

LENT 2020

Galatians 6

Galatians 6 - A little bit more...

Hopefully if you're reading this you have had an opportunity for me to introduce Galatians 6 as a part of our church's Lent series. If not you can find it here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoYlgNwDTEI>

In this blog I just want to add some things I wasn't able to elaborate in the video above. Looking at Galatians 6 I identified three points, New Community, New Challenges and New Creation.

New Community

Paul shares that faith in Jesus is all we need to be saved, and that as those who have been saved we also enter into the family of God, we are called children of God. We become a part of the new community. The false teachers in the church of Galatia wanted people to have to do certain things in order to belong, Paul tells us that none of that counts, all that matters is the Cross of Christ in which we can be made right with God and restored to one another.

In 5:25 Paul says our life is now one which is defined as living in the Spirit and as such we need to grab hold of that identity and walk in step with the Spirit. Not leaving us hanging Paul shares what we can do 'walk in step with the Spirit.' Most of what follows as instruction from Paul is how we relate to each other.

Paul tells us not to provoke one another, or envy one another, to restore one another and to carry one another's burdens.

How do you respond when you see or hear about someone else sinning? When I think of my answer to this, I hear a very British response, a good tut. You know the noise I mean? When people shake their head and make that noise with their tongue? Paul doesn't envisage this reaction, instead he wants us to restore each other. How? Gently and Carefully. Gently, because that is not our first reaction, but it is how Jesus responded to us. Think of the woman caught in adultery. How does Jesus respond? Gently! The first thing he does is stop her from being stoned, and then he goes and speaks to her quietly and gently, calling her to turn from her sin. I think we can learn a lot from this episode, both in how Jesus deals with us, and how we are to deal with others.

And secondly, carefully. We have to be careful around sin, it's like when you handle paint, you have to be careful with it and handle it properly or it gets everywhere. Don't think you are spiritually impressive and can deal with others issues on your own, recognise your need for God and for accountability. In fact, Paul warns the Galatians of this.

In v.3 we are told to be careful we do not think too much of ourselves, to make sure we do not get too big for our boots. Why does Paul say this? Because the danger was that people would just take the regulations the false teachers were imposing and replace them with Paul's new instructions. But that was not Paul's intention, he didn't want to create a spiritual elite, he wanted to share how we are to be the new community God wants us to be. And to be that, we mustn't get overly impressed with the amount we help, because we too, like any who fall and sin, are sinners, and ultimately without Christ are nothing. That's the word Paul uses - 'nothing.' Why does he say that? If we never evaluate our own life, and never recognise our own need for the cross, then we can compare ourselves to those who are sinning, or struggling with burdens and so believe the lie that we are better than them. That is not what it means to be part of the New Community, so we must 'test our own actions.' We must assess ourselves instead of compare ourselves to others.

New Challenges

I addressed most of these in the video, like not becoming weary in doing good and why Paul emphasises giving to believers. One aspect I didn't address, however, was v.6 where Paul encourages us to give to those who teach us. For us in our context this is church.

Right now, our world is facing odd and challenging times, and a lot of people will be struggling financially. Although we fully trust God for the church's finances, it would be naive to not recognise that the financial impact of Covid-19 could impact the Church. There will be some in both our church and in the wider church, whose personal finances are reduced because of what is happening, and are faced with the question of how will it impact their giving to the Church. I just want to reassure you that it is ok if your giving to the church has to go down (and hopefully our finance team would say the same). The one principle that exists here from Paul is that we should give, both to the church, but also to support others in the fellowship too. But there is not specific guidelines from Paul here as to how much we should give, and although other scriptures do suggest a certain percentage, we always promote that people seek God for the amount they should give. I want to encourage you, in particular at this time, to seek God for how much you should give to the church. God is far more worried about the attitude than the amount, and although the two can sometimes coincide that is not always the case. The smallest amount can be given with the best attitude, and the biggest amount the worst. Seek God, trust him **with** your finances and trust him **for** your finances.

Lastly on this, and I alluded to it in my video, the false teachers were seeking to avoid persecution. Although, I would like to confidently say that if I was in the same situation I would not do the same, until I am there I can't know for sure. However, I do know that at times when I know I should speak up, or defend someone, or tell someone about Jesus,

or offer to pray, I remain quiet. Why? Because like these false teachers, I am pursuing the easy life. It's easier to stay silent. During this period, I want to encourage you to use it as an opportunity to take on this new challenge of not seeking what is easy, but what is good and right. May we like Paul not just say we would boast of the cross, but let us actually be in a place where we are willing and happy and proud to publicly declare how we once was lost and now are found, and we not care who knows it!

New Creation

Paul speaks about the new creation in several places, and the reason those two words excite me is because I think they are the closest thing we have to a description of what heaven will be like. Paul describes the New Creation in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. I would really recommend reading it, and if you have the message translation it is beautifully written there.

This description of what Jesus has done is seen throughout the New Testament, in particular John uses this theme in his gospel. It is why he starts with the words 'in the beginning...' and why when he writes about Jesus resurrection he emphasises that Jesus is walking in a garden (both pointing us back to the creation story in Genesis). In Romans, Paul says that the whole earth is groaning, in anticipation for the new creation to come in its fullness.

In Galatians 6 Paul says none of the religious stuff matters, ultimately what counts is the New Creation. Why? Because this is what Jesus achieved and started on the cross. If you can picture an hour glass on its side, this is how I imagine what Paul is saying; the thin bit in the middle is Christ coming to live, die and rise again. Everything before that leads to and points to him, just look at the Old Testament that speaks of Jesus time and time again. And then everything afterwards comes from him and flows from him into eternity. Jesus is central to everything, he is the Lord of lords and King of kings and he has ushered in the new creation. The New Creation work has begun, it is not just something that will happen in the future, but it has happened and is happening now.

Where and how? In you and me. We are both the new creation and the agents of the new creation. How do we live that out? In community with one another, expressed through love for God and love for one another, which is the very definition of life in the Spirit.

I hope this has been helpful. As I said at the start this is just some extra stuff I didn't have time for in my talk, but you can catch the original sermon here if you haven't already:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoYlgNwDTEI>