

Fruits of Faith
Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18 (NIV)
July 3, 2016

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 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. Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God. Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

In today's Epistle reading, Paul speaks about the fruits of faith. Too often, people think of the fruits of faith in the same terms as the fruits of the Spirit; joy, peace, and love. While these are certainly fruits of faith, today we are going to look at fruits of faith from a different angle. Today we will look at the responsibility of fruits of faith.

Having faith in Christ is the most liberating thing we can experience. Our faith, together with the help of the Holy Spirit, frees us from the bondage of sin. Our faith allows us to live under the direction of our heavenly Father, instead of living under the burdensome control of Satan.

If, as Scripture tells us, we have been set free in Jesus, then what have we been set free to do? We have been set free from caring and worrying about ourselves, so that we can care for others, and in particular our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There is a wealth of instruction in today's Epistle reading on how to demonstrate our faith by caring for others. To gain as much as possible from this reading, we are going to look at it one section at a time.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (Ga 6:1 NIV).

The Greek that we translate as "caught in" actually means to be overtaken by surprise. The Greek we translate here as "sin" means to step aside or fall away from a standard. So the "someone" referred to in this verse isn't a hardened sinner. The person to be restored is a brother or sister in the faith who has unintentionally fallen into some sin.

To gently restore this person the first thing we must do is throw away our judgmental attitudes. We need to come alongside such a fallen sibling and help them back on the right track. We need to treat that person the same as we would treat someone who has been physically injured – with gentleness and kindness.

The warning against temptation is a warning against pride. When we help to restore someone, we can easily begin to think about the wonderful thing we have done. We need to be ever mindful of the fact that we have done nothing. We are just tools of God.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Ga 6:2 NIV).

The burdens Paul is speaking of are spiritual burdens of temptation and sin. These burdens are included in Jesus' invitation: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest* (Mt 11:28 NIV). In the same way we receive rest and comfort from Jesus, we are to give comfort to others. We comfort others by helping them out of their spiritual trouble, by assuring them of God's forgiveness, and by urging them, with the Spirit's help, to produce fruits of faith in their lives.

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Ga 6:3 NIV).

Again, Paul warns us not become puffed up. If you take away the things that God does for us and in us, you find out that, in and of ourselves, we are nothing. When we are walking the path and someone else falls, it is easy to think we are better. At those times we must remember the old saying: *There, but for the grace of God, go I.*

Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else (Ga 6:4 NIV).

This verse piggybacks on verse three. How do we keep from being prideful when we don't fall the same as someone else? Instead of comparing ourselves to other people, we should be comparing our actions and thoughts to those of Christ. Jesus tell us: *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48 NIV). That should be enough to take any prideful wind out of our sails.

We must realize that the glory for whatever good we might do belongs to God. The Bible says: *It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose* (Php 2:13 NIV). No good ever comes from us. All good always comes from God.

Each one should carry his own load (Ga 6:5 NIV).

We need a little more Greek to explain this. In verse two, the burden Paul tells us to carry for each other is a load that has been placed on someone. Here in verse five, the load Paul speaks of is similar to the pack a soldier would carry. In other words, it is what is expected of you. The load we are to carry for ourselves is the load of personal accountability.

Jesus said: *I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken* (Mt 12:36 NIV). Jesus doesn't beat around the bush when it comes to personal accountability. In today's text, Paul is telling us one of the things we are responsible for is caring for our brother and sisters in the faith, without conceit or pride.

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor (Ga 6:6 NIV).

The first five verses have given us instruction on how to care for a fallen believer. Verse six brings a new thought. Paul tells us that it is the responsibility of those who are taught to care for the teacher. The concept of sharing all good things means not just honor, respect, and spiritual encouragement, but also material care for the needs of those serving the church.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows (Ga 6:7 NIV).

Paul interjects a very stern warning. We don't see God, but God sees us. In verse three Paul spoke about deceiving ourselves with an inflated ego. The idea of mocking means to treat with contempt or ridicule; perhaps with the goal of outwitting. Paul warns against thinking we're smarter than God.

No sins are done in secret. We might fool the entire world, but God knows the truth about everything and everyone. And, as we heard Jesus say earlier, everyone will give an account of their lives before God.

What we do in this life is how we will be treated. We must work to restrain the tendencies and desires of our sinful being. We must always keep ourselves in check by comparing our thoughts and actions to the standard set by our Savior. Paul continues this thought in verse eight.

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Ga 6:8 NIV).

What we reap in this life is directly related to what we sow. If you live a life of self-indulgence, greed, and callous disregard for other people, you will receive the just reward of that kind of life. Believe me, you won't like what you end up with. And you won't like where you end up.

On the other hand, if you live, to the best of your ability, to promote the kingdom of God, you will reap eternal life. I'm not saying that everything will be ice cream and roses in your life here on earth, but this life isn't all there is to life. However, there is no happier person on the face of this earth, than the person who is walking through life hand in hand with the Holy Spirit.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Ga 6:9 NIV).

Paul encourages us to keep on keeping on. As we grow older, it is easy to become cynical. When it seems like the more sinful someone is the more they succeed, we are tempted to say with Asaph: *This is what the wicked are like – always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.* (Ps 73:12-13 NIV), but that is not true.

In God's time all things will become right, the scales will be balanced. If we persist in our life of service to God and to those around us, we will one day reap a harvest richer than we could ever imagine. We have this promise from God: *No one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him* (Is 64:4 NIV).

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Ga 6:10 NIV).

Paul says "*as we have opportunity,*" let me rephrase that. Don't pass up any opportunity. Last week I told you that an opportunity to serve God might be a one-time shot. The same applies here. A particular opportunity to do good for someone might never come again. Don't let those times slip by without doing whatever good you can.

The unbelievers need to see and feel our good works so they can glorify our Father in heaven. Believers need to see and feel our good works to encourage them to continue in the faith. God wants us to love and do good to everyone we meet, everyone we associate with, and everyone we live with, especially our fellow redeemed.