

**DOING GOOD TO EVERYONE****Galatians 6:1-10****(Read Galatians 6:1-10)**

**Intro:** My first baptism was a man on his death bed. It was about 3 months after Kathy and I moved from Ashland to Pennsylvania in 1986 for my first assignment as a senior pastor – indeed, the only pastor of a little church. One of our members wanted me to visit her neighbors Al and Amanda Nornhold. This couple were in their 80s and Al was literally dying from kidney failure – in the entire time I knew him, which was his final three months, he was bedridden.

Their concerned neighbor thought I, as a pastor, had special powers to bring salvation to someone who had angrily rejected the church most of his life. You see, Al had seen his father put out of the church in the early 1920s, a Brethren in Christ Church, as a matter of fact, for the awful sin of owning a radio. That memory, and the hurt and rejection it caused, had festered in Al for 60 plus years. And here I was thinking I could break through those decades of waywardness.

Al kindly listened as I shared the Good News of a Savior who would save even the most delayed plea for pardon. And as I finished my spiel, he looked at me and said “No.” I was flabbergasted! How could you reject such an invitation? What could a dying man have to lose?! His answer was, “*I guess the devil just has a hold on me.*” Even so, I tried a few more times before I gave up and went down the steps, a beaten man. (Tell the rest of the story)

Al had turned his life over to Jesus. Satan lost his grip and Jesus won.

That night I received a call from Amanda, Al’s wife and she told me Al wanted to be baptized. I went the next day and baptized Al **AND** Amanda – because she, too had accepted Jesus as her Savior.

About two months later I buried Al in the midst of a snow storm on New Year’s Day 1987. It was my second funeral as pastor in that church and it was the one where I KNEW the one I was eulogizing was with Jesus in glory. Al was a restored man who gained eternal life by the love and grace of a God who has a love that will not let us go.

Let’s make sure that we are not guilty of the kind of legalism and harshness that might cause such bitterness. Instead, let’s be known by the fact that we are doing good to everyone. May it be said of the people of ABC that in our ministry . . .

**The goal is always restoration**

- Look at that quote from Warren Wiersbe on the front of your worship folder. “*Nothing reveals the wickedness of legalism better than the way the legalists treat those who have sinned.*” Al’s dad was removed from fellowship in his community of faith for what was considered sinful. OHHH would they look at us now!
- But what about those times when sin does happen – what do we do with those to wander away? Jesus gave us a fairly clear path: “*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.* Matthew 18:15-17. The Brethren in Christ in the Lancaster County church one hundred years ago applied that Mathew 18 passage vigorously and drove a young man away. But, truthfully, what was Jesus’s message concerning Gentiles and tax collectors? They were the lost he came to seek and to save (Luke 19:10). By the way – Jesus had just invited himself to dinner with a tax collector when he said those words on the screen.
- Instead of driving sinners away, we need to be seeking to restore them, all the while realizing but for the grace of God, there go I. David Guzik writes, “*This job of restoration is often neglected in the church. We have a tendency to either pretend the sin never happened, or we tend to react too harshly towards the one who has sinned. The balance between these two extremes can only be negotiated by the spiritual. It should be normal to do what God says here, but it isn’t. It is all too easy to respond to someone’s sin with gossip, harsh judgment, or undiscerning approval. The influence of the legalists among the Galatians made this warning necessary*” In fact Paul has been vigorously addressing it all the way through the letter.
- FB Meyer says this, “*The spirit of the world gloats over sin; the Spirit of Christ leads us to restore the sinner.*” (It occurs to me that my F. B. Meyer commentary was given to me by none other than Ethelyn – the lady who

led Al Nornhold to a faith commitment). We need to bring the wanderers back and restore them. The description is like that of a restoration of a crumbled wall or a doctor resetting a broken arm or leg. A restoration to its former wholeness. And it is to be done gently. Probably the most important part of verse one is contained in just five words, “...in a spirit of gentleness.” And once again, this can be brought home to us by the fact that we know our own vulnerabilities and know the gentleness we would require. It points out how when we are thinking of others first, we are less likely to think too highly of ourselves. I think it was Gusik who comments, “*We need honest self-examination and as we do that we are less prone to self-deception which helps us to fall into the same kind of transgression we are trying to get rid of in others.*”

- So . . .

### **Instead of causing more burdens – help others with their burden**

- This is pretty basic. Look for a brother or a sister with a burden, and help them with it. A couple things come clear here: First as we judge less, we can see more. And as we see more we realize the heaviness of those in need of restoration. When we forget ourselves we can see need. Step up and help! The other thing we see is that every one of us has burdens and God does not intend that we carry them ourselves. Who doesn't love it when we are in a sticky situation and someone comes along and pulls out of the mess we're in. That is, if we're not too proud to accept it. And when we do we're getting in the way of our own ministry of restoration. Let's not be too proud to accept the goodness of others.
- Next, here in the middle of our passage is one of Paul's little digressions that he sometimes falls into. It's one of those times when he writes something that it kind of fits the context but it can also make you scratch your head. For me, though, it's an opportunity for . . .

### **A word of thanks**

- Let me explain: Paul writes, *Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.* Galatians 6:6.
- I was glad that commentators, to a person, point out that passages like this are important, yet can be awkward for the preacher since they seem self-serving. Martin Luther wrote, “*These passages are all meant to benefit us ministers. I must say I do not find much pleasure in explaining these verses. I am made to appear as if I am speaking for my own benefit.*” And it really seems that way. John Stott says this, “The right relationship between teacher and taught, or minister and congregation, is one of koinonia, ‘fellowship’ or ‘partnership’.” So Paul writes: ‘Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.’ So, in the end, it isn't payment; it is sharing.
- And that is where I want to put my word of thanks in: You, my church family at Ashland Brethren in Christ, whom everyone in this area and conference affectionately refer to as ABC, take very good care of your pastor!!!! You don't need to be reminded of the words in this passage – you live it and are a shining example of pastoral care for your pastor. Not only do you compensate Kathy and me very generously, you provide for us in very tangible ways as you are with the Sabbatical I am taking this summer. That is not lost on me. Thank you for caring for us so selflessly.
- But this just points out that you know and have experienced that generosity comes from people who believe . . .

### **God will take care of you**

- Here at ABC we often say you cannot out give God. But this works in so many other ways other than financial and material generosity. When Paul says, *whatever one sows, that will he also reap* (v. 7b) it has applications beyond giving and supporting teachers and ministers. It has a general application in life; what we get out of life is often what we put in. David Guzik writes, “*Paul is not promoting some law of spiritual karma that ensures we will get good when we do good, or always get bad when we do bad. If there were such an absolute spiritual law, it would surely damn us all. Instead, Paul simply relates the principle of sowing and reaping to the way we manage our resources before the Lord.*”
- As we give, God provides. As we offer grace, we see grace in our own lives. As we offer peace, we experience peace. This is not delusion – we may experience hardship even as we sow goodness – but we are never diminished by that hardship as we live for Jesus.

- But it does go both ways. I hesitate to bring it up, but it's the truth, if you sow evil you will reap evil. The Psalmist and Job often asked varying versions of Jeremiah's cry, *Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?* Jeremiah 12:1b. And we wonder about it too when we see distressing things that mock God and his people. But Jesus looked at his mockers and prayed "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Luke 23:34. Our calling is not to counter protest or boycott or picket – our calling is to do good to everyone and allow God to sort it out – and he will.
- And in the meantime, we have the Spirit of the living God, so . . .

### **Don't give up**

- Keep doing good! Don't grow weary of it! Don't lose heart!
- I get it. It's easy to – but to lose heart is dangerous because you have given up on God if you think all's lost. The original language translation of this phrase translated *if we do not give up* (v. 9b), describes the kind of fear and weariness a woman experiences during labor before delivery. It describes a time when the work is hard and painful, but also unfinished and unrewarded. Now, I've not given birth, but I do know when hours of labor go on, it's easy to lose heart when an expectant mom feels like that – when will it be over?! But when it is, it's all worth it. That is exactly why we need hang on and not grow weary while doing good. It's always worth it. Archibald Hunter writes (and I'm quoting it because it's great, but also because of his fantastic terminology), "*Indefatigable well-doing, therefore is our appointed duty, and we may rest assured that if we do not falter or fail, in due season—and God's good time—we shall be recompensed.*" God will make sure of it in one way or another.
- So, when do we begin? , . . .

### **The time is now!**

- *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone!* Galatians 6:10a. Paul adds in that we are to especially do good to others in the household of faith. That is why this message fits into our series on building one another up. Let me tell you opportunities abound! Just take a look around and you'll see how we can pass on the goodness of God. Nothing has changed since . . . *Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."* Matthew 9:35-38

You are those laborers – go do good.

**Conclusion:** Love compels us. Ashland Seminary's David DeSilva writes, "*Love shows itself where the sinner is gently reclaimed, where believers invest in one another enough to bear one another's burdens; love shows itself where believers refuse to regard a sister or brother as a spiritual trophy of any kind, as if the conversion or transformation of another person could become a claim to honor for oneself (as the rival teachers were doing in Paul's mind). Where love is made real, God's transforming Spirit is truly at work, bringing believers into conformity with God's righteousness.*"

Love compels us. Let it be known of all of us here at ABC, that we live our lives, doing good to everyone. Amen.