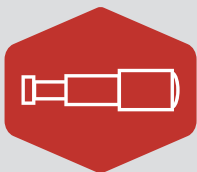




## Lesson 13: Responsible Living

**Main Idea:** In this final portion of his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about how the Spirit is involved in social relationships, including how to have a proper view of self. In this lesson, you will learn practical ways believers can live out the Christian faith as people of the Spirit in community.

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:1-18



### The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

*What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.*

In the previous chapter of Galatians, Paul stressed that the Spirit of God set the Galatian believers free from obligations to the Law and enabled them to walk in the ways of God's Spirit. Paul closed that portion of his letter contrasting what a life led by the flesh, or sinful nature, looks like, and what a life led by the Spirit looks like. Chapter 6, the final eighteen verses of Paul's letter, and the part with the most practical lessons, helps us understand his challenge to the Galatians to live by the power of the Spirit, not the law of Moses.

In the first five verses of this chapter, Paul outlines three responsibilities for believers living in community with others, beginning with the responsibility to love (Galatians 6:1-5). Paul says responsible love does three things.

Responsible love restores fallen believers (verse 1). Paul speaks to those who are spiritual—to every believer living by the Spirit—not some elite group within the

church. Because of God’s grace, they should follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells the Galatians they should restore in a spirit of gentleness. The word “restore” means to mend or repair and is used here specifically in the sense of taking a dislocated bone and putting it back in place. When bones are put back in place, it is naturally very painful. Although Paul talks about grace, he’s also reminding them of the sometimes painful responsibility to gently restore those who are fallen. Education Director for First Fruits of Zion D. Thomas Lancaster notes an Old Testament parallel: “Both Leviticus 19:17 and Galatians 6:1 rely upon a sense of community accountability to an established set of norms. Galatians assumes a community now based upon the broad ethical principles Paul has already laid out.”<sup>1</sup>

In Galatians 5, Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit, one aspect of which is gentleness. Now in chapter six, he offers an opportunity to operate in the fruit of the Spirit, being very gentle in restoring erring believers. Part of this gentleness comes from understanding that everyone has sinned, and those who are fallen are no different than those who are not. Paul reminds them that they could fall into a similar sin.

The second point about responsible love is that it bears others’ burdens (verse 2). If you bear someone else’s burden, you become increasingly empathetic towards that person. This is what Paul calls the Galatians to do. This type of interaction undergirds true fellowship—an idea in the New Testament often rendered with the Greek word *koinonia*. Paul uses this word to describe the shared life of the people of God. Bible commentator and former seminary president Maxie Dunnam writes, “In *koinonia* we are bound to each other, to Christ, and to God. Our life is a shared life; *we bear one another’s burdens*.”<sup>2</sup>

The third aspect of responsible love is that it carries its own load (verses 3–5). In verse 3, Paul points out that some of the Galatians refuse to be restored and bear burdens because they are prideful and too full of themselves. Paul says each person must engage in self-examination and self-correction. In verse 4, Paul admonishes the Galatians not to get into the comparison trap, but to examine themselves in light of where they were and what God is doing in them with all of their limitations.

In verse 5, Paul tells the Galatians to handle their own load and to help other people carry burdens. They should not focus only on their own needs but actively look to take on the needs of others. The way to do both is to be led by the Spirit.

Back to the overall responsibilities of the Galatian believers who lived in community: the first was responsible love, and the second was proper sowing

1 D. Thomas. Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 261.

2 Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982), 31:120.

and reaping (verses 6-10). Paul gives three instructions regarding the nature of these processes. First, the Galatians needed to understand that people should do both sowing and reaping, not just one or the other (verses 6, 10). It is wrong for some people to do all the ministry and for other people to do nothing yet reap all the benefits. In verse 10, Paul teaches the Galatians that they have a mutual responsibility and accountability to be part of the family, sharing with others. He instructs them to do good. Second, they should sow to the Spirit (verses 7-8). This is based on a principle of nature that never fails. A crop yields back the specific type of seed sown. If wheat was sown, the farmer reaps wheat—and the size of the harvest depends, with ideal conditions, on how much seed is sown. The third instruction regarding sowing and reaping is that sowing should be continual (verses 9). Paul's admonition to the Galatians is to keep on sowing to the Spirit because eventually a harvest will be reaped.

In the last verses of chapter 6, Paul evidently feels that the third responsibility of Galatian believers living in community is important enough to write in his own hand as opposed to dictating his words to someone else. The third responsibility is boasting in the Cross (verses 12-18). This responsibility involves, as do the others, three elements.

First, because of the Cross, the Galatians needed to anticipate persecution (verses 12, 17). In verse 12, Paul states that the Cross is offensive. The Cross says doing religious and good things is not enough. The Cross tells people their sin is so wrong and bad that Jesus had to die as its punishment. The Cross states that Jesus is the only way into a relationship with God, and this is offensive to people. Paul had been beaten, whipped, stoned, and left for dead, and the scars on his body proved the persecution he faced. In fact, you might recall from earlier lessons that some of Paul's scars were a result of the first time he came to Galatia, where he was stoned and left for dead after proclaiming the Cross. The Judaizers taught that circumcision was the mark of salvation, but Paul suffered in his body the marks of persecution, true proof of the Cross's power to both offend and save (verse 17).

Second, the responsibility of the Cross meant that the Galatians should boast only in the Cross and nothing else (verses 13-14). Their relationship with Jesus was based on His death and resurrection. In verse 14, Paul identifies with the death and resurrection of Jesus. When Paul says he is crucified to the world, it does not mean he cannot enjoy the good things of the world but that he finally can enjoy what really matters because he is crucified to the things that would control him.

Third, the responsibility of the Cross meant they Galatians would identify with the new creation (verses 15-16). Before Christ, Paul found his identity in his circumcision, nationalism, and gender. These were what he championed. Now, Paul tells the Galatians his identity is not in what he does or does not do, but

in what Jesus did on the Cross. In Jesus, a believer is a new creation, with a new identity.

According to the Scriptures, the Judaizers said, a person had to become a Jew before they could become a Christian. While it is true that in the Hebrew Scriptures, God's focus is largely on the nation of Israel, in Paul's parting shot to the Judaizers, he says they missed the mark completely.

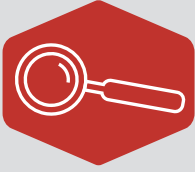
After emphasizing the Galatian believers' responsibility to love, their proper sowing and reaping, and their boast in the Cross of Christ, Paul ends his letter to the Galatians the way he began: with God's grace. Galatians 1:3 states, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Galatians 6:18 closes the letter with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen." From beginning to end, Galatians is about grace. There is no need to add rules, regulations, or requirements to live in a relationship with Jesus. Nearly fifty times in Galatians Paul mentions the name of Jesus Christ. He wants the Galatians to know that Christianity is all about Jesus plus nothing else. We, too, are challenged to adhere to Paul's warnings to maintain faith in Jesus and regulate our Christian walk according to the Spirit's guidance.



## My Lens (Eyeglasses)

*What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.*

- The Christian walk is a shared journey with other believers (vs. 1).
- We must examine our own hearts before we ever speak to someone caught in sin (v. 1).
- This shared journey includes spiritual support, guidance, and restoration (vv. 1-2).
- We must help carry each other's burdens (vv. 2-3).
- The integrity of the people of God is marked by their ability to test their own work (vv. 4-5).
- We must support our spiritual leaders (v. 6).
- Sowing and reaping is relevant to our spiritual development and describes our destiny (vv. 7-8).
- Godly spiritual life is marked by growth rather than anxious human endeavor (vv. 9-10).
- There is only one reason to boast: the Cross of Jesus (vv. 11-15).
- The best and worst of this world can lead to trust in self instead of God (v. 15).
- If you belong to Christ, you will likely be the recipient of some form of persecution (vv. 16-18).



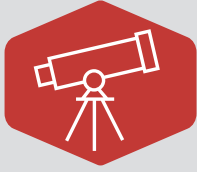
## The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

*How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.*

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.
  
- Who appears in this passage?
  
- Where is this passage taking place?
  
- When is this passage occurring?
  
- Why is this passage important?
  
- What is happening in this passage?
  
- How does this passage apply to my life?

- Have you ever been part of another believer's restoration process? What happened?
- How would you differentiate between a burden to help others bear and a load they need to carry themselves? Please give examples of both.
- What are ways you intentionally sowing to the Spirit? Please be specific.
- What helps you to endure through the times when you are waiting for the harvest?
- For you, what was the most helpful aspect of this study on Galatians and God's grace? What changes have you made as a result?



## **Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)**

*How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.*

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?





## Using My *Fire Bible*

*Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.*

- **Galatians 6:1** What does the word “restore” mean in reference to people?
- **Galatians 6:2** What does it mean to carry one another’s burdens?
- **Galatians 6:6-10** What two types of sowing are contrasted?
- **Galatians 6:7** Describe “God is not mocked” in your own words.
- **Galatians 6:14** Describe the two aspects of the dividing line of the Cross.