

Galatians 6

Here's a brief summary of what we've been talking about thus far... Galatians is Paul's fatherly rant on the saving power of trust rather than law. The Galatians were being seduced back into thinking that the law was a necessary part of the mechanics of salvation, and Paul tackles this opposing teaching head on. Paul repeatedly clarifies that he is not talking about abandoning the law. Rather, he is calling the Galatians to lay down the legalistic perversion of the law which brings neither freedom nor righteousness before God, and run their lives by the Spirit. The fulfillment of the Law in the person and sacrifice of Jesus, at work in the believer by the movement of the Spirit, is the true gospel that Paul proclaimed and defended. This is the gospel that brings freedom, love, and life. With these things understood, we are ready to meditate on the closing chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Monday- (Verses 1-3)

In these verses we are told that it is our responsibility as the people of God to correct those who are living in a way that is opposed to the character of God. However, we are cautioned to do this humbly, remembering that we are also fragile and easily seduced by sin. We are commanded to share in carrying the burdens of others, and also to allow others to help us with ours. It says that this is a fulfillment of the true meaning of the law. Honestly, most of us have a much harder time with this command than we think we do. I have been guilty so often of discarding verse 3 and its caution against self-delusion; my default is always to carry my own burdens. But like this section says, we fool ourselves when we think we can live life without allowing our burden to be shared among the family of believers. How often do you truly allow someone to share their troubles with you? How often do you authentically share yours with them? We have gotten in the habit of *talking about* our burdens without actually *sharing* them, and *sympathizing* with others' troubles rather than *bearing* them. Meditate today on your need for the comfort, understanding, and partnership of the Body, and ways in which you might be deceiving yourself into self-reliance. Also pray that the Lord will open your eyes to opportunities to minister to your brothers and sisters in genuine ways. Humble us Father, to receive the blessing of solace and companionship that you have provided for us in your Body, the church. Teach us today to fulfill the spirit of your law in upholding your children in the midst of their troubles.

Tuesday- (Verses 4-6)

Today's reading calls us to a level of honesty within ourselves that deflates the ego and allows us to see ourselves truly. How different would life be if we all kept this one tiny verse always at the fore of our thoughts? To honestly evaluate our actions...to eliminate empty boasting (which is difficult for me to conceive of, as that seems like a staple of life for us males)...refusing to judge people by our own false standards of excellence...that would make quite an impact, no? And then taking the next two verses; carrying your own load (ie, pulling your weight. This is not referring to bearing your burdens yourself, which we addressed yesterday), and giving credit where credit is due. These three verses are daunting in

their call for personal responsibility, but they are also a fantastic roadmap for us as college students transitioning into adulthood. Today, strive to only boast in your accomplishments that actually deserve it. Attempt to catch yourself when you are holding people to false standards. Take ownership of your area of responsibility. Recognize the contributions of others and honor those who are pouring into you. Such disciplines will surely bless you and those around you. Pray for presence of mind to maintain these attitudes throughout your day, and ask the Lord to show you some of the fruit of your actions. Father, encourage us today as we war against our pride and selfishness. Replace our creature comforts with divine comfort, and our efficiency with thoughtfulness. Lead us not only in our transition to adulthood, but in our transformation to true humanity as well.

Wednesday- (Verses 7-10)

The thought for today is very simple, but cuts straight to the heart of everything: There is no escaping the law of cause and effect; God set up the universe with this principle embedded deeply in its guts. What you sow, you will reap. So, in what ways are we choosing to appease our old natures? And, do we truly believe that such a choice will eventually bring us to ruin? On the flip side, how are we reinforcing our new natures, and do we truly believe that such a choice will result in everything our deepest selves long for? Wrestle with that for a second. Do you actually believe that walking in the footsteps of Jesus will bring you life in *every* sense? Because if you don't, you are going to find it very difficult to find a compelling reason not to sin. But Paul seems to believe it pretty matter-of-factly, and encourages the Galatians (and by extension, us) to be steadfast and patient in doing what is right, with the *complete assurance* that life and blessing will be the unavoidable result. This is something that I struggle to connect with in my gut. It's a hard thing to grasp in a way that reaches down past your intellect and into your soul...but it is Truth (note the capital "T"), and is as indisputable as the very character of God, because that is its source. Wrestle, meditate, and pray today that our gracious Saviour will help you to connect with the reality of this promise. That you would be filled with the quiet resolve of someone who knows that what they are doing is full of purpose. And that in the serenity of that assurance you would go forth today and fulfill the call of verse ten to seize every opportunity to do what is good to everyone, especially to our family in the faith.

Thursday- (Verses 11-14)

The bottom line of this passage is two-fold. First, be watchful for people who only want you to join their cause for the sake of bragging rights, or to use you. And second, don't get caught up in the rat race of trying to impress the people around you when the only thing that is truly impressive is the lovely sacrifice of our Jesus. That being said, what strikes me about this passage is the last sentence. Which, oddly enough, I find is wonderfully paraphrased by Timon the meerkat when he says, "When the *woild* turns its back on *you*, *you* turn your back on the *woild*". In this one sentence, Paul/Timon expresses something achingly beautiful, hopeful, and comforting. Through the execution of our Jesus, the world and I, the world and you, the world and *we* have cut all ties. In Jesus we have disowned each other

completely and no longer have any obligations, affections, or compulsions toward each other. The broken marriage that we had with the old world has been annulled. The former regime is truly God-forsaken because He made a way for us to forsake it all, abandon ship and step into a wonderful new world of wholeness and true lasting peace. Hallelujah, we don't have to live there anymore! I think of the eager expectation of those who settled the Americas, looking to the horizon for a "New World", and finally setting foot on the soil of a new home lush with possibility. What explorer has ever sailed so far that he discovered a land where life was still abundant and fresh? We've been to the moon and not found such a place. But Jesus brought

it

to

us.

Chew on *that*.

Friday- (Verses 15-18)

As we wrap up this series of devotionals from Galatians, I can't help but appreciate how Paul chooses to end his letter. After all the correction, challenging, and scolding in this book, he ends with something as poignant, fatherly, and encouraging as, "neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is being a new creation". Let's try to hold that thought loosely in our hands today, not tightly, but letting it flow into and out of our souls like clean water. Like a breath. Let this thought rinse from your spirit your feelings of inadequacy as a Christian. Your confusion. Your frustration. Your bitterness. Your shame. Your fear. Your anger. All of the ways that your heart is tied in knots over whether you are following our Jesus properly or not, let them be loosened by the awareness that "what matters is being a new creation", and that *that* part is resoundingly accomplished on our behalf and cannot be undone. Father, connect our hearts with the awesome gift of freedom that you have given us. Teach us to boldly, gladly embrace Your joy that fills life with wonder, Your peace that is so precious, and Your hope that is more than just hope.

The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.