



April 13, 2014
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Ergo... Be Good Galatians 6:1-10

We are near the end of our journey through Galatians. If you are visiting this morning, we have spent a lot of time listening to Paul tell the Galatians, and us, that our salvation is depends entirely upon the grace of God. A week from today we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus lived a perfect life—and because he died on the cross as a sacrifice for our rebellion... and because he rose again and broke the back of sin and death—all who follow Christ have been set free.

And the point Paul keeps pounding on is this: it is only this act of gracious love by God that saves us... not our good works, not our rule-keeping, not our religion. It is Jesus alone who saves us. We hide beneath the robes of his righteousness and God declares us Forgiven! What is that called? Justification. Also, Jesus fills us with his Spirit and begins to change us from the inside out. What is that called? Sanctification. And that's what the last two chapters of Galatians talk about: this process of being conformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

But what does that process look like? When we stop trying to live life our own way and start living God's way... what does that look like? Well, something like this. *[Bring two people up. Tie one of the leader's legs to one of other's leg. Have them walk.]*

What in the world does this have to do with anything? Well, take a look at Galatians 5:25, where we ended last week: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." That phrase literally translated is "be led by." Our "job" as followers of Jesus is to walk in step with the Spirit. Where he leads, we go. When he stops, we stop. And at first, it is awkward. We are clumsy. We are used to living our own way, calling our own shots. But the more we follow the Spirit, the more natural it becomes.

On the screen is last week's passage. Notice how many times Paul uses the word Spirit. Seven times in that brief passage: "...live by the Spirit," "led by the Spirit," "the fruit of the Spirit," "live by the Spirit," "keep step with the Spirit." Paul might have titled that section "the Spirit-led Life" because that is what he is pointing us toward, but this is easier said than done because the Spirit is in a battle for the control of our life. A battle with what? Our "flesh"... "Sarx" in the Greek (as in sarcophagus)... that's the word Paul uses to describe our sinful human nature.

Here's the same passage with "flesh" highlighted. Five times, Paul uses "flesh" to describe that part of us that wants to retain control of our lives. When we look at this passage with both "Spirit" and "flesh" highlighted, it is a depiction of the battle Paul is trying to describe; the battle taking place in each one of us. Spirit... flesh. Spirit... flesh.

The Holy Spirit is at work in us, doing battle with our flesh, making us more like Jesus every day. This involves repeated acts of surrender. A woman told me of a friend who has been baptized five times. "I've been dunked, dipped and sprinkled... and it still hasn't worked," she said. No, it doesn't work like that! We give our lives to Christ one time, and it does work! But we surrender our flesh to the control of the Spirit over and over again for the rest of our lives. A friend said to me Friday, "I start out so strong on my knees in the morning, and then it's a downward trajectory for the rest of the day." Does that ring true for you, too? How many times throughout the day do we need to cry out, "Holy Spirit! I need you! Fill me again. Bear your fruit in my life!"

This morning Paul gets specific. What exactly does that Holy Spirit-fruit look like? What sorts of things should we expect to see if we are surrendering to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? This is not an exhaustive list, but it's a good start. So buckle up, pay attention. And you might want to curl your toes underneath the pew this morning, because I think a few are going to get stepped on!

So you claim to belong to Jesus... to be living a Spirit-led life. Okay then, there are symptoms you should exhibit that suggest this is true. First symptom: a Spirit-led believer will practice humble accountability. ¹"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." That word "caught" doesn't mean you caught them—as in you snuck up on them and discovered them in some sinful act. This is not about us being on sin-patrol... looking to pounce every time we catch someone doing wrong. What a fun church that would be... and unfortunately, there are churches like that! But "caught" here means that the brother is "ensnared" in sin. What Paul is saying is: "If you discover a brother or sister snared in sin—trapped in such a way that they either don't see it or don't see a way out—one who is Spirit-led will gently restore that person." Gently!

Our recent event on pornography is an example of that. We know this is a huge battle for as many as 75% of the men in this community. A friend of a man in our church recently committed suicide because his addiction to pornography had gone public. Rather than point the finger of shame, we are trying to say, "How can we help? How can we come alongside you and guide you to a place of freedom?" But notice this: This work of accountability must be done humbly. ¹ "But watch your yourself, or you also may be tempted." You've heard the saying that "every time I point a finger, three are pointing back at me." There is nothing less helpful than

the hypocrisy of someone who wants to fix other people and can't even see their own brokenness.

This is risky relationship, isn't it? Daring to speak into someone's life when it is clear they are going off the rails... and finding a way to do it out of humility and grace and compassion, rather than superiority and judgmentalism. Or even worse, choosing to talk about them rather than to them? Some of the most hypocritical places in the church are prayer meetings where we share sanctified gossip about someone else, all in the name of praying for them. Paul says, if you are living in the Spirit, you will care for your brothers and sister enough to notice when they are trapped in destructive behavior and risk offering help to them as one forgiven sinner to another.

So, Spirit-led assessment #1: Do you have anyone in your circle of Christian friends who would tell you the truth about your destructive blind spots and to whom you would speak the truth in the same situation?

Spirit-led symptom #2: Humble burden-bearing. ² "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when is nothing, he deceives himself." What is the law of Christ? Paul mentioned it back in 5:14: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is what Jesus said when he was asked, "Master, what is the greatest law?" The Law of Christ is love. And not love as a feeling or love as an idea...love as action. It means that when we see our brother or sister struggling under their burden—a burden of illness, a burden of financial hardship, a burden of a rebellious child, or homelessness or joblessness or grief or addiction—we step in and shoulder some of that burden.

And we do so because Christ is our burden-bearer. He bore the weight of the cross. He bears the weight of our sin. And Jesus despised religious hotshots—like the false teachers in Galatia—who wanted to pile more burdens on the people rather than helping lift the ones they were already carrying. Once when he was lambasting the Pharisees, Jesus said this to his listeners, "Do what they say, but don't do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them."

A couple months ago, we were in the midst of a lawsuit with a former employee. It was painful, heartbreaking, depressing and burdensome. To turn around during that hearing and see so many friends seated there, supporting Cyndi and me, praying for us, weeping with us... it was such a gift. This week, another of our members went to Seattle to prepare for the arraignment of the man who hit and killed her husband. This time, that same circle of friends was with her, helping carry her burden. It goes around and comes around. And, Paul adds, if you think you are too good—to much of a big shot—to lower yourself into the grim of life to help another with their burden, you are deluding yourself.

Spirit-led assessment # 2: when was the last time you stepped out of your comfort zone and into the broken life of another to help them with their burden?

So, Humble Accountability, Humble Burden-Bearing... and now, Spirit-led symptom # 3: Humble responsibility. ⁴ "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load." Wait a second! Paul just told us that we should be burden-bearers for others. Now he's saying we should carry our own loads? Which is it? Actually, it's a different word. "Load" here means "responsibility," not burden. Paul is saying, "Every believer has certain gifts and abilities. Every person has been equipped and called by God to carry out a responsibility in the work of Jesus. No one can carry your load... and if you don't do your part, it won't get done."

Notice this has nothing to do with how others are gifted or what others can or cannot do. If you compare yourself to the person who is super-talented, you will feel discouraged and diminish your own gifts and calling. If you compare yourself to one who is less talented, you can become arrogant and look down upon their more meager contributions. No, Paul says, the Spirit-led life means an honest self-assessment of our own gifts and abilities... and then carrying the load he has assigned you.

You might remember that last year we took a survey to assess our spiritual maturity as a congregation. The results were confusing. 63% of you described yourself as either "close to Christ" or "Christ-centered," the two highest possible self-assessments... 2/3 of you! That is an abnormally high percentage. Good news, right? And yet, as we looked closer at your self-assessment, of those who said you were close to Christ or Christ-centered, 25% of you have never invited a non-Christian to church, 1/3 of you serve in the church one time or less every few months, half serve those in need 1 or 2 times a year or less, and half of you do not tithe.

Again, this is your own self-assessment! Paul has a warning for this. Do a careful, honest and humble appraisal of who you are and what you are—not compared to anyone else or even compared to what you want to be but who and what you really are—whom God has called you to be... and then, do your part! Take your responsibility. Carry your load. What a difference it would make if every member of this congregation really did their part rather than sitting back and letting others carry their load, too. Easter is coming... a great opportunity to invite someone to church. I wonder how many of us have the courage and will to do so?

Notice this, too. Paul speaks specifically about financial support of the church as a symptom of the Spirit-led life. ⁶ "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor." 41% of those who attend this church—mostly members who worship here, who receive care for their children and partake of our ministries—give nothing or almost nothing in support of this

ministry. The average per-member giving is a little more than 2% of income... not even close to a tithe. If every member gave even 5% of their income to the Lord's work here at Chapel Hill, we could pay off our entire debt in two years. But we don't... yet. Apparently, not much changes. Paul was addressing the same issue 2000 years ago... people who took from the church but didn't carry their load, financially. The Spirit-led life shares financial responsibility for his church.

Paul continues: ⁷ "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." In other words, you may fool yourself, you may fool others... but you won't fool God. The seeds you plant spiritually—seeds of humble relationship and accountability and responsibility and generosity—those seeds will produce a great harvest. And if you plant seeds of self-centeredness and pride and irresponsibility and stinginess... that is the harvest you will reap. It is a law of spiritual consequences.

Spirit-led assessment # 3: Am I carrying out the responsibilities Jesus has assigned to me? Am I carrying my load in the work of my Church?

Paul sums up the Spirit-led life this way: ⁹ "Let us not become weary in doing good." And he repeats himself again... ¹⁰ "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." "Be good," Paul says "and especially be good to your Christian family."

Now, does this strike you as weird? For the first chapters of this book, Paul has been saying, "It is not about being good. It is about God's grace. You are not saved because you are good, rule-keeping people. You are saved because God loves you, Jesus died for you and the Holy Spirit is working in you." Yet now, he turns around and says, "Be good!" So, what gives? Do we have to be good to be Christians... or not?

Let me explain it to you this way. When I was a boy in Yakima, I played baseball for the Jed's Tiger Sharks. One of my teammates was a kid named Colin. His dad was the coach, and I remember watching as Colin's dad would scream at him every time he didn't do something right. Literally, he would stand over his ten-year-old son and scream, face red, swearing at him... and Colin would stand, tears streaming down his face, seething with hatred. Every time Colin got up to bat, you could see him looking at his dad, knowing he'd better get a hit, better run it out, better beat the throw, or his dad would be mad at him. In other words, if he wanted dad's approval, he'd better perform.

My dad never missed a game. He was always in the stands. And when I got up to hit, I looked for him, too. I wanted to make sure he was watching. I wanted to get a hit for him—just like Colin—but not because I was afraid of what he would do if I struck out. I wanted a hit because I felt his love and wanted him to be proud of me. Nothing I could do at that plate could make my dad love me more. I knew

that. So I was freed up to swing away, do my best, and hopefully, give my dad some delight.

When Paul says, “Be good... do good... plant good seeds... be humble... be accountable... be responsible... be generous...” it’s not because if we don’t do those things, God won’t love us. That would put us right back into the performance trap. No, he’s saying, “Because God loves you—because you are grateful for his salvation, because his Holy Spirit is at work in you—cooperate with that work! Let the Spirit do what he wants. Listen to the Spirit’s voice. Walk where the Spirit leads. Resist the temptation of your flesh and allow the Spirit victory, and you will live a liberated, fruitful, Spirit-filled and God-delighting life.”

Doesn’t that sound good? So, what does the evidence of your life say about how closely you are walking with the Spirit?

Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don’t teach! Listen and reflect on God’s word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- **DIG DEEPER**
 1. For most of Galatians, Paul pounds away on the idea that we cannot be good enough to earn God’s gracious favor. Yet here, in verses 6: 9-10, Paul tells us to “do good.” So...which is it? How do you explain this?
 2. What does Paul mean when he charges us to “test our own work?”
 3. How do verses 7-8 anchor this chapter?