

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 6 (PART 2)

PAUL HAS POURED HIS HEART OUT TO THE GALATIAN BELIEVERS. HE HAS WARNED THEM, APPEALED TO THEM, REMINDED THEM, AND INSTRUCTED THEM. AS HE CONCLUDES THIS LETTER HE NOW HAS TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHURCH WHICH ARE CRUCIAL TO THEIR FUTURE PROGRESS AND SURVIVAL. AT THE START OF CHAPTER 6 HE URGES THEM TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES - WATCHING AND HELPING WITHIN THE CHURCH WHEN THERE ARE BURDENS TO BEAR OR SINS BEING COMMITTED.

THE IDEA IS THAT THE CHURCH, THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, COULD BE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND DEPENDENT ON GOD HIMSELF AND EACH OTHER TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE END. THIS WORK ISN'T EASY AND REQUIRES DAILY DEVOTION. SO AS PAUL CONCLUDES HE WILL GIVE THEM SOME UNIVERSAL TRUTH AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO HELP THEM SEE THINGS THROUGH TO THE END.

GALATIANS 6:6 - CARE FOR THOSE CARING FOR YOU

BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE FINAL INSTRUCTIONS, PAUL ADDS ONE MORE ELEMENT TO HIS CALL TO "BEAR EACH OTHER'S BURDENS." IN THIS CASE HE IS ENCOURAGING THOSE WHO ARE RECEIVING BLESSING FROM THOSE TEACHING AND LEADING THEM TO BE AND GIVE A BLESSING IN RETURN. THIS ISN'T A SELF-SERVING REQUEST FOR IT IS UNCLEAR THAT PAUL WILL RETURN TO THESE REGIONS AND DOESN'T HAVE A PO BOX OR VENMO ACCOUNT SET UP TO RECEIVE DONATIONS. HE IS ENCOURAGING THE CHURCH TO INVEST IN THE LEADERS AND TEACHERS THAT ARE SERVING THEM.

IN MANY CASES WHEN THE CHURCH IS FINANCIALLY OR MATERIALLY SUPPORTIVE OF THOSE LEADING AND TEACHING THEM, IT IS TO THE CHURCH'S BENEFIT. A PASTOR OR TEACHER WHO IS UNDIVIDED IN THEIR SERVICE TO THE CHURCH WILL (PRESUMABLY) BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CARING FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SUPPORTING THEM.

GALATIANS 6:7-10 - REAPING & SOWING

THESE VERSES BY PAUL COMMUNICATE A UNIVERSAL TRUTH THAT IS BUILT INTO THE CREATION ITSELF. WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE OF SOWING/REAPING IN THE NATURAL WORLD IS ALSO TRUE IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. IF YOU PLANT AN APPLE SEED IN THE GROUND, YOU WILL REAP AN APPLE TREE. IF YOU PLANT A TOMATO SEED, YOU WILL REAP TOMATOES IN RETURN.

PAUL TELLS US THAT THIS PRINCIPLE IS TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS. IF YOU PLANT "SPIRITUAL SEEDS", YOU WILL REAP "SPIRITUAL FRUIT". IF YOU PLANT "SEEDS OF THE FLESH" YOU WILL REAP FLESHLY RESULTS.

ONE INTERESTING OBSERVATION FROM THIS SECTION IS THAT PAUL BEGINS HIS EXPLANATION WITH A WARNING "DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED." IN OTHER WORDS HE WANTS TO ADDRESS THE FACT THAT EVEN THOUGH SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY CAN BYPASS THE REALITY OF THIS TRUTH - YOU CAN'T. YOU MIGHT THINK THAT YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN, BUT YOU CAN'T. PERHAPS YOU DON'T SEE THE RAMIFICATION OF YOUR CHOICES RIGHT AWAY, BUT HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE FRUIT IN THE SAME WEEK YOU PLANTED A SEED? DON'T BE DECEIVED - WHATEVER A PERSON SOWS, THAT THEY WILL ALSO REAP.

THERE ARE A FEW OTHER PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE BUILT IN TO THIS TRUTH

- THE WAY TO REAP GOOD FRUIT IN YOUR LIFE IS BY PLANTING GOOD SEEDS.
- THE WAY TO STOP REAPING BAD FRUIT IN YOUR LIFE IS BY STOPPING PLANTING BAD SEEDS AND STARTING TO PLANT GOOD ONES

- THERE MAY BE SITUATIONS WHERE YOU ARE STILL REAPING THE RESULTS OF SIN/FLESH DECISIONS WHILE YOU WAIT FOR NEW, GOOD FRUIT TO BLOSSOM
- SMALL, SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT, CHOICES AND DECISIONS, CONSISTENTLY PRACTICED OVER TIME IS THE WAY TO CHANGE.
- IF YOU WONDER WHY YOUR LIFE IS THE WAY IT IS RIGHT NOW, EXAMINE THE SEEDS YOU ARE PLANTING, AND EVEN MORE SPECIFICALLY THE SEEDS YOU HAVE BEEN PLANTING IN THE PAST.

WITH ALL OF THIS BEING SAID, WE SHOULD NOT CONFUSE THIS SECTION WITH A FORM OF WORKS-BASED THEOLOGY OR CULTURAL "KARMA" OR "WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND". YOU CAN BE (OR SHOULD I SAY WILL BE?) A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN AND EXPERIENCE PERSECUTION, TROUBLE AND TRIALS. THE PRESENCE OF THESE THINGS DOESN'T NECESSARILY IMPLY YOU HAVE SINNED OR DONE SOMETHING WRONG. WE HAVE A PERSONAL ADVERSARY, LIVE IN A FALLEN WORLD AND HAVE OPPOSITION IN IT. JESUS WAS PERFECT AND WAS BETRAYED AND MURDERED, NOT TO MENTION LIVED A LIFE THAT WAS "ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF (ISAIAH 53:3)."

THIS ISN'T ABOUT MONEY OR MATERIAL PROSPERITY - IT IS ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT OF YOUR LIFE AND MOST IMPORTANTLY YOUR INNER PERSON.

IF YOU ARE SARCASTIC AND SNIPPY, YOU SHOULD EXPECT A LIFE THAT EXPERIENCES CONFLICT AND CONTENTION. IF YOU ARE KIND AND THOUGHTFUL, YOU SHOULD EXPECT A LIFE THAT IS MARKED BY LOVE AND PEACE. IF YOU INVEST YOUR TIME IN GODLY PURSUITS, YOU WILL REAP THE BENEFIT OF WISDOM AND GODLINESS. IF YOU INVEST YOUR TIME IN UNGODLY THINGS, YOU WILL REAP THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH. IF YOU WATCH EVIL TV OR MOVIES, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU WILL DEAL WITH FEAR AND ANXIETY. IF YOU LISTEN TO PRAISE MUSIC, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOUR THOUGHT LIFE WILL BE PEACEFUL AND CHRIST-LIKE. IF YOU SPEND TIME WITH ANGRY PEOPLE WHO USE FOUL LANGUAGE AND PUT PEOPLE DOWN, YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE THOSE THINGS TAKE ROOT IN YOUR OWN LIFE. THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT GOES. WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.

ONE OF THE PRIMARY AREAS WE OUGHT TO BE SOWING IS IN LOVING RELATIONSHIPS AND DOING GOOD FOR OTHERS. IT'S INTERESTING THAT IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS SECTION PAUL ENCOURAGES THE GALATIANS TO "DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH (6:19)." WE OUGHT TO SPEND OUR DAYS SERVING OTHERS, BLESSING OTHERS AND DOING GOOD TOWARDS OTHERS. IN DOING THIS, WE ARE MAKING THE MOST OF THE TIME AND PLANTING SPIRITUAL SEEDS. WE SHOULDN'T SIT AROUND WAITING FOR OTHERS TO DO GOOD TO US, WE SHOULD BE ACTIVE IN DOING GOOD TO OTHERS.

AND SO WE ALL FIND OURSELVES TODAY LONGING TO HAVE GOOD, GODLY AND SPIRITUAL FRUIT IN OUR LIVES. WE RECOGNIZE THAT A DAILY FAITHFULNESS TO INVEST OUR TIME, THOUGHTS AND HEART IN GODLY THINGS WILL PRODUCE THESE THINGS IN OUR LIVES - BUT THIS TAKES TIME. THIS DOESN'T OFTEN HAPPEN OVER NIGHT. AND SO THE TAG PAUL ADDS TO THE END OF THIS INSTRUCTION IS "LET US NOT LOSE HEART".

THIS IS A REAL TEMPTATION. SPIRITUAL GROWTH TAKES TIME. THERE ARE DAYS WHEN NOTHING APPEARS TO BE HAPPENING! AND YET UNLESS THE FARMER KEEPS GOING OUT TO THE FIELD TO WATER THE CROPS, PULL THE WEEDS AND SHOO AWAY THE CROWS AND RABBITS - THE CROPS WON'T GROW. AND SO THE FARMER STAYS FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN IT *APPEARS* LIKE NOTHING IS HAPPENING BECAUSE SOMETHING IS HAPPENING, IT'S JUST BELOW THE SURFACE. BUT SURE ENOUGH IN DUE TIME HE/WE WILL REAP! IN THE WAITING, WE HOLD ON TO THAT PROMISE.

GALATIANS 6:11-16 - FINAL WORDS - FROM PAUL HIMSELF

PAUL PROBABLY WAS DICTATING THIS LETTER TO SOMEONE ELSE WHO WAS WRITING IT DOWN. BUT AT THIS POINT IN THE LETTER HE WANTS TO BE SURE THAT THE GALATIANS KNOW THESE WORDS ARE COMING RIGHT FROM HIM. PERHAPS HE EVEN PENNED THIS NEXT SECTION HIMSELF AND THERE WAS A NOTABLE MARK OF HIS HANDWRITING. THIS WAS A CLEAR AND PERSONAL TOUCH FROM PAUL TO THESE DISCIPLES WHO HE LOVED SO DEARLY.

HE WILL USE THIS PERSONAL MOMENT TO REITERATE ONE FINAL TIME THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HIM AND THE FALSE TEACHERS WHO WERE TRYING TO GET THE PEOPLE TO FOLLOW THE LAW OF MOSES.

FALSE TEACHERS:

TRYING TO LOOK GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE (V. 12)
ARE TAKING THE EASY ROAD TO AVOID PERSECUTION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE (V. 12)
GET CIRCUMCISED BUT DON'T EVEN KEEP THE REST OF THE LAW (V. 13)
THEY WANT PEOPLE CIRCUMCISED JUST TO BOAST ABOUT THE SIZE OF THEIR OWN FOLLOWING (V. 13)

PAUL:

ALL I BOAST ABOUT IS WHAT JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE! (V. 14)

IN OFFERING THIS CONTRAST, PAUL IS TRYING TO PUT THE FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL AND THE WORK CHRIST HAS DONE AS OPPOSED TO HIS OWN LIFE AND MINISTRY. HE DOESN'T WANT THE CREDIT NOR IS HE INTERESTED IN NUMBERS. HE IS INTERESTED IN GLORIFYING GOD, STAYING FAITHFUL TO THE TRUE GOSPEL AND HELPING PEOPLE GET SAVED. WHAT A LIFE GOAL.

THE METRIC HE IS MEASURING IS NOT HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE CIRCUMCISED, BUT HOW MUCH OF THE NEW CREATION LIFE IS SPRINGING UP IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS (V. 15).

"IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER WE HAVE BEEN CIRCUMCISED OR NOT. WHAT COUNTS IS WHETHER WE HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A NEW CREATION. (GALATIANS 6:15, NLT)"

AND THOSE WHO ARE FOLLOWING THIS WAY OF LIFE, PAUL PRAYS FOR "PEACE AND MERCY" TO BE UPON THEM. FOR IT IS THOSE WHO ARE TRUSTING IN JESUS CHRIST WHO ARE THE TRUE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD (V. 16).

GALATIANS 6:17

PAUL HAS JUST WRITTEN IN DEPTH AND AT LENGTH. BUT AS HE CONCLUDES HIS LETTER HE INDICATES THAT HE WANTS TO BE DONE WITH THIS. THIS IS A MAN WHO HAS LITERALLY SUFFERED PHYSICAL PAIN BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL - THINGS THAT LITERALLY TOOK PLACE DURING HIS TIME IN GALATIA. HE DOESN'T WANT TO HAVE TO RESTART THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH AGAIN. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW SERIOUS HE IS, YOU CAN LOOK AT HIS OWN SCARS. IT IS TIME FOR THE GALATIANS TO GROW UP.

GALATIANS 6:18

IN HIS USUAL FASHION PAUL'S FINAL WORDS ARE TO COMMEND THE BELIEVERS TO THE "GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." THIS ISN'T JUST THE GRACE THAT CAME TO US THROUGH THE CROSS BUT THE DAILY GRACE (HELP) THAT COMES FROM OUR LIVING LORD AND SAVIOR, OR HIGH PRIEST WHO IS ACTIVE AND INTERCEDING FOR US. PAUL'S HELP IS NICE, BUT JESUS' HELP IS BETTER. AND SO IF THINGS ARE GOING TO TURN OUT WELL FOR THE GALATIANS, WHICH PAUL CLEARLY HOPES - IT WILL BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST.

AS PAUL CONCLUDES HIS LETTER HE EMPHASIZES WHAT MATTERS TO HIM BECAUSE OF HIS AWARENESS OF WHAT MATTERS TO GOD. THIS IS GOOD FOR US TO CONSIDER AS WELL. IT IS EASY TO REJOICE WHEN THE CHURCH IS FULL OF PEOPLE, WHEN THE PRAISE MUSIC IS LOUD, WHEN THE OFFERING NUMBERS ARE HIGH OR WHEN WEBSITE TRAFFIC OR SERMON VIEWS ARE INCREASING. THOSE THINGS MAY BE AN INDICATION OF GOD'S WORK IN A CHURCH, BUT THEY ARE NOT THE BAROMETER THAT GOD IS LOOKING AT.

GOD IS MOSTLY CONCERNED ABOUT INWARD TRANSFORMATION. IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW LONG WE HAVE BEEN A CHRISTIAN, MEMBER OF A CHURCH, HOW MANY TEAMS WE SERVE ON, HOW MANY BIBLE STUDIES WE ATTEND, HOW MANY SERMONS WE'VE LISTENED TO (OR PREACHED), HOW MANY BIBLES WE OWN, WHICH CHRISTIAN BOOKS WE HAVE READ, CONFERENCES WE HAVE ATTENDED OR VERSES WE HAVE MEMORIZED. WHAT MATTERS IS WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE INSIDE AND HOW THAT AFFECTS AND IS BEING MANIFESTED ON THE OUTSIDE. ARE WE BEING TRANSFORMED TO LOOK MORE LIKE JESUS? ARE WE LOVING, KIND, PATIENT, HOLY, GENEROUS, SACRIFICIAL, AND FORGIVING? THOSE ARE GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK.

THE CHALLENGE THAT THE GALATIANS FACED WASN'T EVEN SO MUCH WHETHER OR NOT TO KEEP THE MOSAIC LAW OR BE CIRCUMCISED. THE TRUE TEST WAS WHETHER OR NOT THEY BELIEVED THAT THE WORK GOD DID THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS WAS ~~ENOUGH~~ FOR THEIR SALVATION AND REDEMPTION. WERE THEY WILLING TO WAIT FOR GOD'S SPIRIT TO TRANSFORM THEM FROM WITHIN AND MAKE THEM NEW OR TAKE SHORT CUTS WHICH ONLY IMPROVE WHAT YOU SAW ON THE OUTSIDE.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST WAS A CONTROVERSIAL MESSAGE IN PAUL'S DAY. JEWS COULDN'T FATHOM THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD COME AND DIE RATHER THAN RULE AND REIGN. JEWS COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT THEY NEEDED SAVING. JEWS COULDN'T RECONCILE THAT THERE WAS A NEW WAY TO PLEASE GOD. GENTILES DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE RESURRECTION OR DESIRE FOR NEW CREATION. GENTILES DIDN'T EMBRACE A CRUCIFIED JEW AS SOMEONE TO FOLLOW. GENTILES DIDN'T THINK THEIR IDOLS, EVILS AND LUSTS WERE BAD. AND YET PAUL KEPT ON PREACHING AND TEACHING AND DEMONSTRATING THE TRUTH OF THIS SILLY MESSAGE. AND AS PEOPLE HEARD AND BELIEVED THEIR LIVES WERE TRANSFORMED.

GALATIA WAS THREATENED BY DECEIVERS WHO WERE COMING IN BEHIND PAUL TO PERVERT AND DISTORT THE TRUTH. THEY WERE MOTIVATED BY THEIR OWN PRIDE, BY THEIR OWN FAMILIARITY TO TRADITION, AND BY THE DEVIL. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH WAS A BROTHERLY APPEAL FOR THEIR LIVES. HE MAKES CLEAR THAT INITIAL BELIEF IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE MUST BE FOLLOWED UP BY CONTINUAL DEVOTION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WITH OTHERS HEADING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

THE CHURCH HAD TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT THEY GOT DUPED, THAT THEY TURNED AWAY FROM SIMPLE TRUTH. THEY HAD TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES TO REALIZE THAT THEY WERE SUSCEPTIBLE TO DECEPTION. THEY HAD TO WATCH THAT THEY DIDN'T TAKE EASY, WELL WORN PATHS OF TRADITION OR FAMILIAR PRACTICES OF WHAT THEY HAD ALWAYS DONE. THEY HAD TO FIGHT TO STAY ON THE NARROW WAY OF JESUS.

WE NEED TO RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE TODAY. WE NEED TO STAY ON GUARD AND NOT BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE GRACE AND GOSPEL OF CHRIST (1:6). WE NEED TO WORK HARD TO KNOW AND HOLD ON TO THE GOSPEL. WE NEED TO NOT GET TRICKED INTO THINKING WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE WHAT PLEASE GOD. WE NEED TO DEPEND ON THE SPIRIT'S POWER AND MANIFEST THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. WE NEED TO PRIORITIZE INWARD TRANSFORMATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. AND WE NEED TO TRULY AND GENUINELY CARE FOR EACH OTHER ALONG THE WAY.

WE HAVE GOOD AND HARD WORK TO DO. WE HAVE OLD AND NEW THREATS TO FACE. BUT WE HAVE THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SAVIOR TO GUIDE AND FIGHT FOR AND LOVE US AS WE TRUST AND LOVE AND FOLLOW HIM TODAY.