

GALATIANS

Bearing Burdens and Sowing Seeds

Galatians 5:26 – 6:10

Last week, we learned that Christian freedom is not INDEPENDENCE. It is not permission from God to go crazy and live like we want, but it is the invitation to live in RELATIONSHIP with Almighty God and live the life of LOVE that God has called us to in Christ. Today, we will see just what it looks like to “keep in step with the Spirit” and serve our fellow man in love.

I always want you to remember when you are reading scripture that the chapter breaks should not cause you to disassociate one chapter’s focus from then next chapter. With that in mind, look at the last verse in chapter 5 and see how it leads right into a contrasting action in the first verses in chapter 6. **Galatians 5:26 – 6:2 NIV**

26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. 1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

BEAR THE RIGHT BURDENS.

The first burden that we are called to bear is the burdens of our brothers/sisters in Christ who have fallen prey to some sin in order to help them back into their freedom. But pride and selfishness will disrupt our ability to keep in step with the Spirit every time. Paul warns us not to become conceited, because that will lead to arguments, jealousy, and even the attempt to deprive others of what they have or take it for ourselves! This kind of behavior is typical of the world, but totally unfit for a child of God. But it is not just the ABSENCE of these things that we are called to! Instead, we are called to SERVE any brother or sister who gets trapped in some sin instead of SHAMING them and feeding some inner sense of SUPERIORITY over them in our own hearts. (Since that is what LEGALISTS do to those around them, like the woman caught in adultery or Zacchaeus.)

The idea here is not necessarily that someone is “caught red-handed” in some sin, but rather that they are TRAPPED by sin’s subtlety and cannot get free. Paul says that those who are “living by the Spirit” should move toward that person in love and RESTORE them. (Restore = To mend a fishing net or set a broken bone; to put back in right order.). This is a beautiful picture of HEALING. It is to be done with GENTLENESS (meekness and tenderness.). Paul wrote of this in other letters as well. **Ephesians 4:1-3 NIV**

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Living this way with your spiritual family will bring health to us and GLORY to GOD! This is actually what it means to “fulfill the Law of Christ” in our lives. That is the Law of Love in action! Now, while one is helping to restore a brother or sister in Christ, they should be ON GUARD themselves. They should NEVER assume that they are ABOVE the possibility of falling prey to the same sin! (Again, PRIDE!). We must take sin seriously and not put ourselves in a situation that would bring us down along with the one we are trying to help.

This is ONE reflection of what it means to “carry one another’s burdens” as a Spirit-filled believer. But the word BURDEN does not just refer to being trapped by sin. [Burden=Heavy load, crushing weight]. This can also refer to circumstances that are overwhelming to someone going through a horrible time (death of a loved one, health issues, ect.). We are called to serve those in our family that are SUFFERING in these ways.

Serving others this way is a calling for us, but this command is not meant to create a sense of ENTITLEMENT within the church. **Galatians 6:3-5 NIV**

3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load.

We must not be SELF-DECEIVED about our own strength and capacity. One way that we do this is by always COMPARING ourselves with those that we think are less gifted (or less holy or smart or . . .) than us. Comparisons don’t belong in the church! We should only measure ourselves by the measure of Jesus Christ as we seek to become like him. Paul says that we should TEST our own actions to see what we are really made of. This is the difference between being an “ARMCHAIR QUARTERBACK” or actually sweating and struggling on the field with the other athletes! In reality, Paul is describing the work of DISCIPLESHIP in this passage. It involves getting up close to people in the real world, helping them and teaching them and mentoring them in real life. When we do this, we can take pride [find JOY and SATISFACTION] in that work for the glory of God. This is what it means to “**carry your own load.**”

“At first glance, Gal. 6:2 and 5 seemingly contradict each other until a closer lexical study shows that the two words translated respectively as “burden” and “load” had different usages. The former word in Gal. 6:2 (baros) means a “crushing weight,” while the latter word in Gal. 6:5 (phortion) means a **“soldier’s backpack filled with his needed equipment.”** Mature Christians must carry the load of responsibility for themselves and sometimes, for others.” [From **FreeBibleCommentary**]

Are you bearing the right burdens in your life? If you are, then you are a remarkable blessing to the church, and your life as guided by the Holy Spirit is glorifying God daily! In fact, if you are bearing the right loads in your life, then you are simultaneously setting yourself up for some amazing blessings from God in another way.

SOW THE RIGHT SEEDS. Galatians 6:6-10 NIV

6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.** 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever 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.

The study of the Law of the Harvest is one of my favorite topics. It is a double-edged sword that can either excite you or terrify you, dependent upon how you SEE and (more importantly) LIVE it as a follower of Christ! Paul sets up a CONTEXT for this law by his command to “share all good things” with those that INSTRUCT (or disciple) them. This is Paul’s first reference to the principle of providing resources for those who serve full-time in the church to help people learn the Word and grow in their faith. It is a picture of being a blessing to those that have eternally blessed you. Paul writes about this even more extensively in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9), but he takes this principle in Galatians quickly to the broader application of **what it means to sow to the SPIRIT rather than to sow to the FLESH. In fact, these are the only two types of sowing that one can do in life.** There is no NEUTRAL MIDDLE ground for sowing.

First, Paul says that we should not be DECEIVED; God cannot be MOCKED. We mock God when we IGNORE or DEFY his will and his wisdom. Mocking God is an act of SELF-DECEPTION that ultimately leads to death. You cannot “snub God” (i.e. - treat God and his wisdom with CONTEMPT] in your actual lifestyle choices without experiencing DEVASTATING, NATURAL CONSEQUENCES. **This is the Law of the Harvest: You REAP what you SOW.** Period. **But please hear me now: The Law of the Harvest must not be misunderstood.** It has application for all people to a very LIMITED degree, but its FULL WEIGHT can only be experienced by those who have the ability to sow to the Spirit AND the Flesh.

Remember, the CONTEXT of this section of Paul’s letter is instruction to believers about walking in submission to the Holy Spirit. A person outside of the faith will only have the capacity to sow to the flesh. He cannot “keep in step with the Spirit” because the Holy Spirit does not live within him. **This is why we cannot equate this law with Karma!** Karma assumes what the LEGALIST assumes; that God is OBLIGED to REPAY any good act with a return of good. This gets really confusing to a lost person who is trying to earn his way to God. It actually makes him FURIOUS with God when God does not cooperate. **The very act of trying to use “holy” behavior as a means of earning eternal life is an act of the flesh that Paul has been condemning from the start of his letter.** Using goodness to earn God’s favor is legalistic flesh on parade. The Spirit is nowhere in sight in those actions. The unbeliever is able to cooperate to some degree with God’s laws in a way that will be a blessing to his life

(God's commands and principles do work!), but he cannot live in relationship with God in a way that allows him to sow seeds that will bear eternal fruit.

But in the life of a believer, the Law of the Harvest can be a great ENCOURAGEMENT (as well as a great WARNING!) to him. Sowing to the flesh is counter to the desire and will of the Holy Spirit; it will result in fleshly ruin, and will never lead to any heavenly REWARDS in eternity future. **Sowing to the flesh is the act of using the flesh's power for the flesh's pleasure and purpose. But sowing to the Spirit is the act of yielding to the Spirit, leaning on his grace, and fulfilling his will for God's pleasure and purpose.** This actually means that our EVERY ACT can be an act of FAITH and obedience that brings glory to God that will result in a HARVEST for us. **God will not overlook even the smallest acts of obedience ("a cup of cold water. . .")** This harvest will come in 2 ways: 1) We reap FRUIT (and SEEDS – i.e. greater potential for more fruit!) in this life for greater acts of faith, and 2) We reap CROWNS in the life to come as REWARDS that grant us roles and opportunities to glorify God throughout eternity. The POTENTIAL found in the Law of the Harvest is glorious and endless! **Here are the seven aspects of the Law of the Harvest that we can observe in creation:**

- *We reap ONLY what we sow.** [Corn seed=Corn] [Flesh=Flesh; Spirit=Spirit]
- *We reap the SAME IN KIND as we sow.** [Corn seed=Corn; Kudzu seed=Kudzu]
- *We reap MORE than we sow.** [1 Corn seed=Corn Stalk with many seeds]
- *We reap IN PROPORTION to what we sow.** [1 seed=1 Plant; 10 seeds=10 plants.]

We will look at the last 3 aspects of the law in just a moment, but I want to point out that this law gives us a sense of God's enormous desire to bless us! He demonstrates this in simple form in nature to show us his heart to bless us in spirit. It is BOUNDLESS in potential. But we ignore it to our great loss and heartache. **How sad it will be to see what COULD have been by grace, but was not, once we reach heaven!**

The last 3 aspects of the law are reflected in Paul's admonition for us to PERSEVERE in obedience and to not give up. **One of the greatest messages I have ever heard in my life was preached on this one topic by E.V. Hill.** Oh, how encouraging it was to me. I know that so many of you may be getting discouraged in your walk, and you are thinking about slacking off or even quitting. Please take Paul's words by faith and keep going. You are CLOSER to the harvest than you could ever believe! Just hang on! Here is Paul's reminder: **"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."** The Law of the Harvest reveals this in 3 additional ways:

- *We reap in a DIFFERENT SEASON than when we sow.** [Spring plant – Fall harvest]
- *We reap the FULL HARVEST of the GOOD things we sow ONLY if we PERSEVERE; the evil harvest comes on its own!** [Tomatoes Vs. Weeds!]
- *We can do nothing about last year's harvest, but we can about the NEXT harvest!**

Let's make the most of the OPPORTUNITIES that we have by GRACE to do GOOD to those around us for the glory of God. We can help to carry their BURDENS, empowered by the fruit of LOVE, and we can find greater potential for further good by the SEEDS that the fruit contains for our further sowing. We should begin by sowing those seeds among our Christian brothers and sisters, but please, do not let it end there. This is the LIFE of LOVE in CHRIST to which we have been CALLED. Let's live it to the FULL!

Let's pray.