

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Galatians 6:10

By Micky Galloway

*“So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith”* (ASV).

This verse has been so abused, misused and misapplied so as to make the context meaningless. It is strange indeed that a passage beginning with words like *“so then”* (ASV) or *“therefore”* (KJV; NKJV) could be so construed to ignore the context. However, the social gospel concept has so influenced many that they cannot see the expressions *“good works,” “work that which is good,”* or *“do good”* without images coming to mind of starving orphans, helpless old people, charitable institutions and programs attached to the church. It is my judgment that this passage deals with matters of much greater importance and loftier in application than the earthly considerations of money and benevolent programs. A close examination of the context of Galatians 6:10 will show that it is neither authorizing congregational action nor speaking of physical relief.

Is this passage authorizing individual or congregational action? It is argued by some that this letter is addressed *“unto the churches of Galatia”* (Gal. 1:2) and therefore all of its instructions must be talking about church (collective) action. If, however, all of its instructions denote group activity, it would unquestionably have to denote the group composed of the parties addressed. Since churches (plural), not a church, are addressed, the argument would prove the scripturalness of diocesan action, i.e. the churches of Galatia as a group, *“working that which is good toward all men.”* If being addressed *“unto the churches of Galatia”* means Galatians 6:10 refers to organized church action, then why doesn't Galatians 3:27, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ,”* refer to churches? Likewise, why doesn't Galatians 3:29, *“And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed,”* refer to churches? Why doesn't Paul's statement in Galatians 5:2, *“if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing,”* refer to circumcising churches? By what reasoning does one make such expressions as *“a man,” “every man,” “he,” “him,” “us,”* and *“we,”* which appear over and over again in Galatians 6:1-10, refer to organized church responsibility? One cannot properly use these expressions to refer to organized church action any more than he could properly apply fleshly circumcision (Gal. 5:2; 6:12-13) to the local church. These verses simply mean *“we,” “us,” “each of us,”* as they are used in Galatians 5:25-26.

Is this passage speaking of spiritual or physical matters? Galatians 6:10 is the culmination of a line of thought begun in Galatians 5:13, *“For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only (use) not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.”* Then in verse 16, *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* The following verses draw a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit and their works and fruit. Then Paul warns, *“And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk”* (verses 24-25). The admonition is to walk by the Spirit and not according to the flesh. Now let us consider a verse by verse study of Galatians 6:1-10.

**Verse 1** - Paul enjoins the *“spiritual”* (one who lives by the Spirit) to restore the erring brother (one who now walks according to the flesh) by means of admonishing and teaching him. He is to do this with the proper attitude and motive of love for his brother's soul (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Matt, 7:1-5). There is neither congregational action nor benevolence in this verse. The saving of souls, not the restoring of physical health, is the context (cf. Jas. 5:19-20).

**Verse 2** - Congregational action is not spoken of here. The burdens are not physical, but refer to the burdens of the soul (moral infirmities, errors, dishonor and guilt brought on by transgression) – to its being *“overtaken in a fault.”* These are burdens we must help our brethren overcome.

**Verses 3 & 4** - These verses contain a warning against self-righteousness and self-deception. We must be careful as we try to restore those overtaken in a fault lest we conclude that we are something (superior to our erring brother), when in reality we are nothing. One proves his own life by living by the proper standard, the divine standard of God's word. There is no cause for one to become inflated in his view of himself as he attempts to restore the fallen. There is no reward in comparing ourselves with a brother who is fallen. These verses are strictly spiritual in nature, pertaining to the soul, and not one's physical well-being.

**Verse 5** - Every man is to fulfill his own responsibilities before God. His load which he himself is expected to bear must not be shunned to be borne by some other individual or the church (cf. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). The original word "*phortion*," translated "*burden*" in this text has reference to burdens or obligations of a spiritual nature.

**Verse 6** - This verse has generally been understood to mean that the student (one "*overcome in a fault*," one living according to the flesh) is under responsibility to pay his teacher (one who is "*spiritual*," walking according to the Spirit). Can you imagine the fornicator of 1 Corinthians 5 being rebuked by one who is "*spiritual*" in Corinth and his response being (as he reaches for his wallet), "*Here, let me pay you for coming to my house to rebuke me*"? Though it is true that "*the laborer is worthy of his hire*" (Lk.10:7; 1 Cor. 9:14), I am not persuaded that is what is taught in Galatians 6:6. The instruction in this verse is, "*Let him that is taught in the word* (one "*overcome in a fault*," one living according to the flesh, mg) *communicate unto him that teacheth* (one who is "*spiritual*," walking according to the Spirit, mg) *in all good things.*"

The verb "*communicate*" is from the Greek word "*koinoneito*" (root "*koinos*"). It is akin to the noun "*koinonia*" which is recognized as the Greek word from which our word "*fellowship*" is translated. Thayer defines the verb "*to enter into fellowship, join one's self as an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner*" (*Thayer's Greek English Lexicon*, pages 351-352). Though this word may and sometimes does refer to monetary support, this is not its exclusive significance in the New Testament. In Romans 15:27 Paul wrote, "*Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it (to them) also to minister unto them in carnal things.*" The Jews had the spiritual things (the gospel with its blessings); the Gentiles became their partners or sharers in these spiritual things. Is it possible that the "*good things*" the one taught (one "*overcome in a fault*" who is living according to the flesh) is to share (communicate) with his teacher (one who is "*spiritual*" walking according to the Spirit) are the fruits of the Spirit possessed by the teacher which are no longer possessed and enjoyed by the student? The erring brother is not only to listen, but he is to follow the instruction of his teacher in order that fellowship with the Lord may be restored and he may share with his teacher in the practice of all that is morally and spiritually good with its attendant blessings.

"*Fellowship, on the other hand, let him who is being instructed in the doctrine (...in the gospel ...) have with the instructor in all good (verse 10), that is, let the disciple make common cause (endeavor and action) with his teacher in everything that is morally good.*" (*H.A.W. Meyer, Critical Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Galatians, pages 327-328).

**Verses 7, 8, 9** - In these verses Paul enforces the admonition by the warning: "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh* (by walking after the flesh, mg) *shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit* (by walking after the Spirit, mg) *shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not be weary* (because of prolonged effort, mg) *in well-doing* (walking after the Spirit, mg): *for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*" Paul continues the contrast of walking after the flesh with walking after the Spirit and shows the rewards of diligent efforts to walk after the Spirit. This contrast has been the context since Galatians 5:13.

**Verse 10** - Here Paul gives a general admonition concerning the matter to all Christians. The word "*therefore*" (KJV & NKJV), "*So then*" (ASV), indicates a conclusion to what has been previously discussed. The "*do good*" the writer is instructing is THE good he has been discussing of correcting and instructing those in error, especially those of the "*household of faith*" that have been overtaken in walking after the flesh. This is THE good which can be rendered and which we have an obligation to render to all men, especially to fellow believers. This we are to do "*as we have opportunity.*" The idea is not the occasional opportunities which come along from time to time, but that we are living in a continuing season of opportunity to do THE good Paul discusses.

The context of this passage (Gal. 5:13-6:9) has been spiritual matters, specifically, walking after the Spirit as opposed to walking after the flesh, restoring those who have fallen and being diligent in these efforts because "*we shall reap, if we faint not.*" It would be strange indeed for the writer to begin his concluding remarks (verse 10) with "*so then*" or "*therefore*" and now abruptly change the thought to earthly considerations such as support of preachers and benevolent work, much less the institutional social programs of churches. These verses do not discuss helping those who are materially destitute. When men try to teach congregational action in general benevolence, they need a passage that teaches congregational action. Galatians 6:10 is not the passage, because it speaks of individual action. However, the whole context does not refer to material support, but to that which is spiritual in nature. The good of the soul is under consideration in this text, not the good of the physical body or one's physical welfare. - *Fifth Street East Church of Christ Bulletin*, June 7, 2009. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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