

I.N.I.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 31, 2011
Galatians 6:1-10,14-16

In Christ Jesus, who died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We have come to the concluding words of the Apostle Paul to these Galatian Christians who were "bewitched" by false teachings that proclaimed they needed to also keep the Law in order to be saved. Having urged the Galatians to hold fast to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ and that alone for salvation, Paul now urges them to let that Gospel motivate them and produce fruits of faith in their lives. This action will be as natural as a good tree brings forth good fruit. In fact as our sermon theme this morning says,

DOING GOOD COMES NATURALLY----FOR CHRISTIANS!

Now this theme needs to be understood carefully so we don't make it say more than it does. Does doing good come naturally for Christians because they are naturally good? **BY NO MEANS!** Paul would say, **GOD FORBID!** Does doing good come naturally for Christians because they are better than others, the unbelievers for example? Again **GOD FORBID!** Paul says that doing good comes naturally for Christians:

1) BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN CREATED BY GOD TO DO GOOD

It's one of the purposes for God placing us here on this earth--to love one another and to do good to each other. Therefore our theme within a theme this morning is this;

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY!

First to care for your fellow Christians and secondly to do good to all people.

We begin at the end this morning. We read verses 14-16...**BUT GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY EXCEPT IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM THE WORLD HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED TO ME, AND I TO THE WORLD. FOR IN CHRIST JESUS NEITHER CIRCUMCISION NOR UNCIRCUMCISION AVAILS ANYTHING, BUT A NEW CREATION. AND AS MANY AS WALK ACCORDING TO THIS RULE, PEACE AND MERCY BE UPON THEM, AND UPON THE ISRAEL OF GOD.** What motivates and empowers us to care for our fellow Christians and to do good to all people? Not our own goodness, we have none, but the goodness of Christ seen in His sacrifice on the cross. Paul again proclaims **GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY (i.e. boast) EXCEPT IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** The reason Paul so eagerly boasts in the cross of Christ is because it is the means by which the world has been put to death to him. The word "world" here means the evil desires and corruption of the world. We have died to sin, died to the evil corruption and influence of our society, so that we may live a new life. Being crucified to the world means our body of sin has been rendered powerless, so that we do not let sin reign in our mortal bodies and obey its sinful desires. It means that even though we still live in this world, we are not of the world. We do not belong to the world, but we belong to God. It means all of this because we live under grace. The reason we, as Christians, do good to others is because we are dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

What an amazing statement of humble faith by Paul. This mighty man of God, who shook the world with his preaching, bows down before his Savior and confesses that he is nothing and that the Lord Jesus is everything. The child of God glories in the fact that through the cross of Jesus we are what we are---forgiven and redeemed---and can do what we do---love God and one another.

This is not from the law. Paul says, **FOR IN CHRIST JESUS NEITHER CIRCUMCISION NOR**

UNCIRCUMCISION AVAILS ANYTHING. Our doing good does not come from all kinds of laws, but from the new creation God has made of us through faith in Christ. In II Cor. 5:17 Paul wrote **THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION; OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW.**

Paul concludes that **AS MANY AS WALK ACCORDING TO THIS RULE.** What rule? Is Paul here again instituting laws, regulations, rules? No, the rule is as he stated in cha. 5:6 it is **FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE.** As many then as walk in faith working through love will have the peace and mercy of Christ upon them---the peace of God which passes all understanding. We have the message of peace that declares that we poor sinners are forgiven of all of our sins through God's great mercy for His Son's sake. This peace and mercy the Israel of God has. Here Paul again means for Israel--all believers in Christ. Whoever belongs to Christ by faith is Abraham's child and heir, in other words, is really Israel.

We jump back then to vs. 7-9 and see that we who are of the Spirit by faith will sow or plant according to the Spirit. We read vs. 7-9...**DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED; FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL REAP. FOR HE WHO SOWS TO HIS FLESH WILL OF THE FLESH REAP CORRUPTION, BUT HE WHO SOWS TO THE SPIRIT WILL OF THE SPIRIT REAP EVERLASTING LIFE. AND LET US NOT GROW WEARY WHILE DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP IF WE DO NOT LOSE HEART.**

People may think that they can pull the wool over God's eyes, mock Him by outwitting Him, but Paul is very clear that even though we cannot see God, God sees and knows everything we think, say and do. If we think, say and do according to the flesh we will reap, or harvest damnation to ourselves. Paul warns **DO NOT BE DECEIVED!**

But the child of God has been re-created for another purpose. To sow, or plant to the Spirit. To think, say and do what is pleasing to God for the glory of God, for the furthering of His Kingdom. Sowing to the Spirit can only be done by one who has already been brought to faith by the Spirit and already possesses the gift of salvation and eternal life.

But Paul realizes that this kind of lifestyle, although natural for the Christian because of the Spirit living in Him, is tiring and hard and also completely unnatural because of his sinful flesh. Therefore he encourages the Galatians and us, **AND LET US NOT GROW WEARY WHILE DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP IF WE DO NOT LOSE HEART.** As we grow older and see the results of people's actions in their lives we sometimes are tempted to think, "what's the use?" It is easy to fall into the trap of cynicism, that sees the wicked enjoy a trouble free, carefree life despite their evil ways and we are tempted to say with the Psalmist Asaph: **THIS IS WHAT THE WICKED ARE LIKE--ALWAYS CAREFREE, THEY INCREASE IN WEALTH. SURELY IN VAIN I KEPT MY HEART PURE; IN VAIN HAVE I WASHED MY HANDS IN INNOCENCE.**

Paul gives us good reason to persist in bringing forth fruits of faith, in doing good and not losing heart. He writes, **IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP.** In Christ we shall reap a harvest of eternal life with perfect pleasures and joys forevermore.

We now go back to the first six verses of chapter 6. Paul in detail tells these Galatians and us some of the good things that God wants us to do for our neighbor. We read vs. 1-5...**BRETHREN IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS, CONSIDERING YOURSELF LEST YOU ALSO BE TEMPTED. BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST. FOR IF ANYONE THINKS HIMSELF TO BE SOMETHING WHEN HE IS NOTHING, HE DECEIVED HIMSELF. BUT LET EACH ONE EXAMINE HIS OWN WORK, AND THEN HE WILL HAVE REJOICING IN HIMSELF ALONE, AND NOT IN ANOTHER. FOR EACH ONE SHALL BEAR HIS OWN LOAD.**

The first fruit of faith that Paul encourages is the restoration of one who is "overtaken in any

trespass." The word "overtaken" has the sense of overtaken by surprise. Paul is not talking of one who stubbornly, willfully chooses to sin and enjoys living in it but one who has fallen victim to his weak flesh. What should we do? We who are spiritual should in an evangelical manner, Paul says, "**in a spirit of gentleness**" restore such a one. This does not mean in a judgmental, legalistic, impatient, and inconsiderate way, berate the brother and demand repentance and restitution. It does mean in a loving, evangelical yet firm way lead them to see their sin, repent of it and then announce full forgiveness in Christ. The term to restore is used as a surgical term for the careful, skillful yet firm setting of a broken bone. In the spiritual sense in which Paul uses it here, together with the words "**in a spirit of gentleness,**" it suggests the forethought, tact, and love that is needed to gently restore a sinner. Of course, the work of repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, not the one doing the restoring. And that is probably one reason why Paul warns those doing the restoring, **CONSIDERING YOURSELF LEST YOU ALSO BE TEMPTED.**

One of the temptations is that of trusting in oneself. I can do this, I can accomplish that by my tactfulness, by my suave demeanor, or by my winning personality. Another temptation is that of pride or conceit. To think that we are better than the fallen brother or that we are more spiritual than he because we have not sinned in this way. We are all the same by nature--lost and condemned sinners. Apart from Jesus, we are all "nothing" and also can do nothing.

Instead, Paul says we should **BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST.** We comfort those who are in spiritual trouble by helping them see their sins, get out of their trouble, assuring them of God's forgiveness of sins and with the Spirit's help leading them to produce fruits of faith which flows from love.

Instead of comparing ourselves with others, Paul says, **BUT LET EACH EXAMINE HIS OWN WORK (ACTIONS).** We compare our own actions with God's Law of perfect love. When we do that we quickly see that we "**all fall short of the glory of God.**" We also see that many of our works are not motivated by love as God requires but out of selfishness, vainglory, pride and conceit. We also come to realize that whatever good we do, God alone must receive the credit, **FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE.**

Paul says, **FOR EACH ONE SHALL BEAR HIS OWN LOAD.** Responsibility and accountability cannot be transferred to another. While we should bear one another's burdens we cannot share our accountability before God. Scripture clearly states **SO THEN EACH OF US SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD.** Romans 14:12

Paul mentions a second fruit of faith in vs. 6 **LET HIM WHO IS TAUGHT THE WORD SHARE IN ALL GOOD THINGS WITH HIM WHO TEACHES.**

The Lord through Paul directs us that everyone who is instructed in the Word of God is to share with, that is to love and support the one who teaches them that Word. Share in all good things, Paul says. This does not mean only material goods. It is Paul who also wrote in I Cor. 9:14 **EVEN SO THE LORD HAS COMMANDED THAT THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL SHOULD LIVE FROM THE GOSPEL.** Yes, we are to provide physically for those who give of their life's work in service to the Lord and His work in the teaching and preaching ministry. But this also includes other good things, i.e. spiritual encouragement, love, respect, honor. Paul writes in I Thess. 5:12-13 **AND WE URGE YOU, BRETHREN, TO RECOGNIZE THOSE WHO LABOR AMONG YOU, AND ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD AND ADMONISH YOU, AND TO ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK'S SAKE.**

Paul has one last word of encouragement in regard to these fruits of faith. With one sweeping statement he covers everything he has said up to this point and more in vs. 10. **THEREFORE, AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO ALL, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO**

ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. This expands our doing good, beyond forgiving a brother, and loving and supporting a pastor or parochial school teacher. This includes loving and doing good even to your enemies. The word **ALL** includes friends and foes alike. Jesus said, **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, AND PRAY FOR THEM WHO SPITEFULLY USE YOU.**

The believer has been placed on this earth for a purpose. As we said earlier let's make the most of every opportunity of giving service and love to our fellow human beings. This service, love and respect should be given to all regardless of race, nationality, religion, sex, social status or any other class distinction. Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example of tearing down the walls of racism, bigotry and of hatred between classes of people when He talked and ate and drank with sinners and Samaritans. His purpose was always to bring others into His kingdom.

So should our love for others always include a desire to bring them through the power of the Spirit working through the Gospel into the Lord's family.

And that is Paul's last words of encouragement--doing good **ESPECIALLY TO THOSE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.** We as adult parents have a responsibility to our neighbors, but our first obligation and responsibility is toward our children. So also, we as a family of believers in Christ have as our first responsibility those who are closest to us; those of our faith and of our own fellowship. Paul says in I Cor. 12:26 **AND IF ONE MEMBER SUFFERS, ALL THE MEMBERS SUFFER WITH IT; OR IF ONE MEMBER IS HONORED, ALL THE MEMBERS REJOICE WITH IT.** Again in Rom. 12 Paul writes **REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE AND MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN.**

As in any family there are at times even within the Church and congregation family hard feelings between members. People will hurt others by what they say, some want their own way and feel their ideas are always the best, others are just unfeeling or uncaring. We are included in that list at times. It is then that we need to turn to the Lord in repentance seeking forgiveness and for the love to turn away from selfish motives and actions and to be truly, lovingly concerned about one another.

In closing let's let the Apostle Paul again speak to us on this same subject from another letter of his--the one to the Colossians. Read Colossians 3:12-17: **THEREFORE, AS *THE* ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED, PUT ON TENDER MERCIES, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING; BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANYONE HAS A COMPLAINT AGAINST ANOTHER; EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO YOU ALSO *MUST DO.* BUT ABOVE ALL THESE THINGS PUT ON LOVE, WHICH IS THE BOND OF PERFECTION. AND LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH ALSO YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY; AND BE THANKFUL. LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD. AND *WHATEVER* YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, *DO* ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.**

Amen.