

When someone studies a particular field of interest the final course is often referred to as practicum. That means the application of all the theory and ideas you have learned. The first ten verses of this final chapter (and we could include the last two verses of the previous chapter) are Paul's practicum on this topic of grace versus works. While Paul has explained why the false teachers' insistence on circumcision is unnecessary and has told the Galatians that the answer is to live by the Spirit, that loving our neighbor fulfills the law, and that we are to keep in step with the Spirit, he now gives some practical application to those concepts. When we study God's Word we must get down to the practical application while being careful to understand that the good works are the outworking of the Spirit and not what merits our salvation or righteousness. Rather, these applications are an illustration of what the Spirit will do through us. This is what makes Christianity so different from other religions that emphasize what you do in your own power to merit worth. In Christ we find our worth in what He has done for us, and the good works are a product of His life in us (Philippians 2:13ⁱ).

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.

Galatians 6:1 Paul had just listed for the Galatians the fruits of the Spirit and told them to keep in step with the Spirit. This paragraph describes one of the main ways that is expressed while building one another up in love (5:13ⁱⁱ; Ephesians 4:16ⁱⁱⁱ).

If the spiritually mature in the congregation see someone in the church family caught in sin, they should intervene gently, humbly, for their good. The mature, in contrast to new believers, are those who have become familiar with God's Word and the battles we face as Christians. They are the ones that are to help those caught in sin.

The ESV word "caught" can be translated "entrapped". Sin enslaves and can become a trap from which we find it difficult to escape. The word transgression means to fall out of the way. It is in contrast to "keep in step" in 5:25^{iv}. That may mean that Paul is referring back to the list of the works of the flesh in 5:19-21^v. If those works of the flesh have trapped someone, the spiritually mature need to help them get out of the trap.

As a young boy I remember seeing my grandfather's old rusty traps. The bigger the animal you were after the bigger the trap and the stronger the spring. To open it you had to push both sides down at the same time. Some traps of sin require the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer along with a fellow soldier in Christ to help open the trap's jaws.

Watch out that you are not tempted to pridefully think you are better, or that you are so strong that this temptation can't lure you in as well. If I wasn't careful when playing with those traps, they would snap shut on me. Justification for sin may appeal to our old nature, so watch out that you are not ensnared.

Paul used some harsh discipline when a person was proud of his sexual sin (1 Corinthians 5:5^{vi}), but in most cases a person will feel convicted and can fall into condemnation, and thus gentleness is required (5:23^{vii}; 2 Timothy 2:25^{viii}).

Paul already expressed the importance of expelling the false teacher. He was more severe when addressing that issue. This is more along the lines of seeing that your brother is struggling to break free from sinful behavior or is justifying it. That requires gentleness, whereas dealing with a false teacher requires firmness.

Not many people enjoy confrontation. We can be too timid to help a person caught in sin. But the real problem is that we either don't see how destructive sin is, or we don't have the love of Christ for that brother or sister. I have been guilty of this in the past. It is one thing to let a new believer grow in grace and let the Holy Spirit bring conviction in His time, and another to see a person who is established in the faith but struggling with a habitual sin. The Word and the Spirit continually help us all grow in grace and convicts us of areas in our lives that need to be more Christ like (John 16:8^{ix}). We aren't fruit inspectors checking to see that each person is perfect. This is referring to those sins of the flesh that can entrap us.

If we are going to serve one another with the love of Christ, we must risk the confrontation to help restore the erring member to spiritual health. It usually requires us coming alongside them and taking time with them to help them rely on the power of Christ to set them free. That is an expression of the familial love we have for one another desiring the best for each person that is a part of the body of Christ.

If the person senses anything other than love and gentleness, he or she may reject or ignore us. We tend to fear either. If they run, we feel we have driven them from fellowship. But if you are gentle and loving, it is their sin that drove them away. And if they are a genuine believer, they will long to be back. Your efforts to contact them and prayers for them will prevail. That takes genuine concern and willingness to devote time.

But there is a problem with the modern church that makes this expression of love all too rare. Too many of us are gospel consumers. We want to come and sing and hear a good sermon and go home and do our own thing. We have not allowed the love of Christ for one another to surpass our own love of self. **We need to realize that we are in a spiritual family that is eternal.** The people around us are going to be with us forever. Jesus gave His life for them. That is how much He loves them. Are we willing to share His heart? Those fruits of the Spirit are not just to be expressed to God but also to the body of Christ and to the lost as well. We should be caring for one another at least as much as we do for our flesh and blood family. The fact that so many in the American church don't care for one another to this extent is one of the main signs of our immaturity.

Aren't we supposed to be like Jesus? How has He cared for you? How willing has He been to restore you and encourage you in the faith? How deeply does He know you? That is our model and should be the goal of each of us. *¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you should wander away from the truth and someone turns him back, ²⁰he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save that person's soul from death, and will cover over a great number of sins.* James 5:19,20 And that leads us to the next verse.

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 Everyone has a burden to bear, for we all take up our cross. Paul said he felt the daily burden of seeing the churches mature and stay faithful (2 Corinthians 11:28^x). There are burdens of health, finances, relationships, and we all struggle with our old nature. Love cares about what the brother or sister in Christ is enduring (Romans 15:1^{xi}). The law of Christ is to love your neighbor as yourself (5:14^{xii}), or even more, as Jesus has loved you (John 15:12^{xiii}; 1 John 4:21^{xiv}). He is the example par excellence of a burden bearer (Isaiah 53:4-6^{xv}; Mark 10:45^{xvi}). His whole purpose in life was to bear our sins and be our ransom (Matthew 20:28^{xvii}). Comparing our lives to His will keep us from the temptation

to think too highly of ourselves or complaining about our minor sacrifices. What a tiny thing it is to bear a brother's burden when Jesus took on the sin burden of the world!

Paul assumes we all have burdens and the help from the family of God is needed. Of course, we first cast our burdens on the Lord and know that He will sustain us (Psalm 55:22^{xviii}). But we should realize that we are not meant to be an island. We all need the help of others and others need our help (Hebrews 10:25^{xix}). Helping bear others' burdens is not simply for pastors. This is a command for all believers. Even the Apostle Paul needed help carrying his burden (2 Corinthians 7:5,6).

³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Galatians 6:3 If we think we are too important to stoop down to help a weak one, we forgot the true measure of greatness. The greatest is servant of all (Mark 9:35^{xx}). Pride makes us useless to the kingdom. We are all really nothing. If the great Apostle Paul said that of himself, surely it is applicable to us all (2 Corinthians 12:11^{xxi}). It is God's love for us that gives us value and the Spirit who does the work in and through us. The next time you are tempted to be prideful and elevate yourself above others just remember that you are nothing, and it is only the gracious and merciful love of God that gives you and the person you are comparing yourself to any value.

Daily confession is the best medicine for a prideful spirit. It reminds us how short we fall. While pride keeps us from seeing our own faults, searching our hearts takes the blinders off and lets the Spirit convict us. We all need a time of humbly coming before the Lord as I suggested last week, to ask as David did in Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV) ²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:* ²⁴ *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Self-conceit is fatal for burden bearing because it turns us into judges rather than burden bearers. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus warns us how self-deception leads to self-conceit and disposes us to be quick when it comes to judge others (Matthew 7:3).^{xxii}

C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity: "If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed." (p. 99)

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. Galatians 6:4 How do we test our work? Is what we are doing of lasting value, or is it wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12-15^{xxiii})? Will it be consumed on that day, or will it remain? We can boast in what the church is doing, but what is our role in that lasting work? Are we listening to the Word and the Spirit or just going through the motions? And if we are hearing, are we then responding by cooperating with the Spirit?

It is strange to read a passage that tells us we can boast in our self. In 1 Corinthians 1:31^{xxiv} we are told that if we boast it should be in the Lord. How can we reconcile these two statements from the same author? The content of the letter to the Galatians is that salvation is all by grace and we add nothing to it. For that reason and Paul's statement to the Corinthians, I think we should understand boasting in our self alone rather than our neighbor to mean that in testing the results from our work, we find that we yielded to the life of Christ and let Him work through us. We not only have testimonies of others, but we have a personal testimony of our part in the body of Christ. If we have let the Holy Spirit produce fruit in our lives, we have reason to boast in what God has done through us. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 12:3, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he*

ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. We should not downplay the work God does in and through us.

⁵ *For each will have to bear his own load.* Galatians 6:5 Perhaps the meaning here is the same as Romans 14:12. *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

The Greek word for burden is different, baros (verse 2) meaning a weight or heavy load and portion (verse 5) being 'a common term for a man's pack'. So we are to bear one another's 'burdens' which are too heavy for a man to bear alone, but there is one burden which we cannot share—indeed do not need to because it is a pack light enough for every man to carry himself—and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgment.^{xxv}

The prospect of standing before the bar of Heaven and the majesty of the risen Lord to give an account for "every careless word" (Matthew 12:36^{xxvi}) has a remarkable way of disillusioning us of self-deception or self-conceit. It's not hard to feel spiritually spiffy when we measure ourselves against others. But when we envision our sinful, little selves before the One from whom even earth and sky will flee away (Revelation 20:11^{xxvii}), grandiose ideas about who we are or what we've done will themselves flee away. Gazing at the final judgment ought to be a regular part of our Christian discipleship.^{xxviii}

⁶ *Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.* Galatians 6:6 (Verses 6-10 are about sowing and reaping.) Notice also that it is in the context of talking about the Spirit's work that Paul drops this line about teaching. Being a Spirit-led church does not mean avoiding teaching substantively. In the book of Acts, the Spirit was performing amazing wonders, yet the church did not say, "Oh, who needs the Bible?" Instead, we find "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). A Spirit-led church is a teaching church.^{xxix}

I have learned from so many others who sowed into my life and my duty is to acknowledge and support their work. Like the Apostles in Acts 6, those who devote themselves to preaching the Word should give themselves to prayer and the study of God's Word (Acts 6:4^{xxx}). The support of their congregation frees up their time so they can and still support their family. The cross-references indicate material things, and indeed, those who labor in the Word often need material help. But surely "all good things" are more than simply the material. How about testimonies, words of gratitude, appreciation, and fellowship? In fact, the word "share" is *koinoneito* from the Greek word for fellowship *koinonea*! The preaching of the Word is not supported by payment alone but by the fellowship of meeting one another's needs. This illustrates mutual burden bearing described in verse 2.

This congregation I serve has amply supported me, so I say this to those on-line or guests who may be attending other churches. It is in your best interest to provide financially and pray fervently for your pastor. The freedom he has to study the Word and pray will bless you. And if your church is well fed on the Word of God, it will be sharing that Word with others. This is why Jews would build a synagogue and school if there were ten or more families. A tenth of their income as offerings would put the rabbi on the same financial basis as the median of the congregation. That is a good rule of thumb for his salary. We have polls today that tell us what the average pastoral salary is in a specific region. It would be better to poll your congregation as to its gross income and find the average. Then no one should complain that he is paid too much or too little.

Of course, this can be abused by congregation or pastor. The congregation should never order the preacher as to what to preach, nor should the preacher grow lazy because he is not supervised. I have met pastors who were abused by their congregations and congregations abused by their pastors. This verse gives us the ideal situation when the pastor is faithful to teach the Word and the congregation shares all good things with him. Caring for the flock and the study of the Word to deliver a message is a full-time occupation, and often more demanding than most secular jobs when done in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

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. Galatians 6:7,8 A physical and spiritual law that we tend to forget is that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4^{xxxix}). You can't fool Him, nor will He violate His own laws. If you want a pastor that plumbs the depths of God's Word and has time for you, then support him. Want kindness, mercy, love? then sow it! And if you sow deception, apathy, and arrogance, that is what you will reap. How often I see this play out in my own life, in others, with pastors in the city, with congregations, both in a good way and in a bad way as well. Thank God this law regarding our sins was superseded by another law when Jesus reaped our harvest of judgment upon Himself on the cross. Amen?

This verse should be a guiding expression. What are you currently reaping? Think of what you sowed that would result in what you are now receiving. And remember, heavenly reward will only fully be realized when we get there. Sometimes we see someone who seems to have it all who is as selfish as anyone could be. Reaping doesn't always appear on the surface. That is why people are so shocked when a celebrity takes his life. A psalmist had this very question of why some seem to live in rebellion but live what appears to be a blessed life. The psalm ends with him seeing them in their final destiny (Psalm 73:17^{xxxix}). The law of sowing and reaping is sure to take place.

By the books we read, the company we keep and the leisure occupations we pursue we can be 'sowing to the Spirit'. Then we are to foster disciplined habits of devotion in private and in public, in daily prayer and Bible reading, and in worship with the Lord's people on the Lord's Day. All this is 'sowing to the Spirit'; without it there can be no harvest of the Spirit, no 'fruit of the Spirit'.^{xxxix}

We must decide which harvest we desire. Sow to the flesh and reap destruction, or sow to the Spirit and reap eternal life. Once you decide, sow accordingly, but don't think you can have both! One or the other will prevail (Matthew 6:24^{xxxix}). Dear believer, crucify the flesh and walk in the Spirit! That is love, joy, peace, and eternal life!

Wait! Isn't eternal life a gift and not merited by works? Yes, but when Jesus is your Lord, you walk in the Spirit who leads you into the works God has prepared in advance for you (Ephesians 2:10^{xxxix}). And as you walk in the Spirit your life overflows with the fruits of the Spirit. Love serves one another and bears others' burdens. Will you ask God to express this love through you?

Questions:

- 1 Who should help a brother trapped in sin? 2 Why do they have to watch out?
- 3 Why does the church today often avoid doing this? 4 Who needs help with their burden? Who should help them? 5 What is the best medicine for a prideful spirit?

- 6 Why is self-conceit fatal to burden bearing? 7 How can we soberly judge ourselves?
 8 What is the difference between burden in verses 2 and 5?
 9 What should we share with the one who teaches? 10 How can we sow to the Spirit?

ⁱ **Philippians 2:13** ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

ⁱⁱ **Galatians 5:13 (ESV)**

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Ephesians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

^{iv} **Galatians 5:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

^v **Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)**

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.

^{vi} **1 Corinthians 5:5** *I have decided** to hand over such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. ^{vi}

^{vii} **Galatians 5:23 (ESV)**

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{viii} **2 Timothy 2:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

^{ix} **John 16:8** ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment^{ix}

^x **2 Corinthians 11:28** ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches^x

^{xi} **Romans 15:1** We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

^{xii} **Galatians 5:14** the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ^{xii}

^{xiii} **John 15:12** This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ^{xiii}

^{xiv} **1 John 4:21** And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother^{xiv}

^{xv} **Isaiah 53:4-6** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one^{xv}

^{xvi} **Mark 10:45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^{xvii} **Matthew 20:28** even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^{xviii} **Psalms 55:22** ²² Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

^{xix} **Hebrews 10:25** ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

^{xx} **Mark 9:35** ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

^{xxi} **2 Corinthians 12:11** ¹¹ have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing^{xxi}

^{xxii} Todd Wilson, Preaching the Word - Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living.

^{xxiii} **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

^{xxiv} **1 Corinthians 1:31** ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

^{xxv} - The Bible Speaks Today – The Message of Galatians: Only One Way.

^{xxvi} **Matthew 12:36** ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,

^{xxvii} **Revelation 20:11** ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

^{xxviii} Todd Wilson, Preaching the Word - Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living.

^{xxix} Platt, D., & Merida, T. (2014). *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Ga 6:6). Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.

^{xxx} **Acts 6:4** ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

^{xxxi} **Deuteronomy 32:4** ⁴ The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

^{xxxii} **Psalms 73:17** ¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

^{xxxiii} - The Bible Speaks Today – The Message of Galatians: Only One Way.

^{xxxiv} **Matthew 6:24** ²⁴ No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

^{xxxv} **Ephesians 2:10** ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.