

Galatians 6 • Living the New Creation

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We've been making our way through the Book of Galatians here on Sunday morning and we're going to complete that study today. Galatians chapter 6.

I know I'm shocking many of you at the thought and the idea of actually making our way through an entire chapter in one Sunday, but we're going to do it. And one of the reasons we're going to do it is because whenever Paul would get to the end of one of his letters, I think he probably noticed he was getting to the end of his scroll, and he realized, I don't have much space left here to talk.

He began in most of his letters toward the end to give a rather rapid fire succession of thoughts and exhortations that he really didn't expand on or give any detail to, but he just shot some things out rather quickly and Galatians is no different than that.

If you'll read along with me or follow along, I should say while I read, chapter 6 goes like this. *“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.

⁶ Let the one who is taught the word 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.

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be

circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”
(ESV) Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts, speak to us, Lord. You are the teacher, we are the students, we sit at Your feet Lord that we might gain a heart of understanding.

Give us, Lord, we pray, spiritual ears to hear, spiritual eyes to see, and a receptive heart to receive all that You desire to speak to us today. We thank You, Father, for Your Word, in Jesus precious name, amen.

Well, as we get to the closing of this letter; Paul's letter to the Galatians, we've seen over the course of this study that Paul has been confronting repeatedly those false teachers who made their way into the region of Galatia and began to perpetrate that false teaching which was telling the people that in order to be saved, they must, in addition to believing in Jesus, keep the law of Moses as it relates to circumcision, the food laws, Sabbath keeping, and on and on.

And then in chapter 5, we saw how the Apostle Paul began to speak to believers about how we are to live. If we don't live according to the law, how do we live? And he brought out that we live according to the Spirit. We are to follow the leading of the Spirit.

And now as he begins to see that his space is coming to an end with this letter, he goes through and talks about several different things. But the first thing he says is, “*Brothers, (here in verse 1) if anyone is caught in any transgression,*” he goes on to talk about what ought to be done.

Let me just explain very quickly, once again, the difference between transgression and sin. Because this is a word that is given to believers about

believers. He's saying, brothers, if any brother or sister in Christ is caught in a transgression. What does it mean to be caught in a transgression? A transgression means, to violate a known boundary. A sin is just something that we did that was wrong, whether we knew it or not, and usually we don't. It's often a sin of ignorance, but a transgression is a known boundary. It's like when you say to your children. Don't walk in the house with those muddy shoes, right? And then they do it anyway. Bloop, bloop bloop. And that's a transgression. You made it very clear what is not to be done, right? And they violated that word.

Paul is speaking here about a believer and that's why we talk about transgressions in this verse because believers understand the Word of God as it relates to these various areas of sin, and yet they violate them knowingly and sometimes they get caught, right? There comes this place in their life where they find themselves caught once again.

And so Paul says, if anyone among you is “*caught in a transgression,*” he goes on to say, “*you who are spiritual...*” Which is to say, you who are mature in the faith, should restore him with, punches and billy clubs. Oh, it doesn't say that, does it? It doesn't say anything of the sort.

Here's why I bring that up. Remember something, Paul has just finished in chapter 5, talking about the atmosphere of legalism. And do you remember even what he said as he talked about legalism? In legalistic environments, you know how they treat people who are caught in sin? They condemn them, and they do get out the spiritual billy club.

You remember what he said in the last chapter? If you look right, just go back to chapter 5. Some of you, it shouldn't even be a page turn. Verse 15, we talked about this. He said, “*...but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed by one another.*”

And in that verse, you'll remember we talked about that is the atmosphere of a legalistic environment where people respond to one another not in a spirit of gentleness, but in a spirit of harshness and condemnation. Where the fellowship literally cannibalizes itself over a period of time because the only response they have to sin is quick, decisive, and it ostracizes the believer from the rest of the fellowship. That's all they really know how to do is put people out of the fellowship.

And that's the reason I wanted to highlight this verse for you, because Paul is not talking about legalism here, he's talking about a church that is governed by

grace. And when a church is governed by the grace of Jesus Christ, here's what happens. Brothers, you find somebody there or a sister who's caught in a sin? You who are mature in the Lord should go to them to “*restore them in a spirit of gentleness.*”

Why gentleness? That's how the Holy Spirit restores. Well, there's actually two reasons here. One is because he's been talking about being led by the Spirit, right? If you and I are being led by the Spirit, and we're there to help restore a brother or sister in Christ who's been caught in an area of transgression, we are going to walk in a spirit of gentleness because the Spirit of God is moving through us to respond according to His character.

And have you noticed in your own life how gentle He is with you? Have you noticed? Have you noticed that when you fall into some area of sin or you respond out of the flesh rather than according to His heart? Have you noticed how gentle His conviction is with you? Have you noticed you don't just drop dead? Anybody ever notice that? Ever notice that a lightning bolt just doesn't produce itself out of heavens and fry you where you stand?

God is so gracious and the Bible even goes on to say that it is his kindness that leads us to repentance. And so then, how are you and I to respond to someone caught in an area of transgression if we are operating according to the Spirit? It's going to be out of a spirit of gentleness. A desire to restore that individual, right? And that's one of the main reasons we respond in gentleness, because we're operating out of the life of the Spirit.

But there's another reason why we respond in gentleness, and it's actually given to us at the very end of the verse. Notice at the end of verse 1, he says, “*Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*” See, there's that reminder that you and I are subject to the very same weaknesses, and that's another reason we respond out of gentleness. Because, you see, it's so easy.

When you and I begin to minister to someone for whatever reason, there is a natural tendency to look down on people. And I'm sorry to say that it's reality, but it is. And especially if we're dealing with someone who's struggling in an area of sin that we ourselves don't struggle. And you know that there are things that you're strong about and you don't struggle with, and there are things that, that you do struggle with, and there are things that I don't struggle with. I'm not tempted by, but there are other things I'm greatly tempted by.

And if I happen to be dealing with you and you're struggling in a situation where I don't struggle, the natural tendency of my flesh, not the spirit, but my

flesh, is to look at you somehow and think, oh, you poor thing. How in the world did you get caught up in that. While all the while forgetting that I myself am subject to the same weaknesses, and the same issues, and the same problems. Maybe not the exact same temptation, but certainly I'm no different than you as it relates to the weaknesses of my flesh.

And so Paul reminds us here, that's another reason we respond out of gentleness, is because we understand that the person with whom I am dealing is no different than me, and I am from them, as it relates to this issue of sin.

But there's also the warning given here. Be careful *“lest you too be tempted.”* And so there's also that fear of the Lord that enters into the equation that says, when I go to minister to someone who's caught in a sin, what's to stop me from being drawn into that same issue? Because the reality exists. I have to know that the reality exists. I can never walk into a situation like that thinking, I'm impervious to this, that's pride. And now I'm a sitting duck for the enemy because my pride places me in a situation where I feel like I don't have to keep up my defenses. I don't need the full armor of God, that's not a problem with me, sort of a thing.

There are certain things that we have to do whenever we're ministering to someone, that we have to keep watch, we have to be careful. There are some basic rules that I think ought to apply whenever we're helping somebody else out. And I'm not trying to discourage you from helping people out because we need to do it.

Paul even says right here that as we carry one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ, so this is a good thing, right? But you got to be wise about it. For example, I think it's a really dumb idea for a man to minister to a woman and a woman to minister to a man.

I just think it's unwise, because there's great temptations that can take hold in that situation. Here's a guy at work, walking with the Lord, there's a gal; one of the secretaries, one of the people, one of the coworkers, whatever. And they begin, they talk, and he realizes she's got some issues going on in her home, or family, or whatever, or she's caught in a sin. And he's thinking, hey, I'd really like to minister to this woman, so I'm going to invite her out for coffee, and we're just going to talk, and I'm going to pray with her, I'll make sure it's in a public place, whatever sort of a thing.

That's just not wise, it's just not a smart thing to do. If you see somebody of the opposite gender who needs that kind of help, either find somebody that you can

send to go minister to them. And that's what I try to do in situations. If a woman needs some extended counsel, I'm going to find one of the ladies in our fellowship to counsel her.

If she does come and talk to me, my staff knows that my door stays open and they have to stay there in the office as long as I'm in there with another woman. They know that they can't leave, doesn't matter how late that counseling session goes. If it's past closing time, they know they got to stay there.

And it's just one of those things you got to do, for safety. Because there are certain things about when we go to minister to other people, we got to apply wisdom or be careful. As Paul says, keep watch on yourself, lest you be tempted. And you can have the best of intentions. The best of intentions, and still operate in a very unwise sort of a thing.

And the second thing I would just encourage as it relates to ministering to others who are caught in situations or who need the ministry, is to be careful to understand or to recognize when you're in a situation that's over your head. This is actually very common. Your heart is to just be there, to give assistance, to give prayer support. But sometimes you get into a situation and it's just big, it's huge. It's bigger than you can handle, and you get into it and you realize, this is, I'm over my head. Don't ever be afraid to reach out and get help, to get assistance.

That's where you go to believers who've been walking with Jesus for a while. People that you've seen walking with the Lord for a protracted period of time, who have a track record of wisdom, and good life choices in Christ, and being led by the Spirit. You go to those people, I need help. I need help with this. This is bigger than I thought it was, sort of a thing. Be very careful. Keep watch over yourself as Paul says.

Goes on in verse 2, look with me in your Bible. He says, *“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* There's the verse that we mentioned. So how is it fulfilling the law of Christ to bear one another's burdens to help one another? You're loving people like, Christ loves you. You're loving people like you want others to love you. This is the law of..., love your neighbor as yourself. That's the law of Christ. Carry one another's burdens, walk with them, bless them, and so forth.

Verse 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.”

And what Paul is saying here is he's talking about the very thing I was talking about just a minute ago. He's talking about that natural tendency to, when you're ministering to other people to compare yourself with those other people and to somehow think, I'm the one doing the ministering. You are the one receiving the ministry. Ergo, I'm more spiritual than you. Yeah, that's what Paul is saying.

He's saying if anyone thinks that he is something when he is nothing, and by the way, that's a little quick clue there that we're all nothing. You just got insulted and didn't even know it.

He says, if you think you're something when you're nothing, you're deceiving yourself. He says, let each one test his own work. In other words, when you're ministering to someone, stop looking at their life and judging you by their life. You look at your own life before the Lord. That's what he's saying.

When you and I are standing before God, God is never going to say, well, you were better than your neighbors or you were better than that guy. Listen, God doesn't grade on a scale, right?

Paul says, you go to the Lord for you. You talk to the Lord about you. As David said, come and investigate my heart, see if there be any wicked way in me and so forth. (Psalm 139:23-24) It's about what's going on in here. (Pastor Paul points to his heart). Don't compare yourselves with others.

He goes on here in verse 6 to say, *“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.”* Okay, this is a difficult verse for me to teach you guys because it's about me. Because at least as far as you're concerned, I'm the one who is teaching you. But you know what? I also get taught. I have people teaching me, so I'll share this with you as if it's something that we just all have to deal with.

What Paul is saying here is, everybody is being taught by somebody, at least hopefully you're being taught by someone. And he's simply reminding believers to share all good things with those who are feeding them spiritually. And as I said, I get taught too. I've got people that I listen to and hear minister the Word and I love to listen to. And he just reminds us here to share all good things with those who are feeding us, right? Because that's what teaching is, right?

The role that I basically have is a pastor, but have you ever noticed in the Scripture, pastor-teacher goes together? When Paul is outlining the ministry

gifts given to the church, he says: apostle, prophet, evangelist, and then there's pastor-teacher. People have called it the five-fold ministry. Have you ever heard that term? It's a very popular term. We believe in the five-fold. Usually people do it with a southern accent, and that's the way, it just comes out naturally. People talk a lot about the five-fold ministry. It's actually four. It's, pastor-teacher. Even grammatically in the Greek, pastor and teacher goes together. You know why? Pastor is the exact same word in the Greek as shepherd.

What is a teacher? He's a feeder. You know a shepherd that can't feed his sheep? Then you know a shepherd who's got dead sheep. Right? He's got to be able to feed them. Good grief! Can you imagine a shepherd who doesn't know how to feed the flock? He's got to be a feeder. He's got to be. And that's why pastor-teacher goes together. Okay? Paul is literally saying here, as you are being fed, respond to that, so forth.

Verse 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."

Here's a quick reminder. This is a common reminder in Paul's letters of a spiritual and physical law that God has established in the world and in His kingdom, and it is a law no different than the law of gravity.

If I drop something from a particular height, it's going to fall to the floor. If I sow to my flesh, I can expect to reap the flesh. And that's why he says do not be deceived. It never happens any other way than that.

But look what he also says. There's a good side to sowing and reaping. If you sow to the Spirit, this is one of the things. We often talk about sowing and reaping, but we're always talking about it in a negative context. Not really sure why. There's a positive context, if you sow to the Spirit. What does it mean to sow to the Spirit? Well, we know what it is to sow to the flesh, right? It means I basically follow the inclinations of my flesh. I get angry, or somebody does something that makes me angry, I express that anger. That's just falling to the flesh. It's following the flesh. If I'm jealous, if I'm this, if I'm that, my flesh just responds, and I follow the leading of my flesh. You make me mad, or something, I'm going to respond with anger because that's what my flesh wants to do. And if I'm sowing to the flesh, I'm going to follow it.

What's sowing to the Spirit? Following the inclination of the Spirit, which is life and peace, and forgiveness, and joy, and patience, and all the other fruits that

we talked about just recently, right? It's resisting the flesh and responding and yielding to the life of the Spirit. It's to sow to the Spirit.

What is the promise that Paul gives us in his word? If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap from the Spirit. You will reap those very things, ultimately even unto eternal life. And by the way, when he says, even unto eternal life, he's not saying that you earn eternal life from following the life of the Spirit and that sort of thing. He's simply saying that there are times when we reap things that are physical and there are times that we reap things that are spiritual.

And the things that we reap that are spiritual will be seen on the day of the Lord. When He comes to bring the salvation that we've been waiting for all this time. And there will be things that we will be reaped unto that salvation or unto eternal life. Again, this isn't a contradiction of, salvation by grace through faith. Simply saying on that day, you will reap and find yourself the recipient of wonderful blessings because you have sown to the Spirit during those times of your life.

And what that means is, there's many things that we sow to that we don't see a harvest related to those things immediately. Usually I see a pretty fast harvest on the flesh side of things. I mean if somebody gets angry at me, and they get in my face, and they start taking a swing at me, and so I clench my fist and I swing back, I can expect more of that to come, right? Right? If I'm going to respond in anger and violence and stuff, I can expect more anger and violence in my life.

But as far as reaping the things of the Spirit, many of those things don't happen. Some of those things, you guys, you're not going to see the harvest of those things until the day of the Lord.

And that's why Paul goes on in verse 9, if you look with me in your Bible, to say, "*And let us not grow weary of doing good, (because you see, he goes on to say) ... in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*" But don't expect to be reaping all those spiritual blessings right here, right now, today, see a lot of now.

Some of them, you may, but the bulk of what you are sowing to the Spirit is going to be reaped much later on when the Lord returns. But that's hard for us in America because we're used to instant gratification. In most cases of life. So be very careful, he says. Don't get weary and think, wow where's the payoff here to all these things.

Verse 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 says, so don't get weary, keep going, do good to everyone.

That means all individuals, believer or unbeliever, but especially “*to those who are of the household of faith,*” that means believers. Why especially to them? Because they're family, and also because Jesus said that when we love family in the body of Christ, the world will know that we belong to Him. That will be one of the telltale signs that we belong to Jesus, by the love we have one for another.

Especially the body of Christ, love these people. I was sharing, oh mercy, I was sharing a story that I do you guys know of Jim Cymbala? You know Jim Cymbala? He's written some wonderful books: Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Fresh Faith. I've been going back and... I love him as an author. I love him as a speaker. I've been going back and reading some of his stuff and I even went back. And he spoke a few years back at a Calvary Chapel. I don't even know which Calvary Chapel it was. But he was sharing about his ministry which is in Brooklyn, New York. Yeah, right in Brooklyn, so you can imagine.

He pastors the Brooklyn Tabernacle and you can imagine the people that come wandering into his church. He was telling, interestingly enough about an Easter service and they had done like 4 services and it was at the end of the last one, and he was exhausted. And he said I got up and I sat up on the end of the edge of the platform and people were, we had dismissed the service.

People were starting to head out and he said, my eyes connected with a guy a few rows back, and his eyes connected with me and I knew that he was wanted to make his way forward to talk to me, and that wasn't uncommon. Sometimes people came into the church and they were just looking for some money.

And this guy came down and he says, and as he got close to me, he said, I can't begin to describe to you the stench. He said, I could not breathe. He said, I could not take a breath looking in his direction. He literally had to turn his head, and inhale, and then talk to the guy. That bad.

Starts having a conversation with this guy. Where'd you sleep last night? In a truck. Why haven't you been going to the rescue mission? I was afraid for my life there. How long you been homeless? A few years.

Little conversation, banter going back and forth. Eventually he reaches into his pocket to get some money for this guy and the guy says, I don't want your money. He says, I heard about Jesus today, I want Him.

And immediately the Lord just convicted pastor Cymbala, of that natural tendency in the midst of his own exhaustion and having seen many other people come up and just ask for a few bucks, through just that natural tendency, reach into your pocket, get a few dollars, send him on his way.

And the Lord began to speak to pastor Cymbala about His love for that guy. His love for that guy. And so he began to pray for him and he said, the most amazing thing happened while I reached out to pray and as I even reached out to put my arm around him, the Lord filled me with such an incredible love for this stinky man. And he said what happened was amazing.

He said, as we prayed the stench went away. He said, as far as I was concerned nothing smelled bad about this guy, and the Lord just filled him with such an incredible love for this individual.

Prayed with him to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. Immediately took him and threw him in a hospital for a few days just to get healthy, or at least to start to get healthy. The guy kept coming, much to his surprise, kept coming to church.

Today, he is an ordained pastor, married with two children. Was told he would never have children because he had abused his body with drugs so bad for so many years. Came to pastor Cymbala, would you pray for my wife and I? I'll pray for you. Yeah, sure. They had a baby 9 months later. One year later they got their second child. They come back to pastor Cymbala. Would you please reverse that prayer? We don't, we can't have any more children.

I got to tell you something. I listened to that story and I wept, I cried. I literally, I got done... Sue was in the room with me, I didn't want to cry in front of her, and look like a sissy. I closed my laptop and I said, I need to go talk to the Lord. I went into the den and I didn't even get the door closed.

I usually go in there and I just get down on my knees and I didn't even get the door closed, and I just began to weep. I was just so overwhelmed with that attitude. Do good to everyone, especially those in the household of faith. How are we doing? How are we doing? If you had to give us a letter grade, what would it be? I think I'd probably get about a D, to be honest with you.

And I made up my mind that day that I'd start, I'm going to start praying more for God's heart for people. As a teacher, I can tend to see things in a very instructive sort of a way. I mean, that's just my heart, my gifting as a teacher, and so I see things as a teacher but it's people. It's the hearts of people, hurting

people who need Jesus Christ in their life, and I can forget that. And if I'm betting properly, you probably can too.

When we read a verse like this that says, do good to everyone, especially those who are your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, this is a serious Word from the Lord to you and I, to get out of our comfort zone, to get out of our place of convenience, which I'm a convenience buff, my wife will tell you.

I'm one of those guys who... I could have invented the clapper. I don't want to get out of bed to turn off the lights. I just, now I just tell Google. I'm serious. I do. Hey Google, turn off the lights, or hey Google, turn the heat down. And we can get so caught up in our convenience, right? We stop caring about people.

Verse 11. *“See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”* What in the world is Paul doing here? It's like he stops writing his letter for a moment to call attention to his penmanship. See what large letters I use as I write.

See, here's the deal. Here's what's going on. Paul didn't write his own letters. He dictated them to someone who wrote it down for him. But toward the end of each of his letters, he would write a small portion in his own handwriting, and he would call their attention to his own handwriting, because that was the mark of authenticity that it was actually from the apostle Paul. And so he's calling attention to it to say, this is my mark.

And this is how you know this letter is not a forgery. Because there were already letters circulating during that time that were purported to be from the apostle Paul, which were not. And that's a fairly easy thing, I would imagine to try to perpetrate. He calls their attention.

And the fact that he has to write with such large letters, I think lends support to the idea, the belief that Paul suffered from some, a malady of the eyes. You remember earlier in this letter, he told the Galatians, it was because of a disease that I came to you guys in the first place. And then he went on to say, and while I was there, you treated me like an angel. I mean, you treated me like I was an angel of the Lord. In fact, I can testify that you loved me so much, you would have gouged out your own eyes and given them to me, if you could. Remember he said that earlier in the letter? I think all those things lend the idea that was what was Paul's issue.

Verse 12 goes on, and it says, *“It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they*

may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, (boy that's a true statement) but they desire (look at this, but they desire) to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh."

What that means is they're looking for a trophy. That's why they're trying to convince you of what they're saying, is they want a trophy and they want to boast in their trophies. But it's a fleshly boasting and that's why Paul goes on in verse 14 to say, "*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*"

What's Paul saying here? He's saying the Jewish legalists want to boast in your flesh because that's what you can do. They want to boast in what you can do to be saved or what you've done to be saved. You know what? May I never boast in anything but the cross of Christ because now I'm boasting in what He did. Not what I can do. You see the difference?

That's what Galatians is all about. It's not boasting in what you can do to be saved or how you were good enough. You can't be good enough. You only can rest in what He did on the cross. And may none of us boast in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ.

He goes on to say here by, as He speaks of the cross of Christ He says, "*by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*" The cross of Jesus Christ crucifies us to the things of the world and the world to us. This is a restatement of something Paul said to, earlier in this letter. And it was an interesting statement. It was way back in chapter 2. I, you don't need to turn there. I'll just put it up on the screen for you. From Galatians chapter 2, Paul wrote,

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, 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.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, 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.

And when we read that back in chapter 2, you might remember that it was almost a little out of place. Because this is one of those statements you would expect Paul to say at the end of the letter. It's more of a summarization. It comes

to a head. And it's this beautiful statement, but he said it out of order. I have been crucified with grace. I believe this is one of the most powerful statements in the whole Bible. I really do. This one verse. I don't want to sound too weird, but I think I could teach on this verse for the rest of my life and you wouldn't get tired of it.

There is so much here about the Christian life. I think you and I could meditate on that verse for the rest of our lives and barely scratched the surface of the meaning and importance of what Paul is saying in that verse. It is powerful beyond understanding.

But he goes on here in verse 15 and says, *“For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”* And what he's saying there, that's just a summarizing statement. He says, you know what, whether you've been circumcised or you haven't been circumcised, that's not important. You know what's important? If you've been born again. That's the new creation he's talking about.

The question is, have you been born again? Have you been born again? How do I get born again? That was the question Nicodemus asked. Can a man enter into his mother's womb a second time? (John 3:4) What exactly are you talking about here?

Jesus said, no, it's flesh that gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit must give birth to Spirit. (John 3:6) When you and I receive what Jesus did on the cross, and we accept His payment for our sins, the Bible says His Holy Spirit comes to live within us, and we are given that new birth. We are born again. It's not something you can do. It's not something I can do. It's something He does through His Spirit when we receive Him as Savior.

Here's the question, have you received Him as Savior? Have you received Him as, that's the question that you have to ask yourself today. Have I received Jesus Christ as my Savior? And that basically means I've confessed my sin, I've received what He did for me on the cross, I accepted it, I believe. I believe what Jesus did was for me personally. God responds to that with His Holy Spirit and causes new birth to take place inside of us. And that's all that matters. Is the new creation. The new creation that God makes in you.

He says in verse 16, *“And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”* Israel's never far from Paul's thoughts. Verse 17, *“From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”*

What a great statement. Sounds a little like something Clint Eastwood might say. I mean, not in a spiritual sort of, I mean, it sounds like, it's almost tough guy talk. It's like, yeah, don't let anybody cause me any trouble, I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. But it wasn't that a thing for Paul.

He wasn't bragging, because you see in the Greek, the word, marks could also be translated, brand. Because you see, back then, they branded people. Slaves got branded, just like animals do today, and that brand shows ownership, right? Paul is saying, don't let anybody cause me any trouble, because I am I bear on my body the marks of the ownership of Jesus Christ.

And Paul got those marks through everything that he had ever been through. All the beatings, all the stonings, the shipwrecks, the, all the intrigues, the threats to his life and so forth. To Paul, the physical scars that he bore on his body were to him the final credential of his belonging to Jesus, the authenticity of his belonging to Christ.

And in a very real sense, the things that we suffer for Christ are the same thing. And although we may never go through exactly what the apostle Paul endured, I seriously doubt we will. But even if there's, even if it's social suffering that you're going through, because maybe at work people know you're a believer and they disregard you because of it or failed to acknowledge you because of that.

There is a suffering that you endure. There's a thing that is going on that marks you as a believer. I've seen this happen in other people's lives too. Particularly those who are married to unbelievers. I have watched over the years as the believing spouse in the marriage endures constant mocking and hostility from their spouse simply because they belong to Jesus and want to go to church on Sunday. Or read their Bible, and pray, or whatever. However you may suffer, you also in that same sense as the apostle Paul bear, even though it be on your soul, the marks of Christ.

Paul ends the letter by saying, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”*