

# A new way of living

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, if you have your Bibles with you, we've made it, Galatians chapter 6. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in the spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone, and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

[ 2 : 16 ] And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. Now there's a number of you here, yeah, slightly advanced in years. And so, here's my last Sunday, come on.

And you've kind of got to that age where you like to reminisce. You like to think back a little bit, remember the good old days. If I can make a little confession, I've been doing it with some of the students just recently in the Bible College. They're just revising at the moment for exams they had on Friday, and then that they've got tomorrow and Tuesday. And they're complaining and that. I'm like, back in my day, you know, it was fairly straightforward. It was only last year.

But we like to reminisce. And I actually, I quite like sitting down and listening to some of these old stories. I've sat down with my mum and her family year after year, and I've heard things about what life was like in the 40s, 50s, 60s, in Northern England, in and around Lancashire, where you had row upon row of these two up, two downs, you know, and just row.

And you see it, like on Coronation Street. I've never watched it, but you can see the opening titles. You see all these rows of houses, and they just seem to just go on for mile after mile. And they're two up, two down, and they're back onto each other.

And then you have these alleyways, and there's just so many houses. But they reminisce about back in that day, when there was a real community spirit. You're nodding. Lovely. You're reminiscing in your heads as well right now, aren't you?

[ 3 : 55 ] You're enjoying that part. Do you want me to just give you a moment? And they talk about the days when, you know, everyone would get home from school, and they'd go out into the alleyways, and they'd be playing.

Well, the kids would be playing. They'd be having great fun, you know, with an old wheel and a stick, and pushing it along. Some of you are nodding again. This is good. And you remember those games well, yeah?

And they just had great fun in those alleyways, and out on the road, because they could play in the road. There wasn't much traffic around. They were good days, great community spirit, lots and lots of fun.

And even Sundays back then, the vast proportion of the population, they were going to church. There was an awareness of God and of spiritual matters. They were good old days.

Today, today, isn't community disappearing? Perhaps it's disappeared. You know, nowadays, children, unless you have children like mine, or maybe like Daniel, who like to climb trees and play with mud and stuff, so often, though, youngsters these days, that they're quite content with their computers, playing with their mobile phones, playing with their games consoles.

[ 5 : 11 ] They're stuck inside. They're not getting out and enjoying the world around. You know, those devices have become a distraction. We've seen the attendance at churches drop dramatically.

You know, where I come from in Guernsey, there was practically a church on every corner, and on a Sunday, they used to be filled. Absolutely full. Absolutely full. But nowadays, the churches are empty.

The church has been sold off for housing. People going to church has dropped off significantly. And we're living in a day where if you ask people if they're happy, maybe you get a comment of, you know, life's all right.

It could be better. There's like this melancholy kind of approach to life going on. And even, dare I say, maybe Christians that are living a life like the stuffing has been knocked out of them.

You know, the zeal and excitement of what God has done has just waned over the years and disappeared off. Maybe people these days, they have a bit of a warped view, a misaligned view of what it is to live as a Christian.

[ 6 : 19 ] And so perhaps a new way of living is needed. A new way of living needed. You know, over the course of this little mini-series on Galatians, we've been challenged to stop ignoring issues in our lives.

To take our heads out of the sand and stop suffering ostrich syndrome. And to take a really good look in a mirror at our faces.

And to have a look and deal with, confront the aspects in our lives that need to change. Today, we've got to chapter six.

Maybe some of you are sitting there and you're mightily relieved. This series maybe has been too challenging. Maybe it's really rocking you inside, even if outwardly you're not letting it be known. But it's a really practical part of Paul's letter. Because what he's doing now is he's spelling out to the Galatians what it really means to live by the Spirit. And to be led by the Spirit.

[ 7 : 30 ] To keep in step with the Spirit. And we're going to consider that this morning under this title of a new way of living. A new way of living. See, Paul, he really is, even if his language doesn't seem like it, he is full of compassion for these Galatians.

He knows that there's another way for those Galatians to live. That means that they'll literally just put off the way that they have been living.

And they're going to walk away from the false teachers. And so he lays out for them really practically what needs to be their new way of living. Just two little points today.

Not a traditional three-point sermon. Just two little points. The first one is this. In verses 1 to 5.

What Paul is saying here is be community. Be community. Paul, he opens chapter 6 with brothers. Brothers.

[ 8 : 38 ] Brothers. What he's saying here is let's be family. Let's be family together. Let's be united. Let's work together. Let's be a family that's a real community together.

That we're brothers. It's saying let's have care and attention for one another. So that everybody is part of the family. And nobody is left out. Nobody is on the other side.

But all of them are part of the family. Perhaps a family that maybe some here today is a bit different to the experience you've had so far in life.

I know growing up in Cornwall where I was born to two parents who divorced when I was two. Grew up with a single mother and a little sister. It wasn't a traditional family of those days.

And it was hard. What I discovered in the Christian walk though is a completely different approach to real family. Of being brothers and sisters in Christ. A family that I know I'm a part of where God is the father.

[ 9 : 53 ] A really loving and kind father. And Paul is clear on how they are to interact with one another. Paul is saying to these Galatians be a part of a community where maybe the things that you do wrong maybe the hiccups in your living yeah they do get noticed but they don't get exaggerated.

They don't get gossiped about. They don't get condemned. But instead what he's saying to them is that we make less of the issue.

We lessen the seriousness of it by showing grace. Showing grace. Why?

Because what he's saying to them is that every single one of you could so easily have fallen into exactly the same trap fallen into exactly the same circumstances yourself. Humanly speaking the sins that maybe we see being committed around us are shocking.

And they are. Some of the stuff we see going on in this world it really is shocking. Perhaps it repulses us at times when you see some of the stuff on the telly. But spiritually every single one of us are sinners.

[ 11 : 18 ] We're no different. Each one of us could so easily commit something similar. Perhaps today you've been a Christian for many years you think you know this Bible I thought I did before I went to Bible college.

I've come out of Bible college realising I know less than I did before I went in. But that's just because of the sheer enormity of the scriptures. Perhaps you think you know your Bible.

Perhaps you've got a number of spiritual books and you think that because you've got a large library that you're walking all right and you're missing the point you see. Spiritual maturity true spiritual maturity is demonstrated in our attitude and the attitude that we apply to those who are making a mistake.

So when someone makes a mistake who's close to you how are you responding? What is your attitude to them? Just a bit of a fun thing I saw the other day on that wonderful social media network of Facebook.

But I like this. If you take the letters of the alphabet A, B, C, D, E, F and you keep going way up to Z and you apply a number so A is 1 B is 2 and you keep going like that and if you take the word knowledge and you add up the score for all those letters you get to 96%.

[ 12 : 46 ] If you do the same thing for hard work you get to 98%. This is the accountant in me. This is just joyous. But if you do the same thing with the word attitude what do you get?

100%. Attitude matters. Attitude matters. It's silly I know but it's just to illustrate a point that attitude matters. What Paul is saying to these Galatians is have the attitude to be a part of a grace-filled restorative community.

The word restore that Paul is using here it's actually a medical term. It's that medical term for where you're setting your bones you've broken an arm you've done something a bit silly you've broken it and it gets set and you have this cast around it to protect it but here we're what Paul is saying is that that cast being set around the broken it's God's people God's people coming around the broken member of the community and seeking them to be restored it's that quest of the body of believers in bringing about healing within the community of Christ.

Now every single one of us I apologize if I go on about this but it applies as much to me as anyone else that every one of us is a sinner every single one of us is messed up we've stuffed up in some way perhaps you did it this morning perhaps you did it on the way to church you know as a family man I can't tell you the number of times I've driven to church and we've had everything kicking off in the car I mean it's just like we're going to church these past seven weeks has been bliss because I've had no one to argue with in the car but you see every single one of us we mess up we probably hurt people along the way perhaps some of us sitting here today we've been hurt by others and we've not known the right way of responding to it we've not dealt with it in the right way and so we've ended up making the big mistake as well but let us think about the situations in our lives when people actually they came alongside and they helped us what was the most effective way of those people who helped us was it by condemnation or was it by gentleness what worked best in your life condemnation or gentleness isn't it so much easier to be to be open and honest when you know you're not going to get condemned when you know you're not going to get belittled when you're not going to be left with that feeling of utter failure so there's a way of drawing alongside each other within that restorative community see remember that Jesus

Jesus himself who we are remembering in this run up to Christmas and I love this time of year I never used to when I was growing up as an adopted child Christmas just brought pain and I'd cry

every Christmas I'd miss my natural mum and I found it really painful it was about six, seven years ago that I like I'm just going to have to set that all to one side Lord just deal with it and let me enjoy Christmas so this month of December rather than being a Scrooge and about a humbug it's like this is fantastic we're about to celebrate the birth of the Saviour you know and this is just tremendous and that little baby he came into this world he came to save the world and not to condemn it he would have had every right to condemn the world he would have had the right to condemn every single one of us for the way that we sin and the wrong that we do why?

[17:13] because he is the only one who is without sin he is the only one who is perfect he is the only one who is blameless and he knows that the whole of humanity from when time began to when time will come to an end is sinful he had every right to condemn but Christ is the example for us he is the example for us to follow the law of Christ to love your neighbour as yourself perhaps that's going to mean that for some of us we've just got to be prepared to be involved in what maybe we think is mundane and unspectacular ministry perhaps you think that you knock on your neighbour's door and ask me if they need something and just sin talking with them is just mundane but if it's for the glory of God it's the best thing you can be doing it's just wonderful or perhaps it's just that ministry of burden bearing now think for a moment where we would help maybe a woman or an elderly person who's got that heavy suitcase at a train station you know you see them struggling can I help you out and you pick it up for them and you go and help them out should we not wish to be ready should we not be humble hearted that we'll share someone's heavy heart and burden as well to draw alongside those who are carrying a burden and are struggling and then the contrast that Paul is using in these verses is that live in this grace filled restorative community rather than being part of that legalistic judgmental community see all the time he's having that little go at maybe the way that they they have been living the stuff they've got brought into verse 3 legalistic communities know that they allow you to think that you're something they enable you to put yourself up on that pedestal and think and pray being relieved and thankful that you're not like the others and instead thinking that you're better than them isn't that just like the Pharisees oh look at me

I'm so grateful I'm not like them you know Paul's saying don't live like that you know that moral behaviour that that makes you think that you've achieved being made right with God and you know or you think you know the whole thing of living the right way of of doing the nice things making sure that maybe you're always presentable in public you've got that right image being given off to people around you of course you never swear no no no never use bad language never say certain things but in fact it's all about living with just this external front and actually living like that means that we're living like a fraud and I'm not standing here condemning anyone today

I look back on years in Guernsey where I was a total career man and I lived with a front everything was fine that I'm alright Jack and I wasn't I wasn't but when we live like that you know I got to a point where I realised I was just a fraud and ultimately I was deceiving myself perhaps that's a position you're in this morning because you and me we are sinners we've never been good enough today we are not good enough and never ever will we be good enough to be made right with God so Paul is saying he's saying to these Galatians don't look down your nose at others don't think that you're anything special thinking that you're better than them because what he says to them is you're not you're no better what he's saying is that you're in a self-centred judgmental lifestyle and that whole restorative graceful community has been overlooked and dismissed

I was thinking about this and I'm thinking about it from a Formula One Grand Prix perspective you know you look at those drivers and they're constantly jostling out on the racetrack why why are they doing that because all that they want to do all they want to be is up on that podium and for everyone to be looking up at them I mean you see where they put the podium they put it right up high yeah so everyone down below is looking up at them they want that glory and dare I say for those drivers their confidence is in themselves what Christ wants is our confidence to be in him in him reaching out loving and bearing the fruit of the spirit that we talked about last week so that we would boast in Christ boast in Christ I am what I am because of Christ

I am a sinner saved by grace because of Christ Paul is communicating to the Galatians that they were saved and therefore restored by the Saviour to God and they are now to seek to restore each other that's what he wants he wants them to work together so they're going to restore each other because they are brothers and sisters in the wonderful community of Christ may each of us walk by the spirit in these harmonious relationships and you may sit there and go this is this is like a utopia we can't do that you expect me to get on where we're with that yeah I do because if you're brothers

and sisters in Christ you can live within a grace filled community and you can live with one another and enjoy each other's company and encourage one another bearing each other's burdens in brotherly love in brotherly service and in brotherly care and being aware of the whole of the church that whole community so that no one not one person is forgotten or isolated a true community involves everybody and that's what Paul wants here for the

[ 24 : 32 ] Galatians and a message that's being left for us as we read this so be community be community and then in verses 6 to 10 what we have Paul is he's saying I want you to be community but I want you to be effective gospel driven people gospel driven people this is the outworking of the gospel this is the whole putting into practice of all that Paul has been teaching in this book of Galatians and Paul is encouraging them and us as the readers to take the message seriously and to then go and apply it not being hearers only but to being doers see in verse 6 he says share share Paul is talking of harvest it's a subject we considered just about seven weeks ago with a process of sowing and then eventually reaping of a harvest harvest but what is harvested is utterly dependent on what is sown if a farmer wants a crop of potatoes is he going to plant mustard seed no if he wants a harvest of carrots is he going to sow wheat no

Paul says what I want you to do is I want you to plant the seed of the word of God and then I want you to allow the spirit of God himself to water it and then to share in the harvest of souls in verse 6 what Paul is making the point that those receiving the word are to share in the bountiful harvest with those who are sowing the word and this is actually it's referring to the support of those teaching by those who are taught the labourer with the word should get their living by the gospel and it's Martin Luther that said these words it is impossible for one man both to labour day and night to get a living and at the same time to give himself to the study of sacred learning as the preaching office requires Paul's motivation here was excellence hard work devotion to faithful

Christian ministry and for those who are then ministering God's word those who are being the sharers of this incredible transformational word to be supported and to be looked after by those who are receiving the seed of the word so Paul says share if you're going to be gospel driven people in verses seven and eight he says consider your personal godliness your personal godliness in some ways this is a return back to chapter five but now it's looking at it from a sowing and a harvest perspective because there's a choice to be made on one hand you can sow acts of the flesh or you can sow to please the spirit and this is linking back to chapter five the verses 19 to 21 and the chapter five verses 22 to 23 you know very clear two ways of sowing what Paul says is Galatians you will harvest what you have sown we ourselves we will harvest what we have sown every single one of us sow into the flesh maybe those moments where we harbor a grudge maybe when we wallow in self pity whoa whoa whoa is me maybe those moments where we we're still lying in bed and we know that we ought to get up and read our word the word of God and pray but we can't be bothered to get up maybe every time that we strain for self-control Paul says at those moments we are sowing to the flesh and if we sow to the flesh that we're not going to reap holiness instead we're going to reap eternal destruction but if we sow with our minds set on the things of God if we sow with our minds seeking God if we sow with the desire to foster those disciplined kind of habits of personal devotion in our life when we're in daily prayer when we're in daily reading and the study of God's word not just reading it and then just putting it to one side saying amen but really reading and studying it to understand what it is saying not what we want it to say we're prepared to lead these disciplined ways of life and living with that whole desire to worship God then we sow to please the spirit to please God and where that harvest will be eternal life what we've done the mistakes we've made those things that haven't been confessed perhaps punching the pastor before the service I did warn you it would come up those things that haven't been confessed or admitted to God what we do today and what we do tomorrow it does matter it does matter just like the Galatians we can't kid ourselves in fact we can't deceive ourselves on this matter either because you see one day our time here on earth is going to come to an end I'm sorry that's the fact it's the way and we will pass from this life the judgment seat of God awaits I know I long to hear the words of you've been faithful in sowing welcome good and faithful servant and for that one for those who have lived life like that the heavenly awaits but for the person who has sown to the flesh who thinks that they are okay who've given off all the image that everything is fine but they have known in their heart that they are not right with God the horrendous words await them and I think this is one of the most shocking in the Bible I never knew you depart from me so may Paul's reminder of personal godliness really encourage us encourage us to sow to the spirit in utterly committed service to God

in a life that is forgiving in a life that is loving towards others with the desire to sow the gospel seed to sow the gospel seed in as many lives as possible in the assurance of the harvest of eternity and then in verses 9 and 10 Paul says do good do good to be gospel driven people do good not with any expectation of gaining salvation not for justification but simply just do good to others to encourage them to help them with our eyes our eyes on the harvest to come motivated by the harvest of God's glory what Paul is saying is never tire of doing good never get bored of doing good and living in that way and if you do feel weary consider that the process to reach the harvest it takes time it does take time now you've heard about some workers throughout the world they have worked tirelessly doing good for the sake of the gospel for years and years maybe decades and decades and they've not seen anything until right at the last moment of their life and maybe it's happened just after they passed away the harvest can take time when you were a child did you ever do what I did where you're in school and you plant a seed perhaps it's cress or something you know you put your kitchen roll down a bit of water the cress seeds on it and you've got it in your little tub and you've put it up in the windowsill and then you go back ten minutes later and you expect it to have been a massive harvest did you do that

I did I certainly did but actually you learn that it takes time it takes time for things to grow and then for the harvest to be taken what job do you do perhaps as I ask that you're thinking I'm a teacher I'm a software developer I work in IT perhaps an administrator mechanic perhaps you say I have no job now I'm retired you see Christians our job our lifelong job is actually as a farmer now I'm not saying that you need to go out now and find there's a patch of grass over there and a nice long piece of grass and pop it in the corner of your mouth and maybe put on a checked shirt and start to live in that kind of way although checked shirts are very nice that's not what I'm saying but what our life's work must be an expression of our true faith in

[ 35 : 55 ] Christ Jesus as a farmer who's willing to sow and be used of God to harvest at the appointed hour that we would see seed being put down and we would see the seed being nurtured we'd see the seed growing and then awaiting the good harvest if you've been sowing to the flesh the book of Galatians was all about taking a look good look in the mirror perhaps you need to face up to it today take today as a wake up call you know whether you're starting to taste the bitter fruit of sowing to the flesh you know that perhaps your home life behind closed doors is a disaster perhaps your children don't want to be around you perhaps your wife or your husband has become like an almost stranger to you perhaps you know all the time you've been on the internet looking at things you know you shouldn't be perhaps you think that nobody around you knows what's going on perhaps you think you've got away with it friends you can be certain of one thing though

God does know God does know you can't hide anything from God because God is God God is omnipresent he's seen it all he knows exactly where you stand with him this morning this very hour so know this what we sow we will reap and it's that simple what we sow we will reap a new way of living be community and be gospel driven people this is essentially how Paul ends the book of Galatians but there's actually there's a final part to Galatians 6 it's the epilogue of the book because Paul now he personally has to sign off this very difficult letter he's reached the end of all that needs to be said all that needs to be written to these Galatians to help them to help them rediscover the truth to help them to stand for the truth once again to sow the truth and to await the harvest he said all that needs to be said but now he needs to say goodbye to the people whom he cares so deeply for whom he literally poured out his heart and all his emotion for he's done it because he wants them so badly to just turn away from those false teachers way of destruction and so in these verses 11 to 18 we have the goodbye the underlining of the gospel here what

Paul is doing is he's committing them to the grace of God as he literally he takes the pen from his amanuensis that's his secretary who has been writing this letter to this point and he now physically takes the pen and in his own handwriting what he is doing now is he is underlining the gospel and he's doing it in a way that is just shouting it and so he writes in capitals he's writing in those large letters as a final reiteration a final emphasis a final reinforcement of the message of this letter and here in this epilogue he provides his final contrast his final comparison of legalism you know the whole works of the flesh compared to the gospel of Christ

Jesus a comparison against the grace that has been poured out by God Paul is saying now that what is important is knowing Christ Jesus knowing that he has done everything for you and that there is only one way to truly live and that is by being born again justified by faith in Christ alone it is in bold that legalism is attractive because it's popular is the word of God is the word of God today as

well isn't it but he's saying that they can't live in self-justification they can't live self-righteously because it doesn't work and it only produces people who will never experience the fruit of the spirit what he says is let us boast in the cross of

[ 41 : 39 ] Christ Jesus for it is only by the cross that a life can be transformed and the Holy Spirit making the person new the only way I stand here today to the fact that actually that is indeed my testimony it is only by the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit that he took me and transformed my life and I'm sure that that is a testimony of many of you listening this morning remember that time when you humbled yourself at the cross and then you nailed your desires of the flesh to the old rugged cross submitted our life to Jesus and became a new creation isn't that a matter that should make us want to shout it from the rooftops why is it why is it not stir us we deserve a life that that will come to nothing and certainly not in

God a life of death well a life of death and then that finishes in death we deserve that we have been saved redeemed and they can't even put a smile on our faces a lot of the time this is personal we each of us radically redeemed by Jesus have people we can share we can share the truth with every single one of us here we have someone we can share the truth with will we will we irrespective of the marks we may bear for doing so that we may possibly suffer temporarily on this earth people may call you names may not like you anymore isn't it worth it for Christ's sake though isn't it worth it for Christ's sake will Christ not enable us to bear them for what can this world truly do to any one of us seriously what can this world do to any one of us

Christian your old self is gone your old self is gone and we should join together in saying it is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me this world around us is dead to us we are dead to this world if we are truly a born again believer friends when we know Christ crucified personally when we know the saviour of the world at that point there is no more guilt there's no more shame there's no more wondering if there's more that that you can do no more of that because Christ is all sufficient Christ has paid the price for sin in full so now know peace the peace with God see what matters the grace and peace for each person who accepts the cross of Christ through faith alone and lives in the knowledge and the acceptance of that grace of God to please the spirit so that the fruit of the spirit is produced and the gospel seed sown continually in all that we do we've got to the end of

Galatians 6 I found it a personally challenging book I found some parts very difficult to study difficult to prepare to preach because I have things I have to deal with in my own life I don't know how some of you have been moved by it I don't know what God has been saying to you but if he's speaking to you and he's asking for changes if he's asking for you to do things in your lives do them if you need help ask for help know that you are part of a grace filled community here in this church as I get to the end just as Paul got to the end here I want to say a thank you you guys have been a tremendous blessing over these eight weeks I've been here in this church you have a wonderful church there's many wonderful people here who brought joy and laughter into my life over the last few weeks

I've enjoyed your fellowship I've enjoyed learning from you I've enjoyed seeing what goes on in this church and in this community so I thank you I thank you for your prayers and I thank you for your continuing prayers as I move south as well and so as Paul ended this letter I end in this way also that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with your with our spirit my brothers and sisters amen