

**Lenten Devotional Reflection**  
**7<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 (Lent Day Ten)**

**Scripture: Galatians Chapter 6 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. <sup>5</sup> For all must carry their own loads.

<sup>6</sup> Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. <sup>8</sup> If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

<sup>11</sup> See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! <sup>12</sup> It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. <sup>14</sup> May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! <sup>16</sup> As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

<sup>17</sup> From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

<sup>18</sup> May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

**Message**

In chapter 6 Paul shows us in very practical terms how to live out the 'life in the Spirit' that he described in 5:22-25.

First, we are shown the necessity of living out the 'life in the Spirit' in the community of the church. When someone is caught in sin, as we all may be at some time, Paul charges the mature Christians ('spiritual people' who understand the true gospel) to restore them. How? By dealing with them gently (v1), helping them carry their burdens (v2), and instructing them from the word (v6). In this way a person caught in sin be able escape self-deception (v3) and test their actions against the true standard (v4). Those who act according to their own flesh (5:19-21) may be able to deceive themselves, but mature christians won't be fooled for long and God certainly won't be mocked - they will receive their just punishment (vv7-8). Those who act according the Spirit which is in them will bear fruit in the community - untiringly doing good primarily to the family of believers, but secondarily to all other people (vv9-10). In all these things we see how essential the community of the church is to the christian life - it is where sinners are restored, where true instruction is found, where judgement against the works of the flesh are pronounced, and good works from the Spirit are made manifest.

Second, we are shown that the only ground for boasting in the Christian life is the finished work of Christ on the cross. Paul's letter to the Galatian church has been full of sharp words for the false teachers trying to lead Christians astray. These false teachers have been teaching that "faith in Jesus + religious good works = salvation". This gives the false teachers and their disciples a reason to boast, because they think they are saving themselves by their own efforts. But Paul calls this message a "false gospel" (1:6) which brings "God's curse" (1:9) and makes "Christ of no value" (5:2). The reality is that by trying to earn salvation through our own good works, we rob Jesus of his glory and earn only God's righteous condemnation. We cannot add anything to what Christ has achieved for us on the cross. It was costly for him, but is given freely to us. Either we accept salvation as a free gift, or we cannot be saved. That is why, despite having every fleshly advantage (see Phil 3:4-6 for a list of them), Paul can say (along with every true Christian believer) "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### **Reflection**

1. Imagine that you became aware that someone in your congregation has a severe problem with gambling which was endangering their family and damaging their reputation. Using vv1-10 as a guide, how could you help this person 'caught in sin' to address such a problem?
2. What are you most proud of about yourself and what do people most praise you for? Consider that these things pose the greatest danger to your own soul if you start to see them as reasons why you deserve salvation.
3. How would your life change if you lived out the truth of vv14-15? In what way might you experience new "Peace and Mercy" (v15)?

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