

## Doing Good

### Galatians 6:6-10

There was a day that happened during either my freshman or sophomore year in college that I regret. I was talking to a friend who was working the front desk of my dorm when another student came up that I didn't know. This student happened to be on crutches. In the course of chatting there he mentioned that he needed someone to give him a ride somewhere. I can't remember where he needed to go, but I can remember that he had a need. It was a need I could have met. I didn't have anything going on. But because I didn't want to be inconvenienced, I made some excuse about not being able to do it and walked off. And you know what? Later, I felt terrible about it. Here was an opportunity to do good for someone and I didn't do it.

I was a Christian at the time and I think the reason I didn't feel so good about my choice that day was the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Because as a Christian, I've been created and called to do good deeds. And here was a good deed that I refused to do. Thinking in terms of what we've been looking at in Galatians, I wasn't keeping in step with the Spirit at that moment. And that never feels good. As believers we are called to do good. We see that in the passage that we are looking at today. We are going to be looking at Galatians 6:6-10.

Just to remind ourselves of the context, Paul is addressing a concern that if the Galatians are free from the law that this will lead to sinful living. But his answer is that freedom from law is not freedom to do whatever, rather it is freedom to serve one another in love (5:13). It is freedom to do good as one lives life in the Spirit. Life in the Spirit, Paul says, leads to goodness. In the passage that we are looking at today, Paul specifically talks about three areas of goodness that will be expressed as we live life in the Spirit.

First, Paul says that when we live by the Spirit we express the goodness of . . .

#### **I. Generosity with Material Goods (6)**

Paul says:

*<sup>6</sup> And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.*

Paul had made the point in the preceding verse that "*each one shall bear his own load.*" In other words, each one should be responsible for things that are normal responsibilities in life. But in stating that, he makes a clarification. He says to those who are being taught that they should *share all good things with him who teaches*. There should be generosity with material goods. *All good things*, refers to possessions; treasures; financial resources. The one who teaches is to share the wisdom and truth from God's Word; those taught are to share material support with those who teach.

This is an interesting comment because it indicates that at a very early point in the life of the church there were paid teachers. There were those who had been called to devote themselves full-time or at least in a very significant way to the teaching of God's Word. To make it possible for them to devote themselves to this calling they were to be provided for financially.

It might seem surprising to us that there were paid teachers so early in the life of the church, but Jesus himself had taught that the "laborer is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:7). Paul said this about what Jesus had taught in 1 Corinthians 9:14:

*So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

Three verses earlier in verse 11, Paul also said:

*If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?*

It's the same idea as our verse - *Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.* The one who is taught is to be generous with his or her material goods.

If you are a regular here, you know that it is our custom to give you an opportunity to give each Sunday. How do you feel about that time? Is there a sense of joy and gratitude in your giving? Is there a sense of "I've reaped spiritually, and so I want to share my material goods"? I think Paul is saying that if we are living in the Spirit, this is how we will approach giving. On the other hand if we approach giving as something we have to do; if we feel under compulsion and do it begrudgingly, this is not the kind of goodness that life in the Spirit produces. Life in the Spirit produces a heart of generosity.

If you find that you don't give with a heart of generosity, that might be a kind of warning light on your spiritual dashboard that something is not right spiritually. It might point out that you are approaching this area from the flesh and not from the Spirit. If so, I would simply encourage you to acknowledge that to God. Ask Him to help you truly live in the Spirit in this area. Ask Him to grow a heart of generosity in your heart regarding your material possessions that you might express the goodness of being generous with our material goods.

Now, as we come to verses 7-9 there is an interpretive question. Does what Paul say in these verses specifically apply just to financial giving or does verse 6 stand alone and then Paul moves on to another topic in verse 7? Commentators land in different places, but the thing that makes the most sense to me is that these verses, while applying to our financial lives, are not limited to just that one area.

And so, secondly, Paul says that when we live in the Spirit we express the goodness of . . .

## II. Sowing to the Spirit (7-9)

Paul says:

*<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

Remember, Paul is speaking in response to the claim that without the law a person is not going to be restrained from doing evil. If anyone is deceived into thinking that way, Paul gives a strong warning - *God is not mocked*. No one can turn his nose up at God and think, "I'm going to live in a way that is wrong, but I'm still going to reap good things." *God is not mocked*. God has established an inviolable principle of life of sowing and reaping. Paul states it here: *For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap*.

If there is one thing I learned growing up on a farm it was this principle. Every spring, when we would take corn seed and pour it into the planter and then plant those seeds, sure enough, corn would grow. In other fields, we would plant beans and guess what? Beans would grow. And then when it came time to harvest, not one time in all my years of helping dad, did we pick corn where we had planted beans or cut beans where we had planted corn. We reaped what we had sown.

Paul takes this principle and he applies it to his discussion of living either according to the flesh or to the Spirit. He says this in verse 8:

*<sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

Plant corn; get corn. Sow to the flesh; reap corruption. Sow to the Spirit; reap eternal life. We reap what we sow.

Back in chapter 5, Paul talked about some of the deeds of the flesh. If we sow to the flesh in terms of biting and devouring each other (5:15) or expressing outbursts of anger (5:20) or drunkenness or being boastful or envious (5:25) or any of the other things that Paul mentions as deeds of the flesh, we are going to reap more of the same. We will *reap corruption*.

But one who is living by the Spirit sows to the Spirit, or as the NIV says, "sows to please the Spirit." The person who seeks to incline his or her life to God; who seeks to obey; who seeks to keep in step with the Spirit, Paul says, will reap eternal life.

Usually, we tend to think of eternal life as something that we get after this life. But biblically, eternal life is never just limited to what we receive after this life, it also refers to the

life in Christ that we can experience here and now. Those who are sowing to the Spirit are reaping more and more eternal life now and in the life to come.

Paul then says in verse 9:

*<sup>9</sup> And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.*

I think Paul is sort of summarizing here what it means to sow to the Spirit. It means to do good and to keep on doing good. And his encouragement is to *not lose heart in doing good*. Here's the deal about sowing and reaping, we reap what we sow, but so often sowing and reaping are often separated by time. And that can be hard.

If you bought some vegetable seeds earlier this spring, you could have looked at the back of the package and it would have shown how long it would take until the plant is ready to be harvested. Some crops are ready to harvest in around 60 days. Others can take longer. But you know what you will never find? You will never find a package that says you can plant one day and harvest the next. And if you don't understand that, gardening can be frustrating.

Life is like this. Sowing and reaping are often separated by time and that can be hard. And it can be tempting to lose heart in doing good. But Paul says that we must not lose heart in doing good because eventually we will reap.

Some of you have a person in your life that is really hard to be around. This person is often hurtful to you and inconsiderate of you. But you? You are trying to walk in the Spirit in this area. You are trying to do good by not returning insult for insult. Instead of saying hurtful things back you are seeking to express love and kindness. You are being patient with them. But nothing changes. This person is continues to be just as difficult as ever. They are just as hurtful and insensitive.

In a situation like this it might be tempting to think, "What's the point? What's the good of being patient or kind to this person?" It's tempting to lose heart and give up sowing to the Spirit in this situation. I think Paul is saying to us in this situation and the dozens of other life situations that we face and don't immediately reap good things that we need to stay convinced that we will reap what we sow. *In due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary*. Sowing and reaping are often separated by time, but we will reap what we sow, so keep doing good. Keep sowing to the Spirit.

Is there any area where you are losing heart in sowing to the Spirit? Is there any area where you are starting to think, "Doing good is just not worth it"? Paul says to you, "Don't lose heart. Don't grow weary and give up." You will reap what you sow.

Now, as we come to verse 10, Paul gives what is a kind of summary statement of all that he has said in his discussion of living by the Spirit that started by in 5:13 and he says that we should:

### III. Do Good to Others (10)

Paul says:

*<sup>10</sup> So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*

There are divinely given opportunities that are set before us. While we have those opportunities we need to do good. There is no guarantee about tomorrow and so if the opportunity presents itself today, seize the opportunity and do good to others. And Paul says that we should show no partiality. We are to do good to *all men*.

As a church we believe that this is part of our calling here in Manhattan. God wants us to do good to all people. We don't exist for just our own benefit; we exist to do good for all people. And the good that we are to do is not just sharing the message of Christ, but it is also looking at the opportunities that God is putting before us to love people and to meet all kinds of needs and then doing them.

This is what has been behind our season of service the past three falls. But our heart is that this intentionality in doing good in our community will become a year-round thing. And we want to keep growing in the things that we are engaging as a church, but we also want this to be the way we live as individuals in our community. Are you seeing opportunities to do good? Do it while you have the opportunity.

In our efforts to do good for all people, Paul highlights a priority for us here. He says, *especially to those who are of the household of the faith*. In our doing good, we need to tend first to *the household of faith*. We are to do good to those who have become related to us through Christ. They are our brothers or sisters in Christ. This is a relationship that transcends others in terms of its importance.

For some of us, doing good to all people comes easier for us. We find it harder when it comes to the church. But Paul is clear here. There is a priority. Do good especially to those who are of the household of faith. What does this mean? Well, just like Paul doesn't get specific about what doing good to all men includes, neither does he here. And so, I think we are left to conclude that there are all sorts of ways that we do good to others in the church.

Let me mention just a couple of specific ways that we can do good for one another. First, do good with your words. Words have the power to build up or tear down. Build up with your words. We are told in Hebrews that we are to encourage one another day after day (Heb. 10:25). Use your words to do good in one another's lives.

Second, use your time to do good. In our overly busy culture, the gift of making time to serve and to help one another is a powerful thing. When you are aware of a need in the family of faith, make the sacrifice to give of your time to help with whatever the need is.

Finally, do good with your material resources. When you see material and financial need in the family of faith, do good. Be ready to share. Be generous. One of the specific ways we help facilitate this kind of doing good is through our benevolence fund. We have a fund that is used to help meet the financial needs of people in the community ("all men"), but especially those here at Faith. And there are regular needs. Right now in our church there are people who are unemployed and others who are under-employed and the financial strain is great on them. This fund is designed to help meet these needs. And so, if you want to do good in this way, you can always indicate on a check that you want to contribute to the benevolence fund and your money will be used only for that.

Do good - that's Paul's encouragement to us. Be generous with your material goods. Sow to the Spirit. And do good to all people and especially to those who are from the household of faith.

There is a famous quote that is credited to John Wesley about doing good. I searched all over the Wesley Center Online and could not find this quote verbatim. But the ideas that are in this quote are all over his writings. And so, whether this is an actual quote or a compilation of his thoughts, I don't know, but without a doubt this is what he believed:

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

May this heart grow in us to do good as we live life in the Spirit. Amen.