



Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Chapter 6, Verses 1 - 10

by Tim Kelley

This last chapter of Galatians is challenging. Over the years I've heard various preachers and teachers build whole sermons out of "let us not grow weary in well doing" or "whatever a man sows, he will also reap". And though these statements stand on their own as good spiritual principles, I believe they can only be correctly understood in the context of Paul's entire letter as well as the context of the Torah.

It's common practice in Christian circles to take Paul's words as doctrine, especially some of the things he spells out in chapter 6, but to do so would be to violate the scriptures – especially if we take his words to be equal to the Torah – the words spoken directly to Moses by YHWH. To take Paul's statement "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (^{NKJ} Galatians 6:6), as a commandment that's incumbent on all believers to follow would be in clear violation of God's commandment to Moses –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 4:2** "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

- as well as the words of Messiah Yeshua, who said –

^{NKJ} **Matthew 5:17** " Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

It was not Paul's mission to define "Christian living", but rather to spread the good news of the coming of Israel's Messiah, who brought with Himself the opportunity for the words of the prophets to now be fulfilled – that being the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. This is Paul's message, just as it was the message of The Messiah and His disciples.

What then is Paul talking about in these last few sentences of his letter? I believe he's simply continuing with what he set out to do from the beginning – stamp out the division that had plagued the Galatian congregations by the interjection of the "other gospel". The "perpetrators" class-warfare gospel was tearing the congregations apart, and thus Paul had spent the entire letter attempting to invalidate portions of it.

Believing that his letter would convince the leaders in Galatia to reject this "other gospel" (Gal. 5:10), Paul set out to show them what they would have to do to restore the congregations. His first step was to contrast the "fleshly" walk (which I called "works-based righteousness") with the "Spiritual" walk (which I called "faith-based righteousness"). He then went on to remind them that they had all been "crucified with Christ", and that they all now claim to "live in the spirit". If indeed they do, they should show it by how they treat their brother.

It is within that context that Paul defined four steps that would need to take place in order to bring reconciliation and restoration to the congregation. They are found in the first ten verses of chapter 6.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 6:1-3** Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

The perpetrators of the “other gospel” had introduced a form of “class warfare” into the congregation. Their teaching that a person had to convert to Judaism (i.e. – be circumcised) had split the congregation between Jews and non-Jews, and had reignited the animosity between the non-Jewish Israelites and the Jews, an animosity that had seemingly been extinguished by the realization that both groups had become one as a result of the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. Instead of coming together as “one stick in His hand”¹, Ezekiel's two sticks were again splitting apart as evidenced by the “biting and devouring” mentioned in chapter 5, verse 6.

Though the perpetrators may have moved on, they left fires in Galatia that had to be put out. Though we're not sure what all had taken place, there were obviously some who had offended others by word or deed. Many of the non-Jews had been drawn into the synagogue only to be treated as second class citizens². . . maybe even being told they would have to sit at the “non-Jewish” tables³ during the weekly oneg (fellowship meal), The text seems to indicated that some may have even “bad-mouthed” Paul himself.⁴ In order to bring restoration, these things would have to be dealt with, and of course Paul's way of dealing with them would be according to the Torah.

Paul had already admonished the non-Jews to avoid flaunting their freedom to worship YHVH apart from the oral law. He did that by appealing to Yeshua's “new” law⁵, which is not actually and new law, but a correct understanding the Torah commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” found in Leviticus 19. Here's what Yeshua said as He finished His instructions to the disciples just prior to being crucified.

^{NKJ} **John 13:34-35** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Yeshua was obviously referring to Leviticus 19:16-18 where we find that part of “loving your neighbor” is to avoid slander. In Leviticus 19:16, the Hebrew word for “talebearer” is “rakiyl” (רָקִיִל – Strong's 7400) which comes from a root word that means “scandal-monger”. According to BDB⁶, a “scandal-monger” is a traveling gossip. Looking at what was happening in Galatia, it's likely there was a lot of gossiping going on between the Jews and the non-Jews, after all – the non-Jews were coming out of a religious cult steeped in paganism, while the Jews had been “following” Torah for hundreds of years. We've probably witnessed similar gossip in our own congregations . . . a new person comes to the fellowship wearing a sweater decorated with Santa Claus images. We can't help but mention to our friends (probably just within earshot of the “pagan”) how this person is “obviously not converted” because if she were, she surely would not a wear a sweater like that!

Would simple gossip and slander qualify as the fault (KJV) or trespass (NKJ) mentioned in verse 1? Certainly! The Greek word for “trespass” is “paraptoma” (Strong's 3900) which simply means “to fall beside” or to have a “lapse or deviation from truth”⁷. Both gossip and slander qualify for the above, and both were obviously rampant within the Galatian community. There were obviously other “trespasses” taking place as well, but I suspect Paul had in mind the ones that were splitting the community.

Another part of “loving your neighbor” is to correct him when he's wrong.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 19:17** ' You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

¹ Ezekiel 37:19

² Gal. 4:16

³ Gal. 2:12-13

⁴ Gal. 4:16

⁵ Gal. 5:14

⁶ Brown-Driver-Briggs pg. 940a. See 7402

⁷ Strong's Concordance included in BibleWorks ver. 6

This is the part of loving one another that makes most people very uncomfortable, yet never-the-less must be done. The Hebrew word for “rebuke” is “yachach” (יָחַח) – Strong’s 3198) and is translated in the Tnakh as reprove (27 times), rebuke (12 times), and correct (3 times), as well as a number of other ways. To reprove someone is to correct them in a gentle way with the intent of correcting a fault - which in the case of spiritual matters implies a deviation from the Torah walk. According to our Galatians passage, the purpose of correcting the person is to avoid the likelihood of the sin spreading throughout the community.

Paul realized that if the Galatian community was going to survive, the sins that had been committed as a result of the “other gospel” were going to have to be dealt with . . . they couldn’t simply be swept under a rug. So Paul gave some guidelines. First, he called for those who are “spiritual” to be the ones to go to their brother. This raises the question “who is spiritual”. Fortunately, we don’t have to go very far to find out since Paul has already defined it in his letter. Those who are spiritual are the ones who exhibit the fruit of the spirit.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control . . .

Based on the context of chapter 5, Paul was implying that the non-Jews would need to go to the Jews⁸. They were the likely target of the bulk of the gossip and slander, and by taking the “high” road and going to their Jewish brothers in a spirit of gentleness and meekness, they could begin to repair the damage that had been done. This is the “law of Christ”.

Paul had another reason for wanting the non-Jews to proactive in the restoration process, and that was to show the Jewish believers that simply being a son of Abraham did not make them the “spiritual giants” in the community. As we’ll see when we get to verse 15, your lineage gives you no standing in God’s eyes, and to think otherwise simply means that you’ve fallen for your own deception.

Thus, the first step to reconciliation would be to “go to your brother”. Incidentally, this is the same thing Yeshua said in Matthew 18:15-17.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 6:4-5** ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.

There are good works, and there are “not so good” works. If you are moving the good news of the restoration of God’s kingdom forward, this is a good work. If you believe you can obtain salvation by “works of the law”, that’s not good, because according to Paul, it doesn’t “work” that way.

Paul’s next step to reconciliation is to examine your own work . . . how does your life stack up to what you believe to be truth?. This step is tied to the first step by the Greek word “deh” (Strong’s 1161) which is a primary particle that indicates a continuation. Though it’s normally translated “but” or “and”, it can also mean “moreover” or “never-the-less”. Whereas verses 1 – 3 direct the congregation to reprove those who are at fault in the whole Galatian debacle, Paul says that each person should judge himself as well.

Let’s begin by examining the word “rejoicing” in this passage. The Greek word is “kauchema” (Strong’s 2745) and it’s used 11 times in the NT, out of which 5 times it’s translated “rejoicing”. The other times it’s translated along the lines of glorifying yourself or boasting, and that’s the ways it’s translated in the English Standard Version.

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:4** But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone . . .

⁸ See the commentary on Galatians 5:13-26

Paul used basically the same word in verses 13 and 14 –

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:14** But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

So “boasting” is not necessarily wrong, unless you boast in the wrong things. I know of people who boast about their association with someone else. I've heard it many times in job interviews where the applicant will try to make up for his shortcomings in one area by letting me know that he was referred by someone that he knows to be a friend of mine, as if him being a friend of my friend would make him a better employee.

The 1st century Jewish leadership took this to the extreme, thinking that association with Abraham was something to boast about, but boasting about your association with another person rarely lifts you up in the mind of the hearer. Unfortunately, those leaders had nothing else to boast about because their works failed under the scrutiny of God's word. Yeshua pointed this out to His followers

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^{NKJ} **Matthew 23:5** "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

According to Paul, you do have something to boast about if your works are right. The Greek word for “work” is “ergon” (Strong's 2041). It's used 176 times in the NT. Here are a couple of examples where it's used in the positive sense.

^{NKJ} **James 1:25** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work (ergon), this one will be blessed in what he does.

^{NKJ} **1 Peter 2:12** having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works (ergon) which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

In regards to works, each person must examine his works based on what he considers to be the standard set by God. That standard is what Paul defines as the burden that you must bear. The Greek word for burden in this verse is not the same as that in verse two. The “burden” in verse 2 is one that you help each other carry by “going to your brother”, but the burden in verse 4 is a burden you must carry yourself. In verse 4 the Greek word for “burden” is “phortion” (Strong's 5413). It's the same word Yeshua used to contrast His burden to that of the Pharisees.

^{NKJ} **Matthew 11:29-30** "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

Now contrast Yeshua's burden with the burden of the Pharisees.

^{NKJ} **Matthew 23:1** Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples ²saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat . . . ⁴ they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders. . .

As we can see, there were two different “burdens” or standards by which each person in the Galatian communities could “examine his own work”. – the written Torah given by YHVH to Moses, or the combination of the written Torah and the oral traditions. What's more, Paul had shown that if you accept the teaching of the perpetrators (written + oral Torah), then you must judge yourself by that heavier burden.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 5:3** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Therefore, the 2nd step to reconciliation is to judge yourself by the standard that you've accepted – either God's written Torah or a combination of written and oral – then see if you have anything to boast about.

Paul knew that those who accepted the later would find that they fall way short of their standard. He states such later in this chapter.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 6:6-8** ⁶ Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

After working through the problems brought on by some, and after examining yourself to see if you even come close to living up the standard you have chosen for yourself, Paul says to move forward in the work of the gospel, and the way to move forward is to teach. Paul put a high value on those who teach the word of God. In a discussion about the value of speaking in tongues verses inspired speaking (prophecy and teaching), Paul chose teaching over tongues.

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 14:18-19** ¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; ¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Pastors tend to love this part of Galatians because it seems to say that the churchgoers must pay the preachers. I was raised in a church that taught tithing in order to (among other things) pay the wages of the preacher. After years of study, I began to see tithing differently, and ended up “throwing the baby out with the bath water”, adopting a stance that preachers should support themselves. I maintained that view until a few years ago when I came to realize how much time it takes to prepare a message, maintain a web site, and deal with the year-long process of preparing for Sukkot. I’ve come to see that if it were not for the fact that I’ve been able to “retire”, there’s no way I’d have the time to do what I’m doing.

For those in the 1st century, it would have been even more difficult since travel took much longer. It was the custom in 1st century Judea for the Jewish leaders to send “apostles” to the various synagogues spread throughout Asia Minor as well as those cities that border the Mediterranean Sea. Yeshua mentions this fact in his chastisement of the Pharisees –

^{NKJ} **Matthew 23:15** ¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

According to Tim Hegg⁹, it was also the custom of the day for the leader of the receiving congregation to see to the maintenance of the teachers. Yeshua taught pretty much the same thing to his disciples.

^{NKJ} **Luke 10:3-7** ³ "Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴ "Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. ⁵ "But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' . . . ⁷ "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Thus, according to both Yeshua and Paul, helping to pay for the upkeep of the teacher is good and right, but what they taught is different from what’s taught in most Christian churches today. What Yeshua and Paul taught was part of established Jewish “halacha”. What today’s churches teach is that it’s a commandment – and there’s a difference. “Halacha” is not a commandment, but is based on an interpretation of a commandment, an interpretation that can change as circumstances change. You see, the Torah never instructs the Israelites to support teachers and missionaries, but it does instruct them to support, primarily through tithes, the Levites and priests, and God instructed the priests to teach the

⁹ Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Tim Hegg, Torah Resource, 2010, pg. 260

Torah. Because of the example of the Levites and priests, the pattern was set by which other teachers could and should be supported if their work prevented them from providing for themselves.

Another difference between what most churches teach and the “halacha” followed by Yeshua and Paul is in regards to tithes. The Torah is very clear about who and why a person could receive tithes, and neither Yeshua, Paul, nor probably most of the disciples qualified to receive them. Thus the first century Jewish people supported the teachers by way of free will offerings – offerings that were above and beyond the tithes and other Torah mandated offerings.

Because offerings are not mandated, but are “freely given” Paul was able to say that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”. Tithing is a set percentage of the increase of the field, but freewill offerings are what a person gives based on his own desire, thus if a person wanted little from what the teacher has to offer, he would invest (sow) little into his ministry. But if that same person believes the teacher has much to offer, he would invest more.

Why would Paul include this admonition in his steps for reconciliation? Probably because most of the teachers in the Galatian congregations were Jews, some of which may have been promoting the “other gospel” of the perpetrators. Some of them, like Peter had previously done, may have supported the segregation of Jew and non-Jews, thus offending many of the non-Jewish Israelites. These offended Israelites may have decided to “vote with their wallet” and cut off their support of the Jewish teachers. This, according to what I see Paul saying, was unacceptable.

The 3rd step to reconciliation was that all, both Jew and non-Jew, look beyond their hurt feelings and continue to support those who were continuing to move the gospel message forward.

NKJ **Galatians 6:9-10** ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

It was the intent of the perpetrators to wear the non-Jews down to the point where they either converted or returned to the Roman cult. From what we see in chapter 4, it appears that many had indeed “thrown in the towel” and returned to the pagan religion of Rome, and though Paul was hoping that the leadership would change their view, he knew it would take time for the change to filter down through the congregation. Therefore, they must stand strong in the walk as they await vindication. Not only must they stand strong, they must also continue to support the congregation in word and deed.

Paul used the word “oikeios” (Strong’s 3609) which is translated “household”, hoping to encourage the view that they (both Jew and non-Jew) are all of one family living in one house. Just as the prodigal son and his older brother were of the same family, the Jews and the non-Jewish Israelites both came from the same father – Jacob.

Verse 9 and 10 sum up the reconciliation process, and that is – don’t let them drive you away. As non-Jewish believers, you are part of the family of Israel, and as long as you continue steadfast in the congregation and in the Torah-based walk of Messiah Yeshua, the congregation/family will continue to thrive and grow, and the Kingdom of Israel can be restored.

Thus Paul’s four steps to reconciliation in the Galatian community are: 1) going to your brother, 2) judging yourself by the standard you’ve chosen, 3) continuing to support the Gospel, and 4) stick with the congregation. These steps not only helped maintain the Galatian congregations, they can help ours as well as we grow in understanding of YHVH’s great plan for His people – Israel.

Shalom Alechem