

# STUDY NOTES for GALATIANS SIX

## The BEHAVIOR of a BELIEVER

(Continued from chapter 5)

### GALATIANS 6:1-18

**PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the scripture for this lesson. Begin by letting the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.**

#### Summary and Historical Background

Paul concluded his letter to the Galatian churches by giving them two additional principles by which they were to govern their Christian deportment. Stating it briefly, they were to love others (6:1-10), and they were to be loyal to Christ (6:11-18).

Their love for others, if it were genuine, would lead them to restore a fallen brother (6:1); to relieve a burdened brother (6:2-5); to remunerate a teaching brother (6:6-9), and to render good to all men, especially to a needy brother (6:10).

Their loyalty to Christ was not commanded by Paul, but was commended by his life. How did he show his loyalty to Christ? He removed all doubts about himself and his message (6:11). He rejected the doctrines of false teachers (6:12-13). He rejoiced in the cross of Christ (6:14-16). And he respect the marks he received from persecution (6:17-18).

#### A. Love for Others; Others vs. Self (6:1-10)

##### 1. Restore a fallen brother (6:1)

6:1 - "*Brethren*" - Paul used this affectionate address twice in chapter six (cf. 6:18). He did not want to leave the impression that he had rejected them, even though he had used some strong words (cf. 3: 1-15). He still loved them and considered them as members of the family of God.

"*Man*" - a Christian brother is implied by the context.

"*Overtaken*" - it means to be surprised or to be caught.

"*Fault*" - it is the noun for "trespass" and has the same root as the verb "to fall away" or "to fall in one's way" (cf. Heb 6:6). The trespass is singular, a one-time sin, and not habitual sins. In the context Judaizers are trying to persuade Gentile believers to be circumcised in order to fulfill the Law, it is likely that the "fault" (trespass) that Paul had in mind was an attempt by a brother to keep the Law, especially by circumcision. Paul seems to be talking about a brother that may be overcome by the persuasion of the Judaizers and he yielded in a moment of weakness.

"*Ye which are spiritual*" - this refers to a believer who is walking by the Spirit, that is, one who is

controlled by the Spirit (5:16, 25). A spiritual brother will have the love to go to a brother that has fallen into sin and gently deal with him.

*"Restore"* - this word was used of setting broken bones and of mending fishing nets so that they could be used once more. A Christian brother who falls into sin needs to be repaired spiritually so he can be renewed in Christian service. What must be done to restore a fallen brother? It is helpful to see what Nathan did when God sent him to restore David (2 Sam 12:1-15). First, he told a story to get David's attention (1-6). Second, he reminded David of God's goodness to him (7-8). Third, he showed David that he had despised God's command (9). Fourth, he named the consequences of his sin (10-12, 14). The result was good in that David confessed his sin (13). What then are the basic steps for restoring a fallen brother? One, begin with a story about someone who committed the sin he has done. Two, show him what God says about that sin and make sure he believes what the Bible says. Three, remind him of God's goodness in saving him from Hell and giving him many blessings as a Christian. Four, expose his sin and show him the consequences of it by the verses you have already explained to him. Five, ask him to repent by openly confessing his sin and by forsaking it (Prov 28:13). Six, restore him to fellowship with the believers when he has proved that his repentance is genuine.

*"Spirit of meekness"* - this is a fruit of the Spirit (5:23), which speaks of gentleness. The spiritual brother will be gentle in dealing with a fallen believer; this is critical in restoring his brother.

*"Considering thyself"* - the use of the singular second person pronoun ("thyself") shows that this is a personal examination. He must be dependent on the Spirit to show him how to do this work.

## **2. Relieve a burdened brother (6:2-5)**

6:2 - *"Bear"* - this verb is in the present tense which indicates that Christians are to make it a practice of bearing the burdens of Christians who need help in their struggle with adversities. They can help struggling believers by personally lifting those burdens with financial, physical or emotional help, but it is most important to teach them to cast their burdens on the Lord (1 Pet 5:7).

*"Burdens"* - these burdens may have reference to those of a sinning brother (6:1), but should not be limited to those kinds of burdens. Some burdens are caused by the sins of others and other burdens are given to a believer by the Lord to teach him an important lesson.

*"Law of Christ"* - this is the law of love, which is to characterize believers (5:14; Jn 13:34).

6:3 - *"Think himself to be something"* - this is a form of pride, and pride will stop a man from bearing the burdens of others. He must be humble before he can help a burdened brother.

*"When he is nothing"* - a proud person is nothing; he has no moral strength and can help no one.

*"He deceiveth himself"* - he thinks he is something that he is not. He is a dreamer.

6:4 - *"Prove his own work"* - each person should test the character of his work as one would test the purity of metals. It is an individual's responsibility to make this test.

*"Rejoicing"* - literally, "boasting." This is an occasion for a valid type of boasting or glorying. A man who proves that his work is good can be proud of it in a good sense.

6:5 - *"Every man"* - individual responsibility is emphasized (cf. 6:4).

*"Shall bear his own burden"* - this seems to be a contradiction of 6:2 The Greek word for

"burden" in this verse is a different word, although the difference is not clearly defined. Paul used different words to show he was not contradicting himself. The "burden" in 6:2 speaks of the pressures and difficulties that come into a person's life. The "burden" in 6:5 speaks of the responsibility each person must carry before God when he is judged for the deeds done in his body (2 Cor. 5:10).

### **3. Remunerate a teaching brother (6:6-9)**

6:6 - "*Communicate*" - this word is used for "fellowship" and for "sharing." In this case it refers to someone sharing his material goods with his teacher (Rom. 12:13).

*"In all good things"* - possibly things other than material goods were to be shared with the teachers; i.e. encouragement, helpfulness, friendship. However, financial support is the main emphasis and is a common theme in Paul's writings (1 Cor. 9:3-14; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; Phil. 4:10-19; 2 Th. 3:7-9; 1 Tim. 5:17-18). Financial burdens were not to be borne by the teachers. Paul wanted to make that principle absolutely clear so they would not misapply 6:5 to pastors and teachers and force them to carry their own financial burdens.

6:7 - "*God is not mocked*" - the verb, "mocked," comes from the noun for nose and it implies that someone is turning up his nose, thinking that he is better than another person. God is mocked when someone turns up his nose at His commands and warnings.

*"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* - the principle of sowing and reaping is also found in 1 Cor. 9:10-11 and 2 Cor. 9:6. No one should ignore this important and far-reaching principle without being prepared for serious consequences.

6:8 - "*Soweth to his flesh*" - this refers to the person who gratifies his old sinful nature. He plants the seeds of sin in his fallen nature.

*"Reap corruption"* - in the physical realm, "corruption" refers to bodily decay and death; in the spiritual realm, it refers to moral ruination and eternal destruction. When a man plants the seeds of sin in his life, he will harvest the fruit of corruption in his life.

*"Soweth to the Spirit"* - this refers to the Christian who yields himself to the Holy Spirit. He plants the seeds of righteousness in his new nature by supporting God's work and caring for His ministers (6:6).

*"Reap life everlasting"* - life everlasting is endless in duration, but it is also rich in quality. It is exciting, fresh, satisfying and restful. This kind of life is harvested by those who plant righteousness.

6:9 - "*Weary*" - literally, to lose heart.

*"Well doing"* - has reference to supporting the pastors and teachers who taught them. Treat them well.

*"In due season"* - God's time of harvest is not always man's time of harvest, but it will come at the right time.

*"If we faint not"* - this is an important condition that must be met for a rich harvest. Do not give up when the blessing from giving is delayed. The blessing will come at the right time. Seeds do not produce fruit at the same time. Some seeds produce fruit quickly, some slowly, but all good seeds produce fruit. Giving to others is good seed that will produce fruit in due season. Count on it!

#### **4. Render good to all men, especially to a needy brother (6:10).**

6:10 - *"As we have . . . opportunity"* - the word for "season" in 6:9 is the same word used for "opportunity" in this verse. Therefore, it can be said that verse ten is speaking about the season for sowing, while verse nine is speaking about the season for reaping.

*"Do good unto all men"* - this is the work of sowing to the Spirit (6:8).

*"Household of faith"* - Christians are to do good to all men, but most of all to those in their spiritual family. Even as members of an earthly family are especially responsible for the welfare of their own members (1 Tim. 5:8), so Christians have as their primary duty the responsibility of taking care of those believers who are in the "household of faith".

#### **B. Loyalty to Christ; Christ vs. Judaism (6:11-18)**

Believers would do well to follow the example of Paul's loyalty to Christ. Four of his rules are given in these verses; they are worthy of following.

##### **1. Remove all doubts about yourself and your message (6:11).**

6:11 - *"Ye see how large a letter"* - Paul is not talking about the length of this epistle, but rather the largeness of the alphabetical letters that he personally wrote at the end of this epistle. Two explanations will be given for this comment by Paul. One explanation has to do with an idea that he suffered from an eye disease, which caused him to write with large letters. Earlier in the letter he said the Galatians would have given him their eyes because they loved him so much (4:15). This comment would prove that Paul was the author of this letter. A second explanation for Paul's large letters could be his way of showing the seriousness of the message in this letter. He had boldly rebuked their doctrinal errors and now he emphatically underscores his message by concluding it with large letters.

*"With mine own hand"* - Paul personally identified himself as the author of this letter by writing this note. This would leave little doubt in their minds about the author of this letter (1:1; 5:2).

##### **2. Reject the doctrines of false teachers (6:12-13).**

6:12 - *"Desire to make a fair shew in the flesh"* - the Judaizers had fleshly motives for getting a good number of Gentiles converted to Judaism

*"Constrain"* - this verb is in the present tense: the Judaizers were repeatedly trying to compel the Galatians to be circumcised. Although the Judaizers had succeeded in getting the Galatians to adopt some holy days (4:10), they had not yet succeeded in getting them circumcised (cf 5:2).

*"Lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ"* - this was the first motive that the Judaizers had for pressing the Galatians to be circumcised. They wanted success in making converts to Judaism without the cross of Christ. They taught that circumcision would make them converts to Judaism and give them a place in God's Kingdom. The cross of Christ was not enough, but keeping the Law was absolutely necessary and circumcision was the initial rite in keeping the Law. The Judaizers could not make the cross of Christ the only way of gaining favor with God. This would bring swift persecution from the Jewish community.

6:13 - *"Neither . . . keep the law"* - the Judaizers did not keep the whole Law, nor did they attempt to do so. They chose the laws they wanted to keep and emphasized those as the most important. Circumcision was one of those "important laws."

*"That they may glory in your flesh"* - this was the second motive that the Judaizers had for circumcising the Galatian believers. They wanted to boast about their success in getting Gentiles to convert to Judaism. They wanted to boast in the number of Gentiles that they converted to Judaism.

### **3. Rejoice in the cross of Christ (6:14-16).**

6:14 - *"God forbid"* - Paul uses this strong disclaimer three times in this epistle (also in 2:17 and 3:21).

*"Glory"* – literally, "boast." Paul refused to boast in anything except the cross of Christ. He wanted the Galatians to know that circumcision could not be added to the work that Jesus did on the cross for his salvation. He was challenging them to stand with him in this doctrine.

*"The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"* - the cross was an instrument of death for Christ, but it was a symbol of life to Paul. It was by the cross of Christ that he was delivered from the penalty of death for his sins so that he could have everlasting life.

*"The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* - the world system and the believer have died to each other. The world stands for everything outside of Christ, which appeals to the flesh. The world system has no natural interest in the Christian, and the spiritual Christian has no interest in the world system.

6:15 - *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision"* - only the cross of Christ provides salvation, not religious rites or the lack of them (cf 5:6 for a similar statement).

*"But a new creature"* - this should be translated "a new creation." Sinners do not become new creations through religious rites, but only through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

6:16 - *"Walk according to this rule"* - the word for "walk" is the same one used in 5:25, "to walk in a straight line." Paul was pronouncing a blessing on those believers that walked in line with the rule of the preceding verse (6:15). This rule stated that being a new creation in Christ was all-important, while circumcision was not important.

*"Peace . . . mercy"* - these were two blessings that Paul pronounced on true believers in order to strengthen and encourage them.

*"The Israel of God"* - this seems to refer to Christian Jews. Paul's usual use of "Israel" was to apply the term to the Jewish nation, so this phrase should be translated in line with that use.

### **4, Respect the marks received from persecution for Christ (6:17-18))**

6:17 - *"Let no man trouble me"* - Paul considered the case was settled.

*"Marks"* - Paul bore marks in his body from persecution for Jesus' sake, but he considered these marks to be better than the mark of circumcision, which the Judaizers considered so important.

6:18 – *"Brethren"* – an affectionate term (cf 6:1).

*"With your spirit"* - this particular phrase in Paul's benediction also appears in Philippians and Philemon, but nowhere else. Paul sensed that their spirit needed a special supply of grace from Christ to overcome their problems and give them confidence to yield fully to the control of the Holy Spirit.

*"Amen"* - Galatians and Romans are the only letters that Paul closed with an "Amen." It was a solemn statement by Paul to reflect his strong desire that the letter accomplish God's purpose. It means, "So be it."