

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in Saint Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians, the sixth chapter, beginning at the first verse:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.

Anyone who receives instructions in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand. Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey

the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them, Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Hey, did you hear that the US has the world's largest economy again? Did you

hear that the Packers are, for some, the favorites to win the Super Bowl? Did you hear that the Badgers are going to destroy anyone in their path this season in football? Did you hear that our float was phenomenal in the parade? Did you hear the awesome Bible Study that pastor gave last week? Did you know we are the best church in the lower 48?

So did you notice it? What are all of those questions lacking, besides an inkling of truth? All of those questions are lacking any reference to God. Every one of those questions was about the great things that we, people, do and not what God has done. Now sure, you could chalk all of those up to God as it is His will that thee are done, but you ever notice how easy it is to not give God the credit? It is so easy for us to boast in ourselves, and our abilities, and our money, and our friends...

but it is difficult for us to boast in God. And yet that is exactly what Paul is warning us against today. Paul very pointedly reminds us that if we are going to boast, it should not be in ourselves; but rather we should boast in the Cross of Christ.

Paul as a very stern warning for us in our text: Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else. I think that this is very sound advise from Paul, especially in our world today. It is so easy to look around at others and make comparisons against how they are living their life versus how you are living your own life. Now do not misunderstand, Paul is not telling us that we are to take a great deal of pride in how we live... he is telling us that we ought to take pride in how God would have us live. As we will discuss

shortly, and as we discussed at length last week, we should be seeking to fulfill the Spirit and not the sinful nature. But that is a very difficult thing to do for us.

Looking outside of the church and asking, “Why can’t they see that this is the pure and true teaching? Why are they abandoning God?” Seeing an unbeliever and simply walking past them because they are not worthy of your time. Seeing anybody and not being willing to share the Gospel with them. Working with someone and making sure to point out every single thing they do wrong. Living with your spouse and making sure they know, to the littlest detail, how many times you’ve messed up that day. All of these are ways that we are not fulfilling the Spirit, but fulfilling the sinful nature. We are causing dissensions, we are boasting in ourselves.

And I would wager that we are all guilty of doing these things at times.

It is so easy to look at another person and make a judgment about them.. and yet that is exactly what Paul is telling us to NOT do. Paul says two things: 1) that we should focus on ourselves and not make comparisons, and 2) that we should bear with one another. Thus, if someone is doing wrong, we bear with them, gently teaching them, not berating them. If someone is pointing out all of our wrongs, we bear with them remembering that we too are a sinner who needs the forgiveness of Christ, not looking for a time for payback. And still, how hard it is to do this.

As Paul tells us, we need to watch ourselves so that we are not tempted. So for all of you sitting in the seats right now

saying, “Sure glad he’s not talking about me.” “Yeah all you sinners, what are you thinking?” And the like... well now you too have fallen into temptation. You have given in to the exact thing that Paul warns you against. Telling you to focus on yourself and not on another. But when we do focus on another, it should be to pick them up, not put them down.

And then Paul really sticks the dagger in: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. We come into this building while still very lightly taking our sins, and we are mocking God. We come to help another person just to see them at their weakest and have ammunition, God cannot be mocked. We treat someone like a friend just to turn around and bad mouth them once they have left, God cannot be mocked. Because for all these things that we do, we reap what we sow. If we sow

according to the sinful nature, we will reap according to the sinful nature... we will reap hell. When we sow hatred, sexual immorality, dissensions, and the like we will sow hell.

However, when we sow in the Spirit. When we sow: love, patience, gentleness, kindness... we sow eternal joy.

So basically your pastor just told you that you get into heaven by doing good things, right? Wrong. You see, there is only one way that we are able to sow in the Spirit and that is through faith. Without faith, we can sow nothing. But faith in what? Faith in my good works... I don't think any of us would have faith in that. Faith in my ability to follow the Law... No way is that possible. Faith... Faith in Jesus Christ our Savior, that is the faith through which we are able to do anything. Faith that Jesus

Christ lived a perfect life for you. He lived a life that was full of patience: the disciples who needed many reminders of what was going to happen on Good Friday, love: for every person as He hung on the cross dying for all of your and my sins, gentleness: as He never raised a finger against another person but, rather, was like a sheep before its shearers who would not utter a word. And then he died an innocent death. Innocent, because He did not earn it with His sin, rather, it was our sin that put Him on that cross.. and He hung there until He died. And then in victory He came forth from the tomb, proclaiming His victory and proclaiming heaven for all believers.

And it is faith in this, faith in all that Jesus Christ has done, that allows us to do anything worthy of God. For as Isaiah tells us, apart from God all our works are

but filthy rags... but thanks be to God, who sent His Son into this world for us, we are able to lead sanctified lives for Him.

In our sanctified lives we are able to live as Paul describes: in the Spirit. We are able to sow in the Spirit and thus reap eternal life... solely because of what Jesus Christ did for us.

And God, nor Paul, wants us to keep this to ourselves. They do not want us holed up reading the Bible and exiling ourselves from others, no. They want us out there, meeting people where they are and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. When we do good works, we do not boast about how great a person we are, we boast about how great a God we have. We are not boasting in ourselves... we are boasting in the cross of Christ. The very

cross that brought Him so much pain, and brings us such great relief.

As Johann Gerhard tells us, “Eternal life is a rich harvest by which all the toils and labors of true believers, which they endured in this life, will be rewarded. If we want to share in this harvest, we must not forget to sow the seeds of good works in this life... our good works are a spiritual and fruitful seed from which sprouts temporal and eternal blessings. Just as God has ordained that after seed-time there follows the harvest, so also according to divine ordinance (after proper, genuine good works that FLOW FROM FAITH) there follows temporal and eternal blessings.”

Dear fellow boasters in Christ, as we begin to take stock of those things that really matter to us, we begin to see God’s

Hand in a lot more. God has blessed us with a nation that performs well in many areas of measurement. God has blessed Green bay with a better than average football team. God has blessed us with a phenomenal group of people who are able to put a float together to display His glory. God has done all of this and he continues to do even more.

When we boast only in the cross of Christ, we begin to realize that it is not us that matters, rather it is Him. He is the only reason we have to boast. He is our beginning and our end. He is our first and our last. He is our God, and we are His children.

Thanks be to God. Amen.