

Bear One Another's Burdens Galatians 6:1-10

Main Idea:

Paul urges Spirit-led believers to recognize and execute five practical responsibilities within the household of faith.

I. Gentle Restoration (6:1)

- A. The Context of Restoration: Family
- B. The Need for Restoration
- C. The Nature of Restoration
- D. The Nature of the Restorer

II. Humble Burden Bearing (6:2-5)

- A. Burdens are a reality in a fallen world (6:2a)
- B. We are not self-sufficient (6:2a)
- C. Burden bearing is a command to all believers (6:2a)
- D. Burden bearing is how we fulfill the law of Christ (6:2b)
- E. Pride hinders burden bearing (6:3-4)
- F. Paul distinguishes between heavy burdens and light loads (6:5)

III. Generous Sharing (6:6)

- A. Responsibilities of the Teacher
- B. Responsibilities of the Receiver

IV. Personal Holiness (6:7-8)

V. Practical Goodness (6:9-10)

Let's continue discussing community today. Bonhoeffer said: "For it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brothers and sisters" (*Life Together*, 20). Amen. It is indeed a privilege, but the sad reality is that many fail to embrace this biblical vision of community. There are at least five obstacles that must be overcome.

Sensationalism. We are addicted to the dramatic. Christians get excited about conferences, someone else's pastor, or controversy. Life in a local church isn't scintillating enough for many. The stuff of Galatians 6 isn't the stuff of thrill-seekers. It's just biblical Christianity.

Mysticism. Many think of life in the Spirit with miracles in mind – or private devotional experiences, or charismatic utterances. But notice the lifestyle put forward in chapter 6 follows a great section on the Spirit in chapter 5. It is a continuation of the discussion on the Spirit. So what is chapter 6 about? It is about how life in the Spirit should lead one to live out their faith in biblical community. This passage speaks of the responsibilities that Spirit-filled believers, "those who are spiritual" (6:1), should have toward one another in the body of Christ. In fact, some place 5:25-26 with this responsibilities to highlight the relationship between the Spirit and the proper attitudes one should have toward their brother and sister in Christ. So Paul follows the all-important passage about life in the Spirit with a very practical section. He says nothing about signs and wonders, and he does not go into the detail about spiritual gifts. He talks about how the community of faith operates when the Spirit is leading them. This is often overlooked: life in the Spirit involves healthy relationships within the body of Christ. It does not involve conceit and envy (5:26), but a life of love (5:22).

I remember hearing a story about a pastor in New York. A lady in the congregation said to him, “Pastor, we need to see more signs and wonders. We just haven’t seen enough signs and wonders.” The Pastor responded, “Ma’am, over there sits a lady who has been evicted from her apartment with her children. I would consider it a sign and wonder if you would take them in to your house to live for three months.”

Perhaps you are like this lady. You have a great desire for the miraculous. There is nothing wrong with wanting to see God do extraordinary things. But do not overlook, and undervalue how the Spirit usually works in our lives, through the practical deeds of love for others, especially deeds performed within the household of faith (6:10). I love what Ryken says: Ryken: “Spiritual life is meant to be shared. It is less like a fruit hidden away somewhere in a secret garden, and more like one that grows in a public park.”

Idealism. Many have a wish dream for a church. Hear Bonhoeffer: “Every human wish dream that is injected into the community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of community more than the community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter” (27). This text confronts our idealism. It teaches us to care for actual people – broken people – in a local church. It shows us that life in the community involves hardship, struggle, sin, and our Redeemer in the midst of it all

Individualism. We live in an isolated, privatized culture. Biblical community looks alien to westerners, who grow up playing video games all day, who build fences, who have been psychologized to death.

Self-reliance. We don’t think we need people. How wrong we are! Piper calls this the “virus of self-reliance.” The fact is we’re made for community. And we know this. No one says on their death bed, “Bring me my diploma!” They don’t want to hold accomplishments, they want to hold people. You’re made for community. And it’s not only wrong to think you don’t need to community, it’s selfish. The community needs you.

Sensationalism, mysticism, idealism, individualism, and self-reliance. Fight it by the Spirit...

The first fruit of the Spirit mentioned is “love” (Gal 5:22; cf., 1 Cor 13). The Spirit works in us to love one another, not to devour one another (5:15), nor to provoke and envy one another (5:26). Instead of making this merely theoretical, Paul earths this idea by show some ways to love practically. Let us consider five responsibilities of Spirit-led believers.

#1: GENTLE RESTORATION (6:1)

The Context of Restoration: Family

Paul says, “Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won’t be tempted” (6:1, my emphasis). Notice the familial language used. Paul begins saying, “Brothers.” The church is a family. You need a family to care for you spiritually. The church is “a household” (6:10) of brothers and sisters (cf., 6:12), who call God “Abba Father” (4:6). An outsider might think, “You’ve got a weird looking family?” Yes, it should be diverse. God likes variety.

There is nothing like the family of faith. Paul says to Timothy that the church should treat each other as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers (1 Tim 5:1-2). Do you love your church family? If so, care for them spiritually. I love my kids and I don’t want to see them destroy their

lives. I want to protect them. At times, I have to correct them. But that is what families do. They care for each other by speaking truth in love.

One of the things God does through the gospel is form a people (cf., Ti 2:14). To be part of the family of God is a gift of the grace of God. Recognize the glory of it, and invest your life in it.

The Need for Restoration

Paul says sometimes those in the family get “caught in wrong doing” (1). They are clearly guilty of transgression. The enemy sets traps. And sometimes brothers and sisters fall into one of these traps. We need our faith family to open the trap and set us free when this happens. James refers to the idea of “wandering from the truth.”

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20 ESV, my emphasis)

Are you concerned with straying church members? I lost Titus, our miniature schnauzer, one time. When I eventually found him, he was down the street at a neighbor’s backyard, where my neighbor and friends were working out. But before we found him, you would have thought the world was coming to an end. Are you more concerned with your wandering pet than wandering members? I do not mean to belittle pets (I love them), but it seems that some in the church have no concern over the fact that a brother and sister is wandering away from the truth. Others take a “Well, it’s not my business” approach when a brother is straying. It is your business when you realize that you are united to them by faith. The body suffers when a member is broken.

The church is not just charitable organization like the Red Cross, the civic club, the Rotary, or Kiwanis. Those groups do some great work. But by its nature, the church is something different. We are brothers and sisters, adopted into God’s family, knit together by the Holy Spirit in a common fellowship. We must seek the spiritual welfare of one another.

The Nature of Restoration

So what must we do? Paul says, “restore such a person” (1). Stott notes that this word “restore” means to put them back in order, or to repair something. It was the same word used for setting a fractured bone (160). We are to put the broken back together, like a doctor. It was the same word also used for mending fishnets (cf., Mark 1:19). In the same way, the goal is to put the broken back together and release them out. When Jesus gave the steps for church discipline in Matthew 18:15-17, the goal of the process was positive and constructive, as it is here (Ibid.).

We should qualify this ministry, though. Do not take this as a command to be the “righteous police,” inspecting every detail of a person’s life. I do not think that is what Paul has in mind. The matters highlighted here seem to be sins that are destroying people. These are not conscious issues.

For example, if a brother or sister is addicted to something, you should seek to help them. If someone is working an excessive amount of time, and neglecting family, then you should

come along side of them to help him. If a man is involved in a relationship that is “shady,” then confront him gently. If a brother has missed corporate worship for a month, then he should receive at least a phone call. Be a person who cares for your brothers and sisters, not one who is trying to be everyone’s accountability partner. Ultimately, only Jesus can forgive and restore. He puts back together our old broken down jalopy of a spiritual life. And that is our job, to point them to Jesus. We cannot do this by ignoring sin or being silent.

When the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, the people wanted to stone her (John 8). But Jesus was not interested in destroying this woman; he was interested in restoring her. Be concerned for your broken brother and sister, and like Jesus, lead them to restoration, as they “go and sin no more.”

The Nature of the Restorer

Paul does not give any “steps” for restoration” but he does talk about the restorer. **First, the restorer should be spiritual.** The idea is that you should not be on a rescue mission if you are not living by the Spirit. Our culture loves to quote Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that you may not be judged” (ESV), but they are oblivious to Matthew 7:5, “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (ESV). Is this clear? Once you take out the log of your eye, then you go take out the speck of your brothers eye. Jesus is not saying to never be concerned for the spiritual welfare of your brother (as the culture often wants to use this verse). He is urging us to see to our own heart first, and then act. He is ruling out pride. Only the person who humbly repents can go help out those who are struggling. Jesus is opposed to arrogant self-righteousness. He is not opposed to the ministry of restoration, performed by a person who is humbly repentant.

Second, the restorer should be gentle. Luther, who is not most remembered for gentleness, once told a pastor charged with setting a lapsed brother back on the right path these words: “Run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms” (in George, 412). Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, which implies that such a virtue happens as we abide in Jesus personally. He makes us gentle, like himself (Matt 11:29).

Third, the restorer should be careful. Paul says, “Keep a watch on yourself, let you too be tempted” (1b, ESV). Paul told Timothy to “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Tim 4:16a, ESV). We must always be aware that we are not immune to falling ourselves. We must persistently (1 Tim 4:16), watch our lives.

What temptation is Paul referring to in Gaatians 6:1? One of the sins that we must be aware of in the restoration process is spiritual pride. Be careful that you do not exalt yourself over your brother. But Paul seems be referring to the particular sin itself that has overtaken our brother or sister. Be careful entering some people’s world, trying to rescue them. I heard about a guy that went to talk to his friends about their wild drinking parties on the weekends. He had good intentions. He wanted to tell them they do not need alcohol and country music to escape their problems, but instead they need Jesus. However, he ended up getting drunk himself. Be careful that you do not step in the trap.

So, if a person is in sin, restore them. Now, Paul does not speak to the person who is receiving restoration. But just know that sometimes they may not want you to ministry to them. Why? Many think that they are independent. But if one is a Christian, he or she is not independent. They are interdependent. We are body. The whole body of Christ is affected by one

another's sin. Your sin always affects others. If you are the one who is being led astray into destructive sin, receive help. It is not only for your good, but for the good of the whole church.

#2: HUMBLE BURDEN BEARING (6:2-5)

Those who are living in sin need our help (v. 1); and those who are burdened need our help (2). If a Christian brother or sister is weighed down by some burden, then we have a responsibility: do something quickly. Paul writes:

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 one will have to bear his own load. (Galatians 6:2-5 ESV)

Do not let your brother get crushed. Be alert, and quick to act to ease his or her burden. This is a totally selfless act. That is why we need the Holy Spirit's fruit bearing work. In our flesh, we are concerned with our burdens. But the Spirit produces love, and that involves caring about our burdened brother or sister.

Perhaps you are wondering, "What should I do with my life?" Here is a daily mission: Be alert to the burdens of others and devote yourself to making them lighter. In addition to the need for the Spirit's work in our lives, what do we need to know in order to do this? Consider five observations on this burden-bearing ministry.

Six Observations

First, burdens are a reality in a fallen world (2a). Paul assumes that the Galatians will have burdens. They are unavoidable. They may come in the form of mental illness, physical illness, financial crisis, demonic oppression, addiction, or family crises. But one thing is for sure; no one will escape feeling the weight of such problems. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33).

Second, we are not self-sufficient (2a). Paul not only assumes that we will have burdens, but that we cannot carry all of our own burdens. Certainly, we must always first, "cast your burdens on God" knowing that "he will sustain you" (Ps 55:22). And yes, Jesus bore our ultimate burden when he died in our place. But we are also instructed to share our trials and struggles with other believers, as well. Sometimes the answer to our Psalm 55 prayers is found in the help of other believers.

Even the best servants of God need help. Moses was not totally self-sufficient. On one occasion he said, "I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me" (Num 11:14, ESV). In Exodus 18, Jethro told Moses, "What you are doing is not good.... For the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone" (18:17-18, ESV). In 2 Corinthians, Paul said that he was weary and afflicted but the Lord used Titus to help him. He says:

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus. (2 Corinthians 7:5-6 ESV)

Even Paul needed Titus. We all need a Titus at times, and sometimes we need to be the Titus in our brother or sister's life.

Third, burden bearing is a command to all believers (2a). The ministry of burden bearing is not reserved for pastors. To be an obedient Christian, operating under the control of the Spirit, we must help others carry their heavy burden. That is what it means to love. That's what it means to be the church.

Examples:

- Helping pay medical bills
- Babysitting for couples so they can have a date night
- Helping with maintenance issues at home
- Tutoring other's kids
- Skyping with missionaries
- Taking meals to new parents
- Helping folks move
- Holding each other accountable for diet/exercising
- Visiting folks in the hospital

Fourth, burden bearing is how we fulfill the law of Christ (2b). Stott says "The 'law of Christ' is to love one another as He loves us; that was the new commandment which he gave" (158). Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (Jn 13:34; cf., Jn 15:12). Stott adds, "It is very impressive that to 'love our neighbor,' 'to bear one another's burdens,' and 'fulfill the law' are three equivalent expressions. We should not be crushed by this command, but should delight in it, and realize that we have power to fulfill it through the Spirit's ministry in our lives."

Fifth, pride hinders burden bearing (3-4). Paul adds an interesting few sentences saying, "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (3, ESV). What a verse! Some people "think they are something..." If you think you are above stooping to help your brother, you are deceived. But pride often hinders brotherly love.

This verse reminds me of a (true?) story about Muhammad Ali. He was onboard a plane and the stewardess told him to prepare for takeoff by buckling his seatbelt. He shot back, "Superman don't need no seat-belt!" To which she responded, "Superman don't need no airplane! Buckle up!" Do not think of yourself as a spiritual superman. Humble yourself, and serve God's people.

A biblical example of this problem appears in Nehemiah. As the people are working on various parts of the wall, we read that some would not. The writer says, "[B]ut their nobles did not lift a finger to help their supervisors" (Neh 3:5). Pride will create a heart that resists humble service to the church family.

But is verse 4 a contradiction of verse 3? Paul says, "But let each one test his own works and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor" (4, ESV). Is this verse promoting pride? No, it is not. It is not a contradiction of verse 3. Paul basically says this: do not compare yourself to your neighbor. Instead, examine your own life in view of God's evaluation, and when you do, you will not be so prideful. Do not get puffed up because one is lower than you, either by way of sin, or by way of burden. Paul says stop feeding your pride by comparing yourself to others. Measure your life by the laws of Christ, and then you will cultivate a humble attitude (cf., 2 Cor. 10:12, 18).

Sixth, Paul distinguishes between heavy burdens and light loads (5). I could see how someone would think that this verse contradicts verse 2. After Paul says “Bear one another’s burdens (2), he now says, “For each will have to bear his own load” (5, ESV). So which is it?

The Greek text helps here. Two different words for “burden” are used in these two verses. Paul uses the term *baros* in verse 2, meaning a “weight or heavy load” (Stott, 159). But he uses the term *phortion* in verse 5, referring to a “man’s pack” (Ibid.). It is translated “load” in ESV and HCSB. The meaning is clear. Some things in life are so heavy we cannot bear them alone. We need help. Other matters in life are simply “a backpack.”

Everything in your life is not a crisis. You do not have to call 911 or the National Guard; you do not have to convene a meeting. You need to carry your own backpack. But some things in life are too heavy for you not to ask for help. Do not treat loads as burdens, or burdens as loads.

Some situations are listed below. See if you can decide which ones are “burdens” and which ones are “loads.” (Driscoll, “Open Bibles, Open Lives”)

- A. A young guy, who constantly gets up late for work or school because he stays up playing video games all night, asks you to wake him up every morning so he does not lose his job of flunk out of school.
- B. A guy who spends all his money on beer, cigarettes and lottery tickets, refuses to look for a job, and asks you for money.
- C. A businessman works twelve-hour days, including Saturdays, and asks you to take his son to all of his baseball practices and the games.
- D. A married couple has three children, and one day there is an accident. One of the parents dies in a car wreck. The remaining parent and the kids have needs.
- E. A husband leaves his wife for another woman, leaving her with four kids. She needs help with the daily necessities.
- F. An older faithful church member gets sick and is having a hard time living. She needs help with meals, transportation, and occasional living expenses.

I would argue that situations “A-C” are in the “loads” category. Situations “D-F” are in the “burdens” category. You need to carry your own load when it comes to responsibilities like going to bed and waking up, working a job and spending money wisely, and raising your kids. But you need help bearing the burden of grief, abandonment, single parenting, and aging.

There are legitimate and illegitimate needs. We must carry our own load, but we must help with burdens. Some treat everything like a load. They refuse to tell anyone or ask for help. That is not healthy. Some treat everything like a burden, occupying hours of people’s time by things you should take care of yourself.

I love a final scene at the end of the film of Tolkien’s book, *Return of the King*. Frodo was close to completing his task of dropping the evil ring in the fire. But he is too weary and worn to make it up the mountain. Then, his loyal friend Sam says with tears and passion, “Come, Mr. Frodo! I can’t carry it for you, but I can carry you.” He proceeds to help him up the mountain so Frodo can end the drama once and for all. Spirit-filled believers help their brothers and sisters carry the burdens that are crushing them.

#3: GENEROUS SHARING (6:6)

In verse 6, Paul shifts gears a bit saying, “One who is taught the word must share all good

things with the one who teaches” (ESV). Paul speaks to the responsibilities of both the teacher and the receivers within the household of God.

Responsibilities of the Teacher

The teacher must expound the Word of God. The word “taught” and “teaches” both come from the same word, *katecheo*, which is where we get catechism (Stott, 167). It refers to the fundamentals of the faith. The false teachers deviated from the fundamentals of the faith. They departed from the apostles’ teaching, from the word of God.

The role of the pastor-teacher is not to entertain, or use gimmicks to attract people to watch the performance. He is called to teach the truths of Scripture. Why? As a pastor, I am commanded to do so (cf., 2 Tim 4:2). But it is also because the Bible is what you need.

Do you belong to a Bible-saturated church? To be sure, it is not the only thing the church does. In verse 10, Paul has already mentioned caring for the poor in verse 2:10, and mentions mercy ministry in 6:10, also. But do not pit these two against each other. We need faithful and effective Bible teachers, and we need people to care for those in need.

Notice also that in the context of talking about the Spirit’s work, Paul drops this line about teaching. Being a Spirit-led church does not mean you avoid teaching substantively. In the book of Acts, the Spirit was performing incredible wonders, yet the church did not say, “Oh, who needs the Bible!” Instead, we find them in “devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (2:42). A Spirit-led church is a teaching church.

Responsibilities of the Receiver

What about the receivers? Obviously, they should learn from their teachers, even re-teaching what they learn, but here Paul focuses on the responsibility to share “all good things” with the one who teaches. Paul urges the believers to support its teachers materially. This would include food, money, and whatever good things are appropriate for the teacher’s welfare. Paul provided for himself sometimes to keep from burdening the church, but sometimes he did take support, as we see in Philippians and 2 Cor 11:8. He thought it was good for the church to support ministers (cf., 1 Cor 9:11-14; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

If Galatians is the earliest epistle, then this is the earliest reference to the providing for the minister (in George, 420). While the times have changed, the potential for abuse in this area has not changed. Ministers must avoid *laziness*. Since ministers are often unsupervised most of the day, the temptation is to not work very hard. It is easy to receive a salary, and enjoy the security, while sowing and sweating very little. That is not living “above reproach.” Further, ministers must avoid *greed*. When you enter ministry you understand that you will never be wealthy. But once you begin, it is easy to fall into “temptation and a snare” (1 Tim 6:9). Why is it that you rarely hear of pastors taking lower-paying positions in the next phase of their ministry? Resist the love of money. Ministers must also never fall prey to ministerial *professionalism*. Not to be confused with excellence, this temptation is to treat your vocation like any other career. Clock in, clock out. No passion, no desperate prayer, no deep love for people, but all the while serving with a pasted smile, and saying pious words. That is ministerial professionalism, and ministers must avoid this.

Why did Paul include this instruction here? Probably because the teachers in Galatians were in need. Otherwise, I doubt Paul would have mentioned it. Think about it. Paul and

Barnabas appointed elders in every church that they planted (Acts 14:23). Maybe the people stopped supporting the ministers that Paul left in Galatia. Maybe they became infatuated with the new theology of the false teachers and stopped supporting those who were accurately catechizing.

Do not miss Paul's ultimate concern; it is not money. Paul's burden was for the furtherance of the gospel, and he knew that the God-ordained means for accomplishing this was the steady proclamation of the Word of God by faithful teachers. But these teachers would be limited if they could not take care of their daily necessities. By caring for the needs of the teacher, the church says, "We want the Word of God taught faithfully and effectively, so we will help support you." Care for those who teach, not because it is merely a "tradition" but because you love the Word of God, and want to see it spread to the ends of the earth.

#4: PERSONAL HOLINESS (6:7-8)

Paul has a different emphasis in these verses. He talks about sowing and reaping, but not in relationship to money. It has more to do with personal holiness. He says,

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. (Galatians 6:7-8 ESV)

John MacArthur says, "The Christian has only two fields in which he can sow, that of his own flesh and that of the Spirit." (Galatians, 188) This is a divine law: you reap what you sow. If you sow in the Spirit, you will reap the Spirit. If you sow in the flesh, you reap the flesh (5:16-25). To "sow to the flesh" is to pander to it, give in to it, and coddle it – instead of crucifying it! The old adage is true: "sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." (Stott, 170)

Holiness is a Harvest

The seeds are mainly thoughts and deeds. Stott summarizes it powerfully:

Every time we allow our mind to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fancy, wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company whose insidious influence we know we cannot resist, every time we lie in bed when we ought to be up and praying, every time we read pornographic literature, every time we take a risk that strains our self-control we are sowing, sowing, sowing, to the flesh. (170)

Some Christians sow to the flesh every day and wonder why they do not reap holiness and victory and blessing. Let me provide some examples. When an unmarried couple gets caught up in the sensuality of the moment and engages in sexual activity outside of marriage, then they are sowing to the flesh. When a man fantasizes about taking control of an organization and decides to scheme and cheat to get to the top, then he is sowing seeds of destruction, not only for others, but for his own soul. When a woman secretly despises another woman in the church, without ever seeking reconciliation, she is sowing to the flesh, hurting her own soul, and the

fellowship of the church. When a husband and wife allow bitterness and resentment to build in marriage without every trying to resolve their differences and forgive one another, then they are sowing seeds of the flesh, hurting themselves and the whole family. Remember, says Stott, “Holiness is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends almost entirely on what we sow” (Stott, 170, my emphasis).

Paul adds a warning, “God is not mocked” (6:7). Regardless of who you are, you reap what you sow. Your sin will find you out. Paul says elsewhere, “Their end will correspond to their deeds” (2 Cor. 11:15). In contrast, those who have been born of the Spirit, sow in the Spirit, and will reap “eternal life” (8).

Choose your field wisely. Sow thoughts and deeds in the Spirit. The books you read, the people you are with, the things you do for entertainment, and the thoughts you possess are acts of sowing. Are they of the flesh or spirit? When you are sowing in the Spirit, you will reap the reward of the Spirit-controlled life.

How does this relate to biblical community? Simple. What keeps us from living “restoring our broken brother gently?” (1). Our failure to sow in the Spirit. Lack of holiness hinders real community. It is the one who is “spiritual” that does the restoring. What keeps us from bearing one another’s burdens? It is pride. Where does that come from? It comes from sowing to the flesh. What keeps us from being generous? It is greed. Again, it is a sowing to the flesh. Why will we not “do good to the household of faith” (10)? It is because we are too occupied with ourselves. Lack of personal holiness does damage to family of faith.

#5: PRACTICAL GOODNESS (6:9-10)

Paul concludes the section by offering some encouragement in verse 9, and an instruction on biblical community in verse 10. His **encouragement** is this: “And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (6:9, ESV). Compassionate ministry can make you weary. Contending for the gospel can make you exhausted. Every Christian can become discouraged in doing good deeds. So Paul says, keep sowing. Continue loving one another. Keep resisting bickering with others. Keep reject false teachers. Keep bearing one another’s burdens. Keep preaching the gospel. Keep doing good, and watch God work. There is a harvest out there! We reap what we sow, even though it may take years before you see fruit (as in the case with William Carey!), but it is worth it.

Remember also that, even though the phrase “due season” may be properly applied to this life, we should also note the future season. The larger application is that we will reap reward in the eschatological future for faithfulness to God (George, 426). No deed is small in this life. Keep serving faithfully.

Finally, consider Paul’s **specific instruction**, “As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially those who are of the household of faith” (10 ESV, my emphasis). Believers should be marked by practical goodness.

Notice the universal and particular challenge. *Universally*, we must love our neighbor as ourselves. We should be sensitive to the poor in our community. We look for ways to show mercy to “everyone,” to those around the world who have urgent physical needs.

Particularly, Paul says that we pay careful attention to those “in the household of faith” (10). Look for opportunities to “do good” everywhere among the fellowship. Love your neighbor sensitively. But pay special attention to ways you can do good to those within the household of faith. That may mean restoring a broken brother, or bearing burdens, supporting

your teacher, helping with transportation, paying a bill from someone who lost their job, tutor that struggling kid, or baby-sit for parents so they can have a date night. Look for ways to bless those in the household of faith.

Put the whole section together now. Let us be a Spirit-led people marked by: gentle restoration, humble burden bearing, generous sharing, personal holiness, and practical goodness.

This is life in the Spirit. Were these qualities not embodied in Jesus? Yes, perfectly. Jesus restored us from our broken relationship with God. He continues to restore our soul. He carried our greatest burden, the crushing weight of sin. He kept God's law in our place, and then died in our place, removing the penalty of sin that was upon us, so that there is now condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate generous giver, who made us rich through his poverty (2 Cor 8:9). Jesus constantly sowed in the Spirit, a life of perfect righteousness, and reaped eternal glory. Jesus was a prophet might in word and deed, who went about "doing good." Jesus gives us the example, and he gives us the Spirit to live out these responsibilities.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. How does the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:16-26) passage relate to this passage (6:1-10)?
2. Have you ever needed to "restore a brother gently?" What was that like? Do you need to do so now? How should you go about doing it?
3. What do we learn about "burdens" in general from this passage?
4. What are some examples of how one might do "bear one another's burdens?" What might hinder this from happening?
5. What is the difference in "burdens" and "loads" (6:2-5)?
6. What does Paul say about the teacher and the receiver in 6:6? What are some dangers to avoid?
7. How is holiness a *harvest*?
8. Are you "growing weary" (6:9) in doing well? How might you find fresh strength?
9. How does Paul say we should "do good" to "everyone" and to "the household of faith" (6:10)?
10. Are you looking for "opportunities" to do bless others? What ways might you do that today?

