

Doing Good to All

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[0 : 00] Okay, I'm going to begin by actually asking you to turn to the person next to you, or if you're sitting by yourself to try and find someone close by, to share one good thing you've done this week.

Shouldn't be too hard, I don't think, so why don't you, I think so, yep, so have a go. All right. Okay. It sounded like more than one good thing, so that's great.

And I'm sure there were a variety of things you came up with. Perhaps some of you went out of your way to help someone. Perhaps you practiced being a little calmer this week in the face of exams. Perhaps you were learning to watch what you ate. There's plenty of good things we could do, couldn't we? But in our passage tonight, Paul spells out a few good things that we ought to do as an outflow of our faith.

I don't think he's saying that these are the only things that are good, but I think he's saying that they're a priority of sorts. And we'll see later on in the passage why that is.

[1 : 13] So let's begin in verse 1, where Paul says, Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Now first of all, notice how this actually applies to Christians, those who live by the Spirit. Since what they're trying to do as they restore someone caught in a sin is an expression of their faith.

Now the phrase caught in sin suggests someone who's inadvertently fallen into sin. The image perhaps is of your foot getting caught in something, maybe the leads up the front here or something, and tripping over.

So the person has acted foolishly, perhaps out of ignorance. He or she is a believer who has slipped up. And so in such a situation, we're to restore them gently, so as to prevent this particular sin or error from leading into something worse, more sin.

Now I wonder if you've ever been, you've ever done something wrong. I'm sure you have. But as you have, experienced this sort of gentle restoration.

[2 : 32] It sort of takes a special kind of person to do that, doesn't it? Someone say, who has the fruit of the Spirit? If you look back at last week's chapter, chapter 5 and verse 22, qualities such as patience, gentleness, kindness.

These are the things that it takes to restore someone gently. It has to be done in a measured and gracious way. And as they do, Paul says, they need to watch themselves so that they're not tempted in the process or think they are beyond temptation themselves.

So really, when we do something like that, there shouldn't be an attitude that says, you know, I just can't understand why someone would do something like that. What a silly and immature thing to fall into.

We should never have that kind of attitude. And we also ought to be checking ourselves before we attempt to point out someone else's error.

You know, as Jesus says, take the log out of your eyes before you criticize this fact in others. And I think this is particularly so when we are the ones that are feeling wronged by the other person.

[3 : 47] Now, when this happens, I would actually go so far as to say that you're probably not the right person to do the restoring. Because when you feel hurt or angry, you don't have that objectivity to be restoring gently.

Rather, I think when you're in such a situation, we're better off forgiving first. And then perhaps allowing someone else, maybe a leader or something, to do the actual restoring.

But putting those things aside, as a church, though, the point Paul has is that we mustn't turn a blind eye when a member of the church sins.

Because the kingdom of God is actually at stake. If we truly love our brother or sister, then we want to encourage them to keep in step with the spirit.

And so that when they sin, what should be the right thing to do is to actually bring them back to be in line with the spirit. And that requires gently restoring them.

[4 : 48] So that's the first good thing that Paul says we are to do. And then in verse 2, Paul says we are to carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Now, this again is quite a general command. And that's because Paul has in mind that we should do whatever it takes to help one another. But I think not just with life in general, but actually to maintain each other's walk of faith.

So this could include practical tasks like helping someone with meals when they're sick or helping them move house or something. But I think it also includes helping each other spiritually.

Perhaps keeping one another from temptation. Keeping each other accountable. Say, you know, from going online to watch pornography or something like that.

Or it could be to help someone by meeting up with them regularly to help them continue walking in the Lord. Particularly if, let's say, they're going through a hard time at church.

[5 : 55] They might be depressed or something. Or it could be carrying the Lord in terms of volunteering to take on some of the responsibilities they have at church while they're struggling with personal issues.

And above all, I think we can carry each other's burdens by praying for them, by bringing their needs to God in prayer. But whatever we do, the aim is like the first verse, helping a brother or sister not to fall away.

And in this case, not because of sin, but because of despair or discouragement. When we do this, Paul says we fulfill the law of Christ. It's a similar idea to chapter 5 and verse 14, where we're said to fulfill the entire law where we love our neighbor as ourselves.

And it's also called the law of Christ because this is exactly what Christ did to fulfill the law. Jesus carried our burdens for all of us by dying on the cross for our sins.

He fulfilled the law so that we don't have to. He took our punishment so that we didn't. And so by carrying one another's burden, we are simply in our small little way following in Jesus's footsteps.

[7 : 12] We too are to take up our cross for others, just as Jesus did for us. But notice again in verse 3 that there's another warning that goes with it.

Paul tells us not to neglect our own burdens as we do so. He says, You see, the temptation again here is that whenever we help others, it's easy to get proud again, isn't it?

Because we think we are the stronger person when we're trying to help. And sometimes we're so focused on helping others that we neglect our own spirituality.

So Paul wants us to test our own actions. And I think this is especially true for us who are leaders. Test our actions and see where we stand with God's standards, rather than compare ourselves with others.

You know, when my daughters were younger, I used to love racing them in the pool, because I would always win.

[8 : 29] But that wasn't a fair competition, was it? Because I was physically stronger than they were. That's totally different nowadays, but let's not go there. But the point is that if I had compared myself against the clock, now I would be really chastened, wouldn't I?

Because my times would be way slower than I was swimming when I was a 14-year-old. Well, it's the same with our spirituality. It's always easier to find someone that's worse than you in our eyes, isn't it?

But if we assess ourselves against God's standards, now where would we really measure up then? How would we really measure up? Would it really show that we've been growing this time?

Or would it have shown that actually, you know, we've stagnated or even gone backwards?

Reading God's Word and allowing the Spirit to test us against what the Word says, I find is always a very humbling experience.

Because we realize how far short we are of God's perfection. Of course, what that should drive us to is back to Jesus and back to faith in Him for our justification.

[9 : 45] And so when Paul says here we are to carry our own load, what he means is that we are to take seriously our own faith and maturity. We will each have to give an account of ourselves when we come before God.

There will be no one else that we can blame for our own maturity. And, you know, we can't claim credit for someone else's good works either. So, friends, let me ask, do you have a habit of reflecting on your lives?

Of checking your motives to see where you are? Of looking into your own hearts? It's not all about just doing, doing, doing, but actually testing your own actions and seeing how you stand with God. I hope you do. Now, the third thing we can do is what Paul spells out in verse 6. And it's to do good to those who instruct us. So, nevertheless, the one who receives the instruction in the Word should share all good things with their instructor.

So, if verse 1 is focused on doing good to a younger Christian, say, and verse 2 about mutual good to one another, then verse 6 is about doing good to the one who's more mature, who's instructing us.

[11:01] Now, if you're younger in the faith, you might not think that that's possible, but Paul actually shows us or encourages us to do so. And I think what he has in mind here is that as we're growing in our faith and benefiting from the instruction of the Word, then we ought to share the good things that arise from it.

Expressions of love and the fruit of the Spirit should be directed to those who teach us. So, if you're growing in love and joy and peace, then why not share that joy with the person who's been instructing you?

Tell them what the impact of their ministry has been on your life. Because that would really encourage them, for them to know that what they've sown in your lives is bearing fruit.

So, here's a suggestion. Next time it's sharing time in your Bible study, don't just share about your problems, you know, how work is so stressful, exam was so hard. Don't even just share about your blessings.

Thanks. Hooray, I found a job. Or, you know, Dad just bought me a car or something. But share about how the Word of God is shaping your lives as well. So, if you had a great conversation with your colleague or friend at school about Jesus, share about that.

[12:21] If God has been working you in your life to shape you and make you more humble, share about that. Because all of that is evidence that God's Spirit is at work in you.

Well, as far as doing good is concerned, all these three examples, have you noticed, are actually connected with our faith, helping one another to mature in it. And I think that there is a focus on this by Paul because of what he now spells out in the next section.

So, looking at verse 7 and onwards, Paul tells us that the reason for doing good is that God will reward us according to what we sow. Do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Here again, Paul has a warning. God cannot be mocked. There's no way of ever pulling a fast one on him. God knows what we're doing with our lives, and we will reap what we sow.

[13:26] Now, actually, that's not quite right, because throughout Galatians, actually, we've actually learned that, as Christians, we actually haven't reaped what we've sown, have we? What I mean is this.

Instead of being punished for our wrongdoing, which is what should be what we reap for what we sow, no, we're actually being forgiven. Had we truly reap what we've sown, we'll be in big trouble now, wouldn't we?

Instead, we get to reap what Jesus sowed, his righteousness and his inheritance. It's ours by faith in him. But in light of this grace, Paul is now saying, let's not make a mockery of God's forgiveness. Instead, let us sow what is good. Let us live to please the Spirit. Paul's comparison here is with the physical world.

It's the idea of farming, sowing and reaping. So if a farmer puts a mustard seed into the ground, logic tells him that what he'll reap is a mustard tree.

[14:33] Likewise, if you sowed an apple seed, an apple tree will follow. You can't put in a mustard seed and then hope to get an apple tree or a rose bush or something like that. And so it's the same in the spiritual realm.

If we live simply to please the flesh, then we'll get fleshly fruit or eggs of the flesh, as we saw last week. If we live only for the comfort of this life, then nothing spiritual will come of it.

There will be nothing to show at the end of this world. Hence, what we reap, Paul says, is destruction. You will have no part in God's eternal kingdom.

But on the other hand, if we sow to the Spirit, or to use the words from last week, we walk by the Spirit or live by the Spirit, then what is produced is the fruit of the Spirit. And because these things are of the Spirit, they are eternal in nature.

And so they will last. And what we reap is eternal life. It's really two ways to live, isn't it? And that reading that we had in Psalm 1 is very similar.

[15:42] I've tried to put the whole Psalm on one slide. It's a bit small, sorry. But maybe you can follow it. Because it just shows you. Those who walk in step with the wicked, stand with the sinners, sit with the mockers, go all the way down to the end, will end destroyed in the judgment.

Conversely, those who delight in the law of the Lord will produce fruit in season and go right to the bottom. They will stand in the assembly of the righteous. This is how God has designed His moral universe.

What we sow, we will reap. And so in light of this, Paul says in verse 9, we need to persevere in doing good and not give up.

Because it's right at the end when the harvest will become apparent. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Again, it's just like farming. When a seed is sown, we don't immediately get the harvest, do we? Rather, the seed takes time to germinate and then grow. And then maybe after a few seasons, we might see some fruit.

[16:50] And then only when the tree is fully mature, do we have a full harvest. And so it is with our own Christian life and the lives of our brothers and sisters.

The spiritual fruit in our life takes time to grow. And in the meantime, we can easily grow weary, can't we? When we become impatient for the harvest.

I remember being a youth leader 25 years ago or so. That's how old I am. I was pretty young at that time. And so pretty immature too. But there were times when we were leading week in, week out, that it wasn't actually easy to work out what difference we were making.

Anyway, many of those I've lost contact with. But recently, I've bumped into one or two of them. They're now 40-year-olds with their own kids.

But it was good to see that some of them are still Christians. And that's when I begin to see a little of the fruit of what happened those many years ago. Takes time, doesn't it?

[17:53] But of course, when Paul talks about the proper time, he's not even thinking about this life only, is he? Rather, he's talking about eternal life, inheriting the kingdom of God.

That's the thing that we will reap right at the end. And so, we need to continue to be faithful, to believe, to do good to others, helping them in their faith, growing in our faith ourselves, because our reward will only really come right at the end when we've persevered.

And so, to sum it up, Paul gives us the take-home application in verse 10, which in the outline sort of sits by itself. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Now again, Paul makes a distinction here, doesn't he? Yes, it's right to do good to all people. After all, that's being like God who caused the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked. But again, Paul focuses on doing good to those who belong to the family of believers.

Why? Because these are the ones we know will be with us to inherit the kingdom. Now Paul isn't saying here that we just neglect doing good to others as well. No.

[19:08] He says do good to all. Hopefully by doing that, some of them might even come to faith. But, the focus is really to be on the family of believers.

that is, the work of encouraging one another in the faith. Now the rest of the verses, which is the end of the letter, I think are a bit of a postscript to the entire letter.

But, there is in some sense in which it's all tied in with chapter 6 as well. But first, verse 11 is a bit of comic relief, I think. Many scholars have tried to find some spiritual application to this verse.

But I think it's safe to say that there actually is none. You see, I think what's occurred is that Paul has been using a scribe to write his entire letter. And then he gets to the end and he decides to take the pen off the scribe and put the final notes into his own hand.

And then when he does, he sort of realizes, ooh, my handwriting is pretty big compared to the scribe. And so he goes, see what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand. No need for

magnifying glasses.

[20 : 17] Ha ha. Now the effect, of course, is I think because it's so large, the readers pay special attention to it. Rather like using caps when you're texting a message. Not shouting, but hey, this is my final emphasis.

And, you know, if you read it, what he says here is rather emphatic because he wants to point out that while he's been encouraging them to do what is truly good, the agitators, the reason why he's written this letter in the first place, are doing things simply just to make themselves look good. So what is truly good versus what is merely looking good. So he says, those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. In other words, Paul is saying that you're being used, you're being used like a trophy by them to show the non-Christian Jews how law-abiding they are so that they wouldn't be persecuted.

And yet, Paul says, this is just hypocrisy because they haven't kept the law wholeheartedly themselves in the way that God wants them to and they're making you do it. So verse 13, not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.

[21 : 36] Thus, this circumcision is really only just for show and really has no justifying power or value. Now again, for us, I'm pretty sure that circumcision is not our issue, but the principle is still worth noting, isn't it?

That is, we mustn't simply do good just as an outward boast. Or if you like to use that phrase that's being thrown around nowadays, we mustn't do it purely for virtue signaling.

Now, like Paul, if we do boast, then there's only really one thing we should boast in. Verse 14, May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Neither the circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. What counts is the new creation.

Again and again, when people speak well of us, as they see our faith expressed in love and taste the fruit of the Spirit at work in us, our response must never be to go, wow, how good am I?

But rather, our response must be always to turn to Jesus, turn back to Him and turn others to Him as well. We live the way we do, not because we are good, but because we have been deeply impacted by what Christ has done for us.

[23 : 07] We are not good in and of ourselves, but we respond by doing good because of the good that God has done to us in Christ. And if we live the way we do, then we are no longer of this world, nor do we seek the status or recognition it has to offer.

Instead, our eyes are set for the bigger price, that of the new creation. And this is Paul's challenge to us, isn't it?

As he says in verse 16, peace and mercy to all who follow this rule to the Israel of God. I think Israel of God just means God's people.

Paul himself is happy to glad in verse 17 that he bears the marks of Jesus, that is, he is willing to suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. So will we likewise forfeit approval from the world because what counts is our place in the new creation.

So that what counts is not uncircumcision or circumcision, not PhD or no PhD, not prestigious degree or no prestigious degree, not fancy postcode or not fancy postcode, not job promotion or no job promotion, but what counts is our place in the kingdom of God in the new creation.

[24 : 34] Well, brothers and sisters, God has done the most amazing thing for us. That's what we've learned in Galatians. He sent his son, Jesus, to us so that he has given us a way to be right with him that is justified not by what we do but by obeying the law, by simply trusting in his son by faith.

That is the first amazing truth from Galatians. I've got three on the slide. The second is that God then gives us his spirit so that we can please him instead of indulging the desires of the flesh. We now live by the spirit instead of of the flesh and we're giving the power to express our faith in love so as to fulfill the law of Christ. And so as we are exhorted by Paul tonight we are to take every opportunity to do good not to earn our salvation but as a right response to it.

And then finally in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 15 the third amazing truth is that we now belong to the new creation no longer to this world. We are crucified to this world just as Paul was.

We're children of God heirs of the kingdom. So friends how do these three amazing truths sit with you tonight? As you read them do they fill you with joy?

[25 : 57] Do they guide how you live and set your priorities in life? Well I hope and pray that they do and will continue to do so. Let's pray. Father thank you for your son Jesus through whom we may be justified by faith.

Thank you for the gift of your spirit who empowers us to obey you and to love others and thank you for the hope of the new creation to which we belong and the promise of our inheritance in Christ Jesus.

We pray and ask this in the name of Jesus who came and saved us. Amen.