
Title: The Support of Community - Stewardship

Text: Galatians 6:6-10

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Introduction Having studied this topic and this passage, I now understand the full weight of a pastor having to deliver a message that might seem self-serving in a colossal conflict of interest. It is so tempting, in the face of a skeptical Americana that has been fleeced again and again by those wolves in white suits who transverse from prey to prey in personal jets and limousines, it is so tempting to wilt and not say anything about stewardship, especially in the area of finances. But I also must say, having spent time studying this text, and seeing it in light of the whole of the Bible, that my response has been to pray that Christ would see fit to bless us, yes, even bless me with an abundance of “good things” to pour back into this ministry. And hopefully, before we’re done this evening, you’ll understand why I say that.

We have spent the month of September studying, learning and preaching community. Last week, in the Sunday morning hour Pastor Mark showed us what that community looks like in Hebrews 10. This passage tells us that, as we meet together as the house of God, we are a community that draws near to Christ in bold confidence. We are a community that collectively holds fast to our confession of faith which is Christ himself. And we are community aimed at encouraging each other to love and good works. That is what community looks like in Hebrews. This is what our community is supposed to look like here at the Chapel. And our prayer has been as we consider community during September that we will be a people maturing into Christ’s image even as we engage in community.

The passage we are going to consider this evening, has a similar theme. In Galatians, Paul explains to the Galatians what community looks like. But along the way he includes an extra caveat about which we may not have spent a whole lot of time thinking... at least when it comes to community. And if there is one thing we will learn this evening, it will be that community does not take place in a vacuum. There is intentionality and stewardship involved in community.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge partial indebtedness for some of what we’ll say this evening to Dr. Ken Hemphill, former president of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, and his book, “Making Change: A Transformational Guide to Christian Money Management”. I don’t agree with everything in the book... however, his grasp on the biblical theology of giving and how it supports the ministry I found to be quite helpful (and remarkable). While much has been written about money management, most of it is proof texting... or taking verses here and there to make a point. Not enough has been written attempting to see money from the perspective of the whole Bible and redemptive history. Dr. Hemphill makes that attempt in this book and I found his thoughts insightful.

Galatians 5 is where we begin this evening. Pastor Russ earlier this year spent time going through the book of Galatians so this may be a bit of review for most of us. I’m also con-

fidant that we can come back to these passages again and again and expect to hear the Word in a fresh and life transforming way.

Life in the Spirit

Turning to Galatians 5... we are going to begin at verse 16 because this provides the backdrop for the passage we are considering this evening. This is what God's word proclaims to us:

Galatians 5:16-6:10 "I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [Here, Paul is giving a description of two kinds of people: those who follow the desires of the flesh and those who are living the life of the Spirit.]

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit [if we have been regenerated, if we have been given life by the spirit], let us also walk by the Spirit [let us also be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit as previously mentioned]. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. ¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

Here is the community, Christ's church, His Body, at work. Those who have been born of the Spirit (Galatians 2:20, 5:25), who are characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (5:22), who belong to Christ Jesus (5:24), will not take advantage of one another (5:26), but will help others along when they fall down (6:1-2). And as the community lives out the fruit of the Spirit this way, they mimic Christ's pattern of self-sacrifice in loving each other (Gal. 5:14, 6:2), fulfilling the law of Christ. This new creation (Galatians 6:15) will be marked by the bounty of self-sacrificial fruit bearing (Gal. 5:22) to be expected in God's garden, the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21).

Life as a new creation

This new creational pattern of self-sacrifice has implications for those who are at work in God's garden. Let's pick up with Galatians 6:6...

[and this is our passage this evening] ⁶ One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ 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. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Do we see the garden language here? Have we been paying attention when Paul mentioned "fruit" of the Spirit (Genesis 2:8,9,16)? There is the sharing of "good things" (Genesis 1:31). There is sowing and reaping (Genesis 2:15). There is a "due season". There is "doing good". And there is corruption and "eternal life". All of these terms, not only speak of Israel's agrarian economy, they reach back to the original garden.

Why, on the heels of speaking of the fruit of the Spirit, especially with a church that is being tempted by the Old Covenant law, does Paul continue describing new creational life by talking about "sharing all good things with the one who teaches"?

A different gospel

In considering the context of our passage and how the Galatian churches would have heard it, we must ask ourselves, who else is in this garden? Paul is writing to a group of churches that are struggling with the question of what to do with the Old Covenant law. What do we do with Moses? What do we do with the Decalogue in the New Covenant? Turn back to Galatians chapter 1... beginning with verse 6:

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Then see what Paul says in verse 11:

Galatians 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Three things we should see before going back to chapter 6:

- A "different" gospel was being preached. This gospel was contrary to the one Paul and the apostles preached. Paul describes this false gospel as one that was reliant on the Old Covenant law and human ability to keep it for salvation. At one

point, Paul says the churches in Galatia have been bewitched by the oldest of doctrinal errors, a self-serving reliance on accessing God through human effort and ability.

- Paul (and the other founders of the churches of Galatia) preached the gospel. This wasn't a "different gospel", this was THE gospel. Paul describes this gospel as being justified by faith in Christ. Paul's gospel was not grounded in the works of the law, but in the cross of Christ where "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13). "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:4). It is "in Christ, that we are all sons of God through faith" (Galatians 3:26), not "the law". It is only through this gospel that the fruit of the Spirit manifests itself, because it is only through this gospel that there is "life".
- The gospel Paul and the others preached was delivered by Jesus Christ himself. The source of life-giving grace is the crucified Christ who reveals himself in this gospel. To oppose that gospel is to oppose Christ himself. To suggest that one may be right with God in doing what the law requires is to be a bewitching enemy of Jesus Christ.

Keep these three things in mind then as we consider the passage in Galatians 6. Who else is in this garden? In this garden lurks those who, with smooth speech and flattering demeanor (Galatians 4:17), are preaching a different gospel. They do not have the best interests of the Galatian churches in mind. To follow after these bewitching fools is eternally fatal. The end of their gospel is a loss in the inheritance of God's kingdom (Gal. 5:21) and the ultimate catastrophe is to be severed from Christ himself (Gal. 5:4).

The remedy for such a gospel is, of course, the true gospel found only in Christ. And to follow this gospel is to "live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) Those in the new creation who have been given life by the Spirit in the gospel are to put off the bewitching "different gospel"; they are to put off the "works of the flesh" and they are to put on Christ by faith; and they are to put on "the fruit of the Spirit". And our passage this evening is an extension of this put off/put on rhythm of Paul's understanding of life in the Spirit.

The response of the new creation community: stewardship

How is this new creation community to respond to a different gospel that lurks in temptation? As I mentioned earlier, the response is to bring the walk of the Spirit in alignment with the new life that has been given by the Spirit (5:25-26). That response includes verses 6-10. Verse 6: ⁶ **One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.**

Not only are those who belong to Christ to be demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in fulfilling the law of Christ, this mutual one anothering (Galatians 6:1-5) includes the material support of the gospel.

1a. Share all good things with the one who teaches. This is Paul's positive exhortation. The "one who has been taught the word" are those we read about in chapter 1: those who were preached the true gospel. "The one who teaches" refers to Paul and

the other founders of the churches in Galatia who were preaching the true gospel of justification by faith through the cross of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). In God's garden, those who have been the recipients of God's grace through the gospel... those who have been spiritually nourished by those cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of those who belong to Christ... those who benefit from having life breathed into them through the preached word... are to share their material bounty, all *good* things, with those who preach and teach Christ crucified (6:14).

Paul believes one of the antidotes for a false gospel that results in some being severed from Christ himself is material support for the true gospel. The preaching of Christ crucified, including the way we preach it here at the Chapel, does not occur in a vacuum. The one anothering of the saints, the bearing one another's burdens, the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit in lives poured out for each other takes place in real time and space. The expansion of the kingdom in the new creation, while it is surely spiritual, has a physical element to it, even as it exists in this "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). Christ, in his design of redemptive history, has designed the proclamation and defense of the gospel in such a way that it requires resources. Ministry takes stewardship of God-given resources, and nothing less than the gospel is at stake in this stewardship.

Those who labor over the flock (Gal. 4:11) in preaching and teaching this life-giving gospel are to be taken care of through the "good things" in which God has blessed those who benefit from that preaching and teaching. The fruit of the Spirit, as it is demonstrated in love for each other in the community, works itself out in the pocket book and other resources. And fulfilling the law of Christ within the community comes with a sense of obligation for those who are responsible for handling the Word. There is precedent for Paul saying this... more in a minute.

1b. Do not be deceived. Paul's positive exhortation, "share all good things", comes with a warning. This warning has everything to do with the stewardship mentioned in verse 6. A few commentators believe Paul is switching gears here and reverting back to the discussion of chapter 5. That kind of disconnect has helped this text become a popular verse to quote in any discussion of reaping the consequences of our actions. This does have that underlying principle, but we need to make sure that we understand this popular text in the flow of Paul's argument. However, there are more than a few reasons to see this as a unit of thought, and I'm inclined to not follow the schizophrenic Paul line of interpretation... a thought here, a thought there, and "what in the world was he thinking here?" Verse 7 flows out of verse 6. The positive exhortation to "share all good things" is attached to a warning having everything to do with the context in which the Galatian churches find themselves.

What's interesting about this word "deceived" is if you were to take the time to look at how Paul uses it in his writing, more often than not, he is either explicitly referencing or alluding to the deception of Eve in the garden. And I believe that to be the case here. Paul has already used the word "bewitched" to describe the collective condition of these churches. Now he turns the description into a warning. Do not be bewitched.

The natural question that follows is “deceived by what or by whom?” Deceived by the false gospel being perpetrated by those preaching a “different gospel? Perhaps. Deceived by the prospect of not giving material support to the true gospel? Perhaps. Deceived by the temptation to give material support to the false gospel? Perhaps. I think all three are probably in Paul’s mind, given what he says about sowing and reaping. It is possible to do all three at the same time. To be tempted by a “different gospel” more than likely means that resources are headed the direction of the “different gospel”. To be tempted by, and deceived by, the false gospel probably means that material support is not being given to the ministry of the true gospel.

Sowing and reaping

Take note of the stark language Paul uses against those who would follow after a “different gospel”. “Be not deceived. God is not mocked.”

- God is not mocked. To enslave oneself again to the law, as these Galatian churches were being tempted to do, is to mock God, to turn one’s nose up at God. To gratify the desires of the flesh, the result of following after a false gospel, is tantamount to a rejection of God, regardless of the Christian packaging.
- Whatever one sows, one will reap.
 - The one who sows to his own flesh, will from the flesh reap corruption.
 - The one who sows to the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Again, this sowing and reaping is garden like language. There are those who teach and preach the Word, there are those who receive the Word, and the result of this life-giving Word in God’s garden is new life demonstrated in bountiful fruit of the Spirit. We are not going to get into the sowing and reaping here in detail. There’s a lot that could be said here and again, Pastor Russ covered this earlier this year. I note two things for our own purposes on stewardship this evening.

First, the idea of “sowing”, while it is inclusive of the previous section in Galatians 5 where Paul outlines the desires and works of the flesh that are in opposition to the crucified Christ and life-giving Spirit, its most immediate reference point for “sowing” is the word “share” in verse 6. How one shares (or doesn’t share) is how one sows. The gratification of the desires of the flesh will have an adverse affect on the flow of material resources toward the gospel. “Good things” that might have been used to reinforce the ministry of the gospel are expended on the advancement of personal satisfaction, most likely including in this instance, some material support for those preaching a “different gospel.”

The second thing to note is that as there are two ways to sow (live), there are two ways to reap. Again, this idea of corruption, as it is used by Paul elsewhere in his writings, takes us back to the original Adam and his fall. The fall is the original corruption of the old creation. Sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption support what Paul has earlier said in

chapter five that those who do the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. What we do with our resources in relation to the gospel speak to the eternal status of our souls. That's the stark language Paul is using here, even as he exhorts the Galatians to "share all good things".

One may wonder whether Paul, in suggesting that "sharing all good things" is tantamount to "reaping eternal life", believes that it is possible for these churches to buy their way into the kingdom by giving material support to the gospel. Of course not. Simon the magician is condemned in Acts 8 for thinking such things. Here in Galatians 6, Paul is conflating, or "mashing together", two word pictures that Jesus used in his own ministry. This sowing and reaping in Galatians 6 calls to mind Christ's parable of the sower. We can easily see the sowing and reaping in the parable of the sower. But there's also another word picture lying in back of what Paul says here. Material goods leading to corruption or eternal life bring to mind Christ's words to lay up treasures in heaven, rather than treasures on earth, where moth and rust "corrupt".

Here, in putting Christ's two word pictures together, Paul is saying what you do with the "good things" harvested from God himself is where your heart's desires lie. The nugget of truth in the otherwise damnable heresy of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel is that the gospel and material goods do intersect each other. However, the context of this passage and the context of the intersection of material goods and the gospel, is self-sacrifice, with both the one who is being taught the Word and the One who is preaching Christ crucified, with both groups of people laying down lives for each other. And contra the insidious health, wealth, and prosperity gospel (and contra, not co-incidentally, those proclaiming a different gospel to the Galatians), the reaping is of a substance that cannot be seen, seated in the heavenlies. Paul exhorts those who have been given life by the Spirit to invest material goods in the teaching and preaching of the gospel, and there will be dividends not seen with the naked eye but only with the eyes of faith.

Old Testament precedent

There is precedent for Paul to apply life in the Spirit to the community in matching material goods with the gospel this way.

In Exodus 25, God instructs Moses to take up a collection for the building of a tabernacle. Beginning with verse 1. This is what God's word proclaims to us:

The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. ³ And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, etc, etc... verse 8...And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

The material goods that Israel had plundered from Egypt are going to be used by God to build a physical place where God would dwell (Is it any wonder, even as God speaks of a sanctuary in the same breath with gold, silver, and bronze, given the tabernacle's physical nature, that God would have to remind them that he cannot be contained in a temple made with hands?).

And this is precisely what happened. Exodus 35... beginning with verse 4. This is what God's word proclaims to us:

⁴ Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. ⁵ Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze.. etc., etc.,... verse 10 ¹⁰ "Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded: ¹¹ the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, [notice this contribution not only includes material valuables, but skilled labor... down to verse 20] ²⁰ Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹ And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. ²² So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD.... verse 24... Everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's contribution... verse 26...All the women whose hearts stirred them to use their skill spun the goats' hair... verse 29...All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.

I'll leave the preaching of this passage to Pastor Russ when he gets to these chapters. But I would point out that what we have here is a picture in the Old Covenant of material support for the gospel flowing out of hearts that have been given new life in the Spirit. Notice how many times in the passage Moses ties the giving of material goods to what is going on in the hearts of God's people.

Rather than satisfying the desires of the flesh, these people are walking by the Spirit in sharing "all good things" for the ministry of the Word. These good things given in faith would be used to build a tent where heaven and earth would intersect, God would dwell among his people, and his name would be proclaimed wherever his people went.

Not only did Israel's material contributions support the physical tabernacle, but their tithes and offerings also supported the Levitical priesthood. Numbers 18, beginning with verse 20:

And the LORD said to Aaron, "You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. ²¹ "To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting, ²² so that the people of Israel do not come near the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. ²³ But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the people of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴ For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel."

This stipulation is repeated in Deuteronomy 18, although notice the word “offering” is being used instead of “tithes” and notice the garden-like language used here... beginning with verse 1:

“The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the LORD’s food offerings as their inheritance.² They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.³ And this shall be the priests’ due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.⁴ The firstfruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you shall give him.⁵ For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for all time.

The Levitical priesthood was supported by God’s bountiful blessing on his people. A portion of the harvest, the firstfruits, was to be set aside for the proclamation of God’s name in Israel’s gospel. “All good things” were shared with those who gave their lives in service to the dwelling place of God. And the running theme throughout these passages is that the Levites were to have no inheritance because God himself was to be their portion and their inheritance... a reminder to both priests and people that all sustenance is from the One who not only created heaven and earth, but created them as a nation. They are to find their sustenance and satisfaction in the One who gave them life and fed them manna. And you must know by now where this leads.

Why is it that “the one who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches”? Not only does it free up Christ’s shepherds to do the work of the ministry (an idea from these Old Covenant texts picked up by the apostles in Acts 6), but it is an acknowledgment of our utter dependence on Christ, who **is** our Portion. “It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – so that in Christ Jesus the blessing or **portion** or **inheritance** of Abraham might come to the Gentiles... for in Christ Jesus we are all sons of God through faith.”

This is why material support is linked to the gospel... because it is in the gospel that both the one who is taught the word and the one who teaches the word both find sustenance and satisfaction in Christ, the ultimate blessing of Abraham. The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap Jesus Christ himself.

An example for the community

Finally, let’s consider the last two verses of this passage...

let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season [in another fullness of time, when Christ who is our hope will appear], we will reap, if we do not give up.¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Paul closes this section with two statements that mirror each other:

2a. Don't grow weary of doing good.

2b. Do good to every one.

Notice here that the emphasis of sharing "all good things" not only has shifted from stewardship of the material to an overall generosity, the emphasis has also shifted from those who teach to "everyone, especially those who are of the household of faith". What is being done by one group of the community, those who are taught the word, to another group of the community, those who teach the word, becomes an example for the entire community.

Mutual generosity is placed at the heart of perseverance, but it is a generosity that is forward thinking. "In due season" speaks to the eternal life reaped from the life-giving Spirit by those who belong to Christ, the church, "the household of faith". This is why we restore those caught in transgressions. This is why we bear one another's burdens. This is why we align our lives through the Spirit in accordance with the life we've been given by the Spirit. This is why we resist the deception to run after a false gospel promising life and well-being through the law. This household of faith, the community of God's people, who have received adoption as sons of God through Christ becoming a curse for them will, "in due season", reap the fruit of the Spirit in its climactic and glorious end. The consummate end, or intended fruition, of the fruit of the Spirit is eternal life. And a means to that end is material support of the gospel.

The conclusion is quite simple. In God's divine orchestration of redemptive history, he has provided that the stewardship of material goods would be part and parcel to the expansion of the gospel over the face of the earth.

When those who are taught the word share all good things with those who teach and preach the truth of the gospel, the entire community benefits and the false gospel is held at bay. This is why this message is not self-serving, nor is it a conflict of interest. This isn't just about the elders. This is about all of us. This is about a mutual sharing in the prosperity, not of material things, but of the gospel.

We are in this together as a community, the Body of Christ. There are those who are taught the Word (and I also happen to be one of those people most of the time), and there are those who teach and preach the Word. And we are all to be sharing "all good things", whatever we have been so graciously given, including the one thing from this passage that we know we have been given... the fruit of the Spirit. We are to be investing in each other's lives in manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and exercising those gifts God has given us for this ministry of the gospel. This life in the Spirit, living out the fruit of the Spirit in the garden of God, looking forward to the day when the fruit of the Spirit is experienced in its fullness as eternal life in Jesus Christ himself... the life in the Spirit is a community project. Let us be stewards of all of the gracious benefits God has given us in Christ Jesus, looking forward to that day when we, in due season, will reap our Portion and our Inheritance, Jesus Christ.

Let us be stewards of all that God has graciously given us in Christ Jesus, looking forward to that "due season", when we will reap our portion and our inheritance, Christ himself.

Conclusion