

True Compassion
October 14, 2018
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Galatians 6

Opening Review from Chapter Five:

Why did we say “fruit” was a great metaphor to illustrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christ-follower? How is sowing and reaping in nature a combination of human effort and a miracle from God? How does that apply to living the Spirit-filled life?

Paul was writing to a group of churches, so he finished his letter with some instructions on how followers of Christ, in a Christian group setting, should live the Spirit-filled life.

Big Idea: How can you tell if a professing Christian is Spirit-filled or self-focused? You can tell by the way they treat other people and how they tend their Spiritual garden.

Questions:

- As we interact with others do we display compassion or complacency; care or condemnation; contentment or comparison?
- As we tend the garden of our Christian life are we growing consecration or corruption?

Let's look at Paul's prescription for a loving, Spirit-led Christian group starting at 5:26:

Galatians 5:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 6:1–10 (ESV)

6 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

- Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit from last week. Here we see a situation that calls for gentleness: when a fellow believer slips into sinful behavior.

- **What is typically the knee-jerk reaction of Christians when another believer “backslides” into sinful behavior? Why do “legalists” act this way?**
- The goal is restoration. Our natural tendency is confrontation and condemnation.
- Confrontation may be necessary, **how can we do it correctly and scripturally?**
- “Caught in transgression” – **How do we picture that word “caught?”** The word does mean, “to detect.” But it also means to “catch” something before it happens. In this case, to help that other believer deal with a blind spot before it gets worse.
- Another way to look at “caught,” is the concept of being “ensnared.”
- If you came upon your friend and his foot was caught in a bear trap, would you stand there and condemn him for not watching where he stepped?
- Restoration is rescuing someone from the “trap” of sin that has them “caught.”
- **Why did Paul tell the “restorers” to keep “watch on yourself?”**
- Swindoll- *“We may not necessarily be tempted to sin in the same way as the person we’re hoping to restore, but we may be tempted with pride, harshness, gossip, or legalism.”ⁱ*
- When a fellow follower falls the goal is restoration not condemnation, and restoration comes through gentleness.
- How can you tell if a professing Christian is Spirit-filled or self-focused? You can tell by the way they treat other people. Here’s another example:

² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

- It’s no coincidence that “bear one another’s burdens” comes after restoring one who has been caught up in sin. That’s one way we help to bear their burdens.
- **How do we usually define bearing burdens?**
- The motive is fulfilling “the law of Christ?” **What is that? (Gal. 5:14)**
- Look at verse five: **is this a contradiction? Why?** Two different words: burden = “tremendous hardship” while “load” = normal burdens we all have.
- Verse five isn’t a contradiction to verse two but it IS a counterbalance so people don’t take advantage. Example: Verse five means you

won't see a feeble little lady carrying a body builder's groceries to his car!

- When the tremendous burdens of life show up believers need to help each other.
- In verse three Paul shifts to the danger of pride and comparison.

³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.

- The legalists were puffed up and self righteous (the Pharisee and the tax collector Lk.18:11.) Spirit-filled believers know *“without Him I could do nothing!”*
- Comparison to others is a trap that leads to either boasting or envy.
- Each of us should do our best and not worry about those around us.
- The New Living Translation has another interesting interpretation of verse three: ³ *“If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.”*
- None of us is too “important” to help others.

⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

- Churches need to pay the preacher. Seems obvious but not to some churches.
- By the way, Sunday School teachers don't ask for a salary. How can you pay?
- Show up, speak up, and lift up. Show up not only in attendance but when you can help. Speak up - Be engaged in discussion, but also an encouraging word is great “pay.” Lift up your teacher in prayer because every teacher needs it!
- How can you tell if a professing Christian is Spirit-filled or self-focused? You can tell by the way they treat other people AND how they tend their Spiritual garden.
- Let's talk about tending our Spiritual garden. In verse seven (a perfect memory verse) Paul shows us the fruit of the Spirit comes through the law of the harvest.

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Chuck Swindoll has a great little outline on this law of the harvest:

1. ***“We sow and reap in like kind.*** *If you plant watermelon seeds in the spring, don’t expect to harvest grapes in the fall. So, if you dislike watermelons, don’t plant them.*
2. ***We reap in a different season than the one we sow in.*** *Gardeners don’t plant seeds, pull up a lawn chair, and wait with a basket in hand to harvest. The seeds bear fruit in a different season.*
3. ***We reap more than we sow.*** *I think gardeners would be pretty frustrated if each plant produced only one fruit bearing one seed to grow one new plant. God has created plants for fruitfulness and multiplication.*
4. ***We must let go of past harvests and focus on sowing for the future today.*** *Not every harvest produces a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables. Some harvests are flat and disappointing; others yield bumper crops. We can’t base future returns on past harvests. If we want to reap in the future, we need to plant in the present.”ⁱⁱ*

- Those four principles apply whether we are sowing good seeds or bad seeds.
- Sowing the desires of the flesh comes naturally, **how do we sow to the Spirit?**
- Verse eight in the New Living Translation contrasts sowing good seed and bad:

⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

- *“Harvest everlasting life”* doesn’t mean earning our salvation. That would contradict this whole letter about grace and not works.
- *“Harvesting everlasting life”* means a believer who lives to please God *“will reap a harvest that will last forever.”ⁱⁱⁱ* Eternal life doesn’t start when we die and go to heaven; it began when Jesus saved us. (See 1 Corinthians 3:13-15)
- Paul gives a word of encouragement about the harvest from sowing good seed:

⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

- Ever grow weary in doing your best for God and wonder if the crop will come in?
- Think about physical weariness. **How does it manifest? What symptoms?**
- There might be many symptoms of growing weary in well doing. Here are three:
 - Burnout – I’m carrying the whole load and I can’t do this anymore!
 - Boredom – Who cares? This isn’t as fun and exciting as I expected.
 - Bad attitude – I’m sick of this! There’s a lot to criticize and complain about.
- These symptoms of weariness in well doing come from trying to do God’s work alone, in our own strength (and not with the Holy Spirit’s help,) and perhaps forgetting WHY we do it in the first place.
- The remedy is doing God’s work with the help of other believers, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with the motive of loving others – fulfilling the “law of Christ.”
- Above all, Paul says “...*don’t give up!*”
- In these nine verses Paul has given us quite a checklist on how a group of Christ-followers should treat and care for each other. There’s a lot to consider.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- How can you tell if a professing Christian is Spirit-filled or self-focused?
- Answer: You can tell by the way they treat other people, and by the “fruit” from their Spiritual garden. Both of those depend on being “in step” with the Spirit.
- It’s interesting how those two “indicators” tie back to the two highest commands Jesus taught us (Matt. 22:37-40): Love God, and love others as yourself.
- We show the love of Christ for others as we restore with gentleness those who slip in to sin, bear each other’s burdens, resist comparison

to others, which leads to pride or envy, and provide for those who lead us.

- As verse 10 says, ¹⁰ *“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*
- That’s loving others, what about loving God?
- We love God by “sowing” to please Him instead of feeding our selfish desires.
- The In Touch devotion had a great word about how to “sow to the Spirit:”

“When you’re sowing to the Spirit, you are accepting God’s truth into your mind and heart. Then you will begin to experience eternal life, which comes from truly knowing the Lord (John 17:3). The fruit of the Spirit grows naturally from these seeds of godly truth and influences every aspect of your life. When you feed your spirit with the things of God, you’re going to become stronger, more Christlike, and more full of His life in your thoughts and actions.”^{iv}

- All of this sowing and reaping, loving and caring, helping and bearing by a follower of Christ comes from living the Spirit-filled life.
- As we said last week, that’s a life of intentional daily dependence on the Holy Spirit of God living in us.

ⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8)* (Galatians, Ephesians) (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (pp. 138-139). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Campbell, D. K. (1985). Galatians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 610). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} <https://www.intouch.org/read/magazine/daily-devotions/sowing-to-the-spirit>