay. Now we have to go back to v.1 and be gently confronted with our sin of not sowing any acts of God's goodness recently. Ask God's forgiveness. Admit you got caught in this sin and have been so focused on yourself or your family that you didn't even realize you weren't living up to your responsibilities with your church family or the world around you.

Now what? It's not enough to ask forgiveness for not doing what we should have done. Now we need to show repentance by starting to do the things we should. Ask God to show you, who in your circle of influence needs to be shown God's goodness somehow? Who in the church family do you feel God leading you to call and just say 'How are you? Do you need anything? How can I pray for you today? Can we get together somehow?' And then act on how the Spirit prompts you.

And also ask the Lord to make you sensitive towards the unsaved people in your life. Who needs to see the goodness of God? What can we do to show God's love to them? Practically? Spiritually? Again, follow the Spirit's leading.

As tough as Paul sounded in this letter toward those who were misleading God's people into the sin of not following God's Word properly, he also had a heart for those who were caught up in the sin without realizing it. May God give us His gracious gentleness and humility that if we need to talk to someone this week we would do it in the same patient way God deals with us each day. And let's pray that all of us are humble enough to respond to God's gentle confrontation should we be the ones who need restoring by His grace and for His glory.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please contact us
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