

NEW CREATIONS**Galatians 6**

Let's pray:

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.
Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility;
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail—
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.
Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us—
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory. Amen.*

Intro: There are always a lot of serious attempts at turning over a new leaf as each New Year rolls around. There is also much derision about how long those resolutions work and more often speculation about how long (or short) it will be until they are little more than an unpleasant memory. Keith Dohner was sharing the other day that his daughter, Emily, was complaining that the gym where she works out on a regular basis and is usually reasonably empty, was packed on Wednesday. Why? Of course, it was hopeful people full of New Year resolve striving to get fit or at least get rid of holiday weight who had overrun the place. Deb, who had gotten the text from Emily, assured her with something like, "Just give it a few days or maybe a week or two, and you'll have free run of the place again."

Here in our final sermon in our study of Galatians, which I entitled, Pure Gospel, No Additives, which began way back at Labor Day, and took a 5 week hiatus during the Christmas series, I want to talk about what it takes to be NEW CREATIONS. This is the gist of what Paul talks about in Galatians 6.

You see, in the heart of most of humanity is a desire to be different and even better than what they are. All of humankind has a God-shaped hole in their soul, and this makes us all very aware of the fact that there is something more for them. Christ Followers know they need Jesus to fill that void. And another thing Christ Followers need to know is that they need to spread the good news that Jesus is available to fill empty hearts and allow Him to make them into new creations.

As I pointed out a bit ago, this is the time of year when many people at least have a temporary resolve to do better, eat better, feel better, exercise better, be better Christians, etc. etc. The problem is, that resolve is often short-lived. Or it's out in some nebulous future somewhere, like my friend Chuck who is always going to start a diet . . . NEXT MONDAY. The problem is, next Monday never comes.

So, what does it take to be a new creation? Well, truthfully, Paul's been talking about that all through this letter to the Galatians. And, I'm sure you remember how he has spoken sharply, if not harshly to his spiritual children in Galatia. They had been new creations but had quickly fallen away into old and disproven beliefs and practices. His tone as softened as he progressed through the letter, and now he has some final thoughts on what

it takes to sustain newness in our Christian walk. If you remember back to our message from Thanksgiving weekend, you know Paul had a beautiful discussion on the Fruit of the Spirit. That thought continues in a way here as he points out the being a new creation has some requirements and the first one is we need to . . .

Live by the Spirit

- (Read Galatians 6:1-6)
- Living by the Spirit means we CANNOT stand for sin and so if a brother or sister sins, we cannot leave them in it. They must be restored – not judged (we’ll get to that in a minute or two) and doing so, means we will be compassionate. The word Paul used for “restore” is the word used for repair as in resetting a broken bone. It might be painful, but it brings proper healing. In other words, restoration is constructive and not destructive. We cannot overlook sin – but we also need to be gentle in dealing with it.
- The sin that Paul is talking about seems to be the kind that is not premeditated. The kind that is most prevalent for the Children of God. They didn’t mean to, but they did. Barclay writes, “Paul knew the problems that arise in any Christian society. The best of men slip up. The word Paul uses does not mean a deliberate sin; but a slip as might come to a man on an icy road or a dangerous path. Now, the danger of those who are really trying to live the Christian life is that they are apt to judge the sins of others hardly. . . . Paul says that, if a man does make a slip, the real Christian duty is to get him on his feet again. . . . The whole atmosphere of the word (Paul uses) lays the stress not on punishment but on cure; the correction is thought of not as a penalty but as an amendment.”
- We need to realize our own frailty – not of us is immune to temptation. F. B. Meyer writes, “*The spirit of the world gloats over and judges sin, the Spirit of Christ leads to restoration.*” Barclay, again says, “*Paul goes on to say that when we see a man fall into a fault we do well to say, "There but for the grace of God go I." He goes on to rebuke conceit and gives a recipe whereby it may well be avoided. We are to compare our achievement not with the work of our neighbours but with what our best would have been. When we do that, there can never be any cause for conceit.*”
- Here is the truth, straight from Jesus himself and in full King James English power, *Judge not lest ye be judged.* Matthew 7:1 (KJV). In other words, DO NOT COMPARE! Remember, you are a sinner saved by grace.
- (Illustration of Nate in New Mexico – intense shame and feeling of having left everyone down, but because of the love and firmness of his mentors he is rising from his ashes)
- And further, we need to bear one another burdens, and sometimes the burden we have can only be borne by us. Some of this comes out in my next point, but we need to be there for one another. But there are just times, when what we are carrying, especially if it is a consequence of our own actions, when we need to bear the burden alone. We’ll see what I mean in a bit, and here it is. Another requirement to remain a new creation is to . . .

Be Alert

- (Read Galatians 6:7-10)
- Barclay puts it simply, “*Christianity never took the threat out of life.*” So, don’t be deceived – don’t delude yourself – life is not easy. Being a Christ-Follower is not a picnic. Don’t think life will be perfect just because you are following Jesus. Christians in China will tell you quite the opposite – but they still joyfully serve him. And I really struggle with people who never think of God except when they hurl expletives at him for not being there for them. This is a crazy world, for Christians and non-Christians alike. It’s just that Christians have hope and a promise. Non-Christians have nothing.
- But think about it. There are consequences for sin and those consequences will most likely always be with us. I found this a while back and I can’t remember where, but it is from this passage and it is very good on “*the principle of ‘sowing and reaping.’ When a farmer plants seeds of a particular grain into the ground, he does not have to second-guess what plant that will sprout and emerge in due time. It is natural to assume that the sheaves of grain reaped in the future will be an exponential multiplication of the seeds sown into the ground today. However, there is a waiting period between the sowing and reaping events, but we will reap fruits of whatever seed we have planted - one day in the future!*”

Thus the seeds that we sow today will determine what kind of fruit we will reap tomorrow. What we plant that we will reap. Our choices have consequences and that includes how we spend our time, talent and treasures every day. There is a striking relationship between sowing and reaping in our spiritual lives as well. When we live just to please our fleshly desires and passions, we will reap corruption by coveting what is not ours; we will be self-centered and selfish in our attitudes and we will live always looking inward all the time. On the other hand, when we walk in the spirit and live to please God, we will reap the fruit of the Spirit that include "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Let us choose to 'sow to the Spirit' today and reap eternal life in the future. We must do good to everyone within our area of influence (especially to fellow believers in Christ), and we will reap the rewards in due time if we do not get discouraged. We should sow good seeds pertaining to our eternal destiny in order to experience the fruit of God's blessings in our lives. Let the following prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi be our prayer today:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy."

- In other words, watch for every opportunity to do good. Charity begins at home but ALWAYS spreads outward. Keep doing good and you can be sure, God will take care of you.
- Finally . . .

Beware of the wisdom of the world

- (Read Galatians 6:11-18)
- Paul was fighting against the man-made "wisdom" of the Judiaisers. We spent a lot of time talking about what their misleading message did to the Galatians so I won't cover it again here. But, let me just wrap this message and series us with this truth, When we think we have all the answers apart from the word of God and the leading of his Spirit, we will soon be exposed and fall hard.
- Don't try this life on your own. You need the leading of the Holy Spirit. Don't go back to old and failed ways of living – you've heard the adage, actually attributed to Albert Einstein, "*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.*" Paul is pleading with the Galatians to not revert to what Jesus died to overcome. He is pleading with us too – don't go back. Live as new creations. Amen.