



Spirit Versus Flesh in Attaining Justification Galatians 6

Introduction

In concluding this study of Galatians, let us review.

Paul has built his case against the Judaizers, who would bring believers under the Law by proving that:

1. Faith in Christ supersedes the works of the law.
2. Righteousness, which comes through the grace of God, supersedes righteousness sought through the Law, (if such a thing were possible, which it isn't).
3. The spirit supersedes the flesh.

Paul has demonstrated the inability of the Law to make anyone righteous. Nor can the law give the Holy Spirit. And yet it is the Holy Spirit Who makes believers righteous by indwelling them with His holiness. The Law could only work through the flesh, and the flesh can never please God. This was demonstrated in Galatians 4:21-31 by the case of Abraham's two sons.

Christians need never fear that faith is not enough. Christ is enough! To have Him is to have everything a believer needs. A Christian's responsibility is to master walking daily in the power of the Holy Spirit, which means putting off the flesh and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14).

Outline of Galatians 6

- I. Spiritual Power for Restoration - Galatians 6:1-5
- II. Spiritual Power for Doing Good - Galatians 6:6-10
- III. Spiritual Power to Suffer for Christ - Galatians 6:11-18

I. Spiritual Power for Restoration - Galatians 6:1-5

A. The Need for Restoration - Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass.... As these notes are being written, several prominent preachers have been overtaken in moral faults to the dismay of the Christian community and the confusion of the world. Their restoration is important to all. Restoration is important to any believer who finds himself or herself caught up in sin. Some faults that overtake Christians are alcoholism, child abuse, gambling, stealing, drug abuse, materialism and marital difficulties.

B. The Need for Restorers - Galatians 6:1-2

You who are spiritual restore such a one... There is a tremendous need for caring people who can come alongside the backslider. Counseling has become a major activity both in the world and in the church. However, the essential quality mentioned here is spirituality rather than technical competence. The person who knows God, loves people and prays, has the essentials for the job of restoration. Sinning, sinking believers need someone who knows the Lord and His Word and who is willing to pray. A church cannot have too many of these.

Paul envisions a caring community of believers who are accountable to each other and who help each other rather than criticize and tear each other down. It has been said that the Christian army is the only army where the soldiers forsake or mistreat their own fallen ones.

The law of Christ is the golden rule, "do unto others as you would have others do unto you." (See Matthew 7:9-12 and Luke 6:27-31.) It is a great relief to have someone share your burden. A burden shared is cut in half. Christians are called to do for others that which we would want done for us.

C. Responding to the Need - Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Who needs your watchcare today? Is there someone for whom you have a God-given responsibility? A Sunday School class? A family member? A stranger who crosses your path?

Joseph in prison noticed the sadness of another prisoner, (Genesis 40:6). The Lord Jesus "saw" the blind man, meaning He took note of the blind man's plight (John 9:1). If you also look around you can note people's struggles with sin and its sorrow. Then you who are spiritual can take steps to restore such ones.

It is good for each believer to be both over someone, spiritually, and under someone spiritually in a chain of concern and accountability. Hebrews 13:7 says *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you. Also, Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive; for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them*

do so with joy, and not with grief: for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

D. Steps to Restoration - Galatians 6:1-5

1. A Spirit of Meekness - 6:1

The “restorer” needs to go in the right spirit, if anyone is going to be helped. To go in a haughty or prideful way, with a judgmental, critical, curious or gossipy spirit, is to defeat the purpose of restoration. The helpful motive is concern, caring, hoping for restoration.

2. Self-examination - 6:3

The “restorer” should first take inventory of his or her own needs and spiritual condition. Otherwise an unexpected temptation may defeat the best of intentions. Where a believer is in sin, Satan is present, and he has a voracious appetite.

Even as Paul warned against being tempted, he warns against spiritual pride, thinking oneself to be something when one is nothing simply because one has been in a helping position. Many helpers feel superior as if they had gained an advantage over the person they have helped. Actually, Jesus says that anyone who aspires to greatness should be servant of all (Matthew 18:15 and 20:25-28).

3. Bearing Our Own Burdens - 6:4-5

Our greatness will be seen in our deeds, not our position, and in what we did with what we had. Therefore, as far as possible each person should bear his or her own burden so as not to burden others, for Christ is our great burden-bearer (Matthew 11:28-29).

II. Spiritual Power for Doing Good - Galatians 6:6-10

A. Gratitude - Galatians 6:6

Eastern cultures revere their teachers, for knowledge is power and earns respect. The teacher's reward is the growth of the pupil. Paul reminds us to express, or communicate our gratitude in practical ways for the learning imparted. This he calls good.

B. Sowing and Reaping - Galatians 6:7-9

Nature teaches us powerful lessons and none is more graphic than the inexorable principle of sowing and reaping. But this is easy to miss because of the time lapse between the sowing and the reaping. Galatians 6:7 says, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked.*

Whatever a man sows that he will also reap. What you sow is what you reap. Otherwise God is mocked, for as Creator He made bean seeds to sprout beans. God is mocked if one reaps something other than what was sown. However, God is not mocked, if what we sow, such as kindness, goodness, love, joy, peace, is what we will reap.

If you sow to the flesh, doing whatever you feel like doing, and spend your time, energy, and money on selfish pursuits, you will reap selfish, harsh treatment from others, or some other kind of corruption. But if you sow to the spirit, which no one but God really sees, you will reap of the Spirit, eternal life, a reward that goes on forever.

However, you must persevere if you are to reap and not lose your reward. It is easy to become weary with well-doing because there is little immediate reward and no one seems to understand or care what you are doing. But, like hikers on a mountain trail or runners in a marathon, you must keep on keeping on if you would attain the reward.

III. Spiritual Power to Suffer for Christ - Galatians 6:11-18

A. Paul's Personal Appeal - Galatians 6:11

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! Paul made a great effort to write with his own hand. Many commentators believe that Paul had poor eyesight. But he exerted the effort to make this letter personal. See also Galatians 4:13-15.

B. Circumcision or Crucifixion - Galatians 6:12-15

1. The Hypocrisy of Circumcision - 6:12-13

The Judaizers wanted to circumcise converts to Christianity in order to save themselves from persecution. Also, presenting circumcised converts would give them a trophy, *that they may glory in your flesh* (verse 13). It is ironic that those proposing circumcision and extolling the law were unable to keep it. Do you ask people to do that which you are not successful at yourself?

2. The Cross and Crucifixion - 6:14-17

Paul's only glory was in the Cross of Christ (see Philippians 3:4-8) where he found a twofold crucifixion:

1. He was crucified to the world.
2. The world was crucified to him.

Paul had severed himself from the system of the world, its goals, ideology and priorities. Likewise, the world was crucified to Paul. It wanted nothing to do with him or his way of life. The world had no rewards to offer him. Can you say that your only glory is the Cross?

3. The New Creation - 6:16

What is left after you declare yourself crucified is either "no you", or a "new you". Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17 *If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.* Mutilating or changing the old will never make it new. Only Christ makes people new. Are you a new creation in Christ through faith?

4. God's Israel - 6:16

All who are in Christ as new creations, and live accordingly have Paul's blessing of *peace and mercy*. He calls them God's Israel, meaning that they are God's people as much as if they were a circumcised Jew. This does not mean that they become Jews or that Israel becomes the Church. The nation of Israel is still Israel (Romans 9:1 and 11:1), still refusing to recognize her Messiah, Jesus Christ. But believers gain the status of God's people, a kind of spiritual Israel, with its own promises and spiritual blessings. Circumcision's objective has been gained by faith, an act of the Spirit, and not by an act of the flesh. Believers are Abraham's children by faith (Galatians 3:29).

5. Paul's Marks in His Flesh - 6:17

Paul seems to invite comparison of battle scars for Christ. He has much more than circumcision to show for his faith. Would they vie over the sticks and stones he has suffered, or the hunger or the stripes from a Roman lash (2 Corinthians 11:22-33)? What privations do they have to show as battle ribbons?

"No wound? no scar?

Yet as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole: can he have followed far
Who has no wound nor scar?"

(Amy Carmichael)

C. Benediction - Galatians 6:18

Paul gives the Galatians his benediction, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* to be with their spirits. He calls them *brethren*. So he closes in love and a continuing relationship.

Applications

1. Is more of your time and interest spent on your flesh or on your spirit?
2. Whose burden are you sharing? Whose burden do you need to be sharing?
3. Do you bring your burdens to Christ, your burden-bearer?
4. What battle scars do you have on your body or in your heart because of your faithfulness to Christ?