**WHAT COUNTS IS A NEW CREATION**

March 30, 2014

Galatians 6:1-18

Key Verse: 6:15 “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.”

Thank God for blessing us through studying the Book of Galatians. We learned that we are justified, adopted by faith and received the Holy Spirit and became heirs by God’s grace, not by work. We are set free from the condemnation of the law and sin. We also learned that we should not use our freedom to indulge the sinful nature but serve each other humbly in love. It is possible only when we live by the Spirit and the Spirit produces the fruit for us. Now Paul explains the practice of “living by the Spirit.”

Look at verse 1. “Brother, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” We had been chasing sin before we became believers, but now sin has been chasing us and sometimes overtaking us because we are not living in the redeemed body. We want to and should live a holy life, but that’s not possible all the time. There’s always a chance to fall into sins: intentionally or unintentionally. Whatsoever it is, it ruins the person caught in a sin and can affect the whole community negatively. Therefore, church must deal with it and solve it to build up beautiful body of Christ.

What are Paul’s guidelines? First, those who live by the Spirit should restore the person gently (1). If a fleshly person tries to help another fleshly person, both will destroy each other. Therefore, those who are filled with the Spirit or controlled by the Spirit and so bear the fruit of the Spirit should take responsibility because the purpose of the task is restoration, not putting the person out of the world. The word “restore” means “to repair what has been broken.” So those caught in sin are like broken cars that need repair. They are weak and sick in sin. We need to restore them into the right relationship with God and with brothers and sisters in the community so that they can grow spiritually and useful to God. Here, we should keep in mind that the Bible teacher, in our term, should restore the person in a spirit of gentleness. Gentleness pictures humility with power under perfect control. That’s why it is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It means that the teacher should carefully observe with understanding and humility, and most importantly by depending on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory (Mt 12:20).”

Look at verse 2. “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Here, the Greek word “*baros*” for “burden” indicates heavy loads that one person cannot carry. They are unbearable. Especially moral and spiritual burdens really crush a person. Have you experienced such a burden? But burdens for each individual could be any kind. In the movie “Les Miserables,” ex-convict Jean Val Jean carries the burden of a dying poor prostitute. Her little daughter she would leave in the world was the huge burden even that she could not die with. But he promised her and took care of her daughter as his own daughter. That was because he was restored by the love of Christ through the two silver candlesticks and liberated from the oppressing burden of the law. Then he was able to carry someone else’s burden.

But we who help others should remember one hindrance. Look at verse 3. “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”Paul sternly warns against pride or self-righteousness. It is very easy to look down on those in sin or under burdens, becoming superior, self-righteous and smug. Then the remedy for this trap is verses 4,5. “Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.” We should examine whether our motive and actions are right, in Christ’s love or selfish desire. We should make sure that we have a humble gentle spirit and that we have a reason to take pride because of what God has done in our life. If we really serve a burdened brother or sister in love by the Spirit, we will have confidence in ourselves and grow more spiritually. But comparison always leaves a feeling of being either superior or inferior.

Now then each one should carry their own load. Here the Greek word for “load” is “*phortion*,” which means pack, like your backpack, without indication of heaviness. Paul talks about our spiritual responsibility, which each one should bear alone. It is our own cross (Mk 8:34) such as restoring those in sin and carrying each other’s burdens and examining our own actions. So it also means our own accountability when we stand before the Judge. In any case, we should not neglect our own cross with the excuse that we bore other’s burdens. We must carry our own cross faithfully with a thankful heart. Otherwise, we will burden the body of Christ.

Paul has strongly emphasized the principle of salvation by God’s grace throughout the book. Human effort can add nothing to it. Some people may think, “I am a Christian. I am free under God’s grace. Whatever I do, God isn’t going to do anything to me. In any case I will have eternal life.” This is a deception. Look at verse 7. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” Scientific law in physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, agronomy, and so on never changes. It makes the world predictable because God created the world and established the law. I reaped cucumbers from cucumber seeds, not from corn or tomato seeds. If you jump out from the CN Tower, you know the result. This is the general law of “cause and consequence” applied to everything and all people. God determines what we reap and when we reap it, based on how we live.

Look at verse 8. “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” If we curse out of anger, we will reap curse. If we bless, we will reap blessing. It is like an echo. If we go up on a mountain and shout, “I hate you,” then we will soon hear, “I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.” If we shout, “I love you,” we will soon hear, “I love you, I love you, I love you.” If we hold thankfulness in our hearts, we will reap the fruit of joy. If we hold complaints in our hearts, we will reap the fruit of bitterness. Many people blame others when their lives produce bad fruit. They blame their parents, a faulty school system, or a traumatic event in their past. They never take responsibility for the fruit they have born. However, a man reaps what he sows. We are not spectators in this process. We are sowers in our own lives. Ultimately, it is each of us who decide what kind of seed is planted in our minds, hearts and souls. We are who we are precisely because of the seed that has grown in us. We cannot blame others or the situation when we produce bad fruit. We must take full responsibility. If we are bearing bad fruit, it is because we are sowing to please the sinful nature. We must come to God and ask his help to start sowing to please the Spirit. Behavioral science teaches us that thoughts guide behavior, behavior forms our habits, habits develop our character, and character shapes one’s personality. The seed we sow in our own minds has tremendous power in our lives, and in the lives of others. If we indulge in lustful thoughts and petty pleasures, then our personalities will be distorted and our lives ruined. On the other hand, when we meditate on the word of God day and night, our personalities develop in the image of Christ and we will be healthy and happy. We reap a harvest of righteousness and peace. A man reaps what he sows. This is a universal truth. Anyone who sows to please the sinful nature, yet expects spiritual fruit, deceives himself. He is ignorant of God. Many people sow recklessly. They plant harmful thoughts or words with no sense of responsibility. They will reap what they sow. A mother repeatedly told her son, “Go out and die,” when she was burdened by him. One day, he took his life tragically. She didn’t mean it. But her words bore the fruit of death.

Look at verse 9. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” We are not doing good for our salvation, but we have been saved to do good for others. “Doing good” means the acts of love such as helping people suffering in sin to receive life in Jesus’ grace. It is to help those who are wandering without truth to know God and find the meaning and purpose of life. It is to lead others to eternal life by helping them believe the promise of God. Planting the seed of God’s word in one person’s heart may be the best good deed one can do. But it is not easy to persevere in this. It may require going through hardships, even pains of childbirth. When we labor without seeing any visible fruit, we are tempted to give up. How about you? You have been doing good. You have daily bread time, write reflections, pray regularly, study the Bible, but you feel you don’t grow big enough. You wonder when you are going to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, not a basketful but a truckful. Or you go to campus and invite students in love, hoping they would grow to be the disciples of Jesus, but no success. Some of you experience your Bible students coming and going; so nothing to harvest. Or you teach and serve sacrificially, but nobody appreciate you much. Then you may question yourself. “How long should I continue? I’m tired of it.” We often complain, become weary, and are tempted to give up. Do you want to give up? No.

We must remember God’s promise: we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. We need faith in God’s promise. We also need patience. The harvest is in God’s hand. It may take one year, ten years or thirty years. Remember that we do not harvest in a field of tomatoes the day after we sow the seed. But the harvest will surely come. In the plan of God, we may reap what others have sowed in previous generations. In the same way, we may sow what will be harvested by future generations. There is even a plant that was revived from 32,000 year-old-seeds and that blossomed and produced offspring. The one thing we can be sure of is that there will be a harvest if we do not give up.

Then what should we do? We should know that harvest is absolute. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (10).” Let’s be faithful opportunists. If anyone needs help, let’s help; needs love, let’s love; needs comfort, let’s comfort; needs the sandwich on our dish, let’s share it. We must be especially eager to sow God’s word and God’s love in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Not only will they receive benefit directly, but God will bless our act of sowing by producing abundant spiritual fruits. The result of these fruits is the growth of a beautiful spiritual community, which has a good influence on neighbors, and renders glory to God.

Through the Holy Spirit we are freed from the condemnation of the law by faith. God granted his grace to us to live a new life without fear. Look at verse 15. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.” This is one of the most important statements of Christianity. The new creation is what exists when the old mindset is crucified with Christ. Paul speaks in [Galatians 2:20](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Galatians%202.20) of being crucified with Christ; yet somehow he lives and so the “he” that lives must be new—a new creation raised from the dead. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” The new creation is not an improvement of the old life, nor is addition to the old life. It is something entirely different. It is a transformed life, from the slaves of sin into sons and daughters of God. In [Galatians 5:6](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Galatians%205.6), Paul says, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” So the “new Paul” who is created when the “old Paul” is crucified with Christ is a Paul who lives by faith which works through love. This is confirmed back in 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God.” In a sense Paul doesn’t live anymore. Christ lives through him. But he does live, and the “new Paul” is the Paul who depends so much on Christ day by day that it is as though Christ were doing the living through Paul. So the new creation of [Galatians 6:15](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Galatians%206.15) is the mindset of utter reliance on Christ day by day. Or we could say that the new creation is the power of Christ’s life unleashed in us when we depend on him.

Now as a new creation, if we follow this rule, which is living by faith, living by the Spirit in the grace of Christ, we will always have peace and mercy. As we finish the Book of Galatians, we learned about the law and Christ’s grace, freedom and living by the Spirit. Christ came to fulfill the law; so should we by loving one another as Jesus loved us, that is the life living by the Spirit.