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# Session 8: Free!

## Bible Passages

Galatians 6:1-18

## Brief Notes

If one of the key truths in the first three quarters of the letter is that we are “sons”, freed from slavery and from having to establish our own righteousness, then “brothers” (or “brothers and sisters”) points to one of the key concerns of the final quarter: how we relate to one another in the church. Life by the Spirit, as we live out this freedom that Christ has brought us in to, is especially seen in our life together. So Paul speaks of the need to care for one another, to share with one another, before drawing the letter to a close by returning to the crunch issue.

### **Caring for one another (vv.1-5)**

When someone is “caught in sin” - not in the sense of being found out by some church police, but being caught up in sin, ensnared as it were – our response should not be to tut-tut or gossip, but to do what we can to “restore them”. We are to do so “gently” and humbly, mindful that we too are prone to fall into sin (maybe the same sin, or perhaps into pride and self-righteousness). This responsibility towards one another, which we all we all share, is one expression of a broader responsibility to “carry each other’s burdens”, of whatever form those burdens might take. The “law of Christ” (v.2) is Christ’s command to “love one another as I have loved you”. (NB this responsibility to carry each other’s burdens should obviously be an important mark of our

fellowship groups – and I am delighted at the extent that it is – but it is surely something we could do better, and you should consider how it might be done better in your group.) It is pride that often keeps us from this – how we treat others is often determined by what we think about ourselves. Pride comes from comparing ourselves with others, whereas we should remember that we are only responsible to God for the “load” given to us – the opportunities and gifts given to us - and it’s that accountability that should concern us, not how we measure up to others.

## **Sharing with one another (vv.6-10)**

The metaphor of sowing to please our sinful nature or to please the Spirit (v.8) speaks not just about how we live our lives, but of how we use our resources – whether we use what we have selfishly to please ourselves or rather to please the Spirit. That is the concern in these verses; not just the sharing of money, but “all good things”, which might include our time, our homes, our skills etc. A particular application is made (v.6) to supporting ministry in the church, but in vv.9-10 it is extended to helping all people in need, especially other believers. The reason we should “sow” in this way, apart from the fact that it pleases the Spirit, is that “a man reaps what he sows” (v.7). This reaping is unpacked in terms of an eternal reward – not that we can buy a place in heaven by our philanthropy, for Paul has been clear it is all by grace, but the direction we are headed is indicated by how we use our money and resources.

## **True boasting (vv.11-18)**

Paul takes up the pen from his amanuensis for these final verses, not simply to authenticate the letter with a few final words in his own hand, but also to underline the key issue he wants them to remember. What we boast in is what we prize and live for. The false teachers wanted to boast in the Galatians’ circumcision, essentially taking pride in what they had achieved (just as their whole message shifted the emphasis from what Christ has done onto what we must do). By contrast, though Paul might have had many ministry accomplishments to boast of, his boast (v.14) is in the cross of Christ. That is what he trusted in and gloried in – not anything he did but what Christ had done. Impressing or pleasing others meant nothing to him any more – and in fact his cross-centred ministry brought him the world’s scorn and rejection (vv.12, 17). Such boasting in the cross (ie to “follow this rule”, v.16) is what he urges on us, costly though it may be, with the promise of peace, mercy and grace as we do so.

## **Discussion Questions**

- How does this chapter pick up on what has gone before?
- What does it mean to be “caught in a sin”?
  - How sometimes do people respond to that?
  - How should we respond? What might that look like amongst us?
  - In what ways might we be tempted?
- What kinds of burdens might people have?
- How could we do as a fellowship group be better at carrying each other’s burdens?

- How can pride be a hindrance to that?
- Verse 5 might seem to contradict verse 2. What does it mean?
- Verses 6-10 are bound together by the idea of sharing what we have (money possessions, time, effort) with others. That's what is meant by sowing and "doing good". Why should we do this?
  - What form might such sharing take?
- What do the false teachers want to boast in?
  - Who are they trying to impress?
  - What are they trying to avoid?
  - How might we be tempted to do the same?
- What does Paul boast in?
- What would it mean for us to "follow this rule" and boast in the cross of Christ?

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