

Scripture and the Life of God

Session 6

Table Talk

Discuss the questions at the end of chapter 6 in *Scripture and the Life of God*

During this course, what have you learned about Scripture and how to approach it?

Why is the study of Scripture so important for the Christian life?

Galatians 6:1-18

The conclusion of the letter

Divides sharply into two halves (1-10, 10-18)

v. 1-10 - Paul goes into pastoral mode

As with any controversy, there a few that will go at it hard on either side, while the majority feel grief over the whole thing and don't know what to do.

Paul wants to make sure that while the big issues are being hammered out, the little ones matter, too.

Galatians 6:1

Paul hadn't been in Galatia very long and had to entrust the church to teachers who led in his absence

v. 1 - those who have received the Spirit should restore those who have transgressed with a "spirit of gentleness"

"gentleness" = mild, gentle, even-tempered

In the act of putting someone right, the person who is doing that is in danger of pride or arrogance (temptation)

Galatians 6:2

"Bear one another's burdens" - this is the way to obey the Messiah's law

"The law of Christ" - Ref. 1 Corinthians 9:22, James 2:8

It's as though Jesus has taken the whole law into himself—it is summed up in the law of love, thus we should bear one another's burdens

If someone is having a hard time, we come alongside and help them

Law of Christ overshadows every interaction

Galatians 6:3-4

v. 3 - if you think you are something when you're not, you are deceiving yourselves. You are in danger of arrogance.

All Christians face this test—teachers more than most

Everyone needs to test their own work—always looking in the mirror

v. 4 refers to arrogant teachers who want to have pride in what they have made others do—focus on your own stuff

Evaluation - character vs. crowd

Galatians 6:5

“For all must carry their own loads”

paradox of v. 2 - after all, sooner or later you have to carry your own load—you will stand and fall on your work

It's a balance between the individual and the community

We usually try one way or the other (individualism vs. communism)—but it's the person and the community that must work together

Galatians 6:6

Paul then turns to financial responsibility—doesn't talk about money often but, when he does, it's significant

Every community has to handle money appropriately

v. 6 - “share in all good things” - support good teaching

Good for the individual and the community - good teachers “test” their work—embody the message

Galatians 6:7

“God is not mocked”

Paul is talking about an all too common problem—people assume they can get away with certain things without God watching or without accountability

but you can't “turn up your nose at God” (literal meaning)

God's judgment of all human actions is certain

Galatians 6:8

Sowing and reaping metaphor - Also used in 1 Corinthians 9:10-11 and 2 Corinthians 9:6 - all in reference to financial matters

Sowing to one's own flesh (see chapter 5) vs. sowing to the Spirit (fruit of the Spirit)

"eternal life" = life after life after death - the life of the resurrection

Question for Paul is where Galatians are investing their energy, trust, even their money

Galatians 6:9-10

Don't grow weary in doing what is right

reap at harvest-time (the eschaton)

Toil and conflict difficult, but stay the course

and while you do, continue to work for the good of all, especially the family of faith

Galatians 6:11-12

v. 11 - "large letters" - Paul moves from dictation, takes pen in hand to write the last paragraph

v. 12 - it's those who want to make a good showing in your flesh who are doing you wrong

their motive isn't to keep the whole Torah, but to avoid persecution from the Romans

Galatians 6:13

Even these missionaries who insist on the law do not keep all of it

they want you to be circumcised so that they can look good, like good teachers in the eyes of the Romans and fellow Jews

They don't understand what the Torah was about— demarcating the people of God

Christ has broken down that wall by fulfilling the law of love

Galatians 6:14

Looks all the way back to 1:4

“Boasting in the cross” - the whole world is a different place because of the cross

“the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” - the old world is dead, a new creation has begun

a power has been let loose in the world that will not rest until the earth is full of the glory of God

Galatians 6:15

Therefore, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are the issue that matters

What matters is new creation!

The old age is passing, a new age has been launched

Galatians 6:16

“this rule” - the standard around which to line up, the standard of new creation

all who line up in this way are God’s new Israel

they are the Messiah’s people - not Jew or Gentile

Galatians 6:17

“carry the marks of Jesus” - Paul sees the marks of his suffering (beatings) as the marks that count, not circumcision

“let no one make trouble for me” - I have earned these marks, bore them as an apostle of the truth

Galatians 6:18

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit...”

Everything comes from grace and returns to grace

Reflections on Galatians

A first Christian document, indicative of what the Christian movement was supposed to be—not an easy system of rules but something full of life and danger

Christianity is not an armchair religion - God comes into a messy world

As a result, there is a new community—we still wrestle with what it means to be that new community

Justification

About who is part of the family, the new creation community

The doctrine has often split the church, but for Paul it's a doctrine of unity—same family and table

At the heart, it is about Christ's death, resurrection, and the new creation

Paul invites all who believe to be part of the family

Table Talk

How does the letter to the Galatians speak to the church today?

What contemporary issues in the church might we address using Paul's approach?

What are the marks of the community of the new creation? What is in and what is out?

If you were going to teach on Galatians, what would be some of your major themes? How would you approach it?
