

Introduction

For goodness sake! It is a phrase that has come to express surprise or annoyance. "For goodness sake, will you please hurry up." Or "Titus lost his first tooth this week, for goodness sake!" The phrase is in the song that says Santa Clause is coming to town, "He sees you when you're sleeping; He knows when you're awake; He knows if you've been bad or good; So be good for goodness sake." In the section of Galatians before us this morning, it is as though Paul is the one who first came up with the familiar saying. He urges the believers to do good for the sake of goodness because God is watching and he is not mocked. Only those who do good reap what is good. So, do good for goodness sake. Let's read the text.

[Read text and Pray]

The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people is multi-faceted. As we walk by the Spirit, he produces fruit through our lives individually. He also removes from us a competitive spirit. We do not jockey against one another but pull together to bear one another's burdens. We have focused on these aspects of the Spirit's work in us in past weeks. This morning in Galatians 6:6-10, we see yet another manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the household of God. He produces a spirit of generosity which seeks to do good both inside and outside the body. Paul expresses this truth by means of a series of exhortations intermingled with some significant matters of instruction. His main point is that God's people must "do good." I aim this morning to explain to you the essence and character of the goodness about which Paul speaks; to direct you to those who are to be the recipients of that goodness; and set before you the significance of doing good in this way.

I. The Essence of Doing Good.

Notice with me that "doing good" weaves this section of Paul's letter together. Beginning in verse 6, he says that those who are taught must share ALL GOOD THINGS with the one who teaches. Then he discusses the principle of reaping and sowing. It is there to encourage the sharing of good and the doing of good. After that he comes back to urge perseverance in doing good and to express the extent to which we ought to do good. So this section holds together by its emphasis on doing good.

Therefore, we need to consider what is the essence of this thing Paul refers to as doing good. In verse 6, Paul doesn't say "doing good;" he says certain ones must "share good things." The wording is different, but the intent is the same. There he stresses that those who receive instruction must share all good things with the one who teaches. "Share all good things" speaks of the support financially and otherwise that the church should supply to its ministers who spend their work-hours in preparation and study and instruction. I will come back to this point and flesh it out more fully, but for now I just want us to grasp that sharing good things has to do with making financial provision. This expression connects with the references to doing good that follow. Together they express that in this context the idea of goodness is narrowed from what we saw in goodness as fruit of the Spirit.

Paul also put together the ideas of good works and sharing in 1 Timothy 6 where he gave Timothy direction as to how he should instruct the rich in this world. He wrote concerning the rich, "charge them not to be haughty, nor set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to DO GOOD, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to SHARE." They were to share all good things, and do good with their

resources. Those resources belong to God after all. He is the one who provides them, and part of the reason he provides them to us is so we can be channels of his provision to others.

In Galatians the stress is on how the Spirit of God is at work through Christ's people to use their finances and resources to do good—to meet needs and provide for the well-being of specific persons. It is largely through giving and collecting donations that others are assisted materially. In the case of teachers, giving provides for their livelihood. It enables them to subsist, to provide for their needs and make ends meet. In the case of others, it provides for those whose circumstances are such that they need help.

That's what the major collections and contributions in the New Testament were all about. When Paul met with the Jerusalem Council, they started with the doctrinal matters. And when the dust settled on them, one thing remained. They asked Paul and company to remember the poor. And Paul said that was the very thing he was eager to do. And he did. In fact, he already had.

In the earliest days of Paul's ministry as an apostle, he was at Antioch teaching the church with Barnabas. And some prophets came down from Jerusalem. One of them, whose name was Agabus, foretold of a great famine to come. So the Christians in Antioch determined to send relief to the brothers in Judea. They sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. The conditions in Jerusalem did indeed become bad. And it occasioned another collection from many churches to do good for those still living there.

That collection was the centerpiece of several chapters in 2 Corinthians where Paul exhorted them toward generous giving. It was there that he pointed to the example of the Macedonians who though afflicted with poverty had given in great abundance. Paul called the collection an act of grace and reminded the Corinthians that God loves a cheerful giver. In that very context he mentioned the principle of sowing and reaping. "The point is this:" he said, "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Then get this. He pointed out that it is God who makes all grace abound so that they have the sufficiency or the ability to abound in (get this) every GOOD WORK. He is saying that their collection for the starving saints in Jerusalem was a GOOD WORK.

It is clear, then, that what Paul has in mind in Galatians 6:6-10, as a good work and sharing every good thing is the generous use of resources and finances to supply the requirements of subsistence for those in need. It is "doing good" that by the power and working of the Spirit of God that believers, the church, render material support to those who need it. This is the nature of what Paul is speaking of here when he urges the Galatians to be about "doing good" and "sharing all good things."

Do you think about "doing good"? Do you consciously treat your resources as what actually belongs to God? And do you consciously pray and seek the will of God about what he wants you to do with what he has entrusted to your care? We can talk about the fruit of the Spirit— love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We can talk about rejecting a spirit of competition. We see the church rightly as the pillar and support of the truth. But doing good through giving generously is just as real a priority as those. We have to be intentional about it. We need to have our eyes wide open for opportunities. We need to rejoice in the opportunity to bear others' burdens this way. To do it, we must be intentional.

We do not often talk about giving in this church. We are mindful that God loves a cheerful giver. We don't want people to give because of threats and intimidation. That's not godly. It is not godly

to threaten and intimidate, and its not godly when we behave out of manipulation. God is pleased with cheerful givers—when we give out of gladness. But truly that is godly and it is the attitude and behavior after which we should strive in the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps some of us need to repent of reluctant and begrudging giving. Perhaps some of us need to repent of giving but very little to do good works and share all good things that we have so wonderfully been given by the Lord. Perhaps we need to resolve to be more constant in mindfully managing the resources the Lord has placed in our care in order to share more.

II. The Character of Doing Good.

As we examine this short text, we are able to discern that Paul provides a number of modifiers that apply to HOW we should do good. This is the character of the good we should do or the manner in which we should do good. I observe four such characteristics.

A. First, we should do good generously. It is not something Paul actually says, but it is very much implied. It is implied in his reference to sowing and reaping. This is an image Paul uses in 2 Corinthians as he is urging that church to collect funds for those suffering famine in Jerusalem. In chapter 9 verse 6, he states the point: "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

The issue is the same in both letters—being benevolent or rendering material assistance or support. And the principle of quantity applies in both as well. If you are planting flowers and you throw out a pittance of seed, do not expect your garden to be filled with flowers. What does your giving look like? Are you generous or stingy? Bountiful or sparing? In what way does the Lord want us to do good? Generously and bountifully. If your doing of good was measured in flower seeds, what would your garden look like? Let us do good bountifully and let us share all good things generously. May I encourage each of us to evaluate our giving and resolve before the Lord to be generous and bountiful.

B. We should do good generously, but we should also do good persistently. Take note of what Paul writes in 6:9. "Let us NOT GROW WEARY of doing good." It is not enough to do good once or twice or now and then or on-again, off-again. One of our purposes for being alive is to do good. So we should do good at all times—with regularity and consistency and perseverance. It can become tiring. It can seem like there is little progress or fruit from our giving. Anything that is consistently demanding carries with it the temptation to become old and tired. But Paul urges us to keep on and not give up. Be consistent and persistent.

C. So our giving should be bountiful and persistent, but it should also be hopeful. It should be grounded in confidence. Note what Paul says next: "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for IN DUE SEASON WE WILL REAP." The Lord holds forth for us the hope of reaping in due season. When the time is right, in God's good time, the blessing of our giving will return to us. I think this is what Jesus was getting at in the sermon on the mount. He said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and dust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." Your money and mine are not eternal treasure. They are a means to an end. We have the opportunity of investing for heaven with our money and what we will reap is treasure beyond the worth of money. We should sow our seed in expectation. It is an expectation of good being done now, but it is an investment for the future in which God himself will bring the return on the investment. Lay up treasure in heaven by giving away earthly treasure to do good.

D. Our giving should be generous, persistent, and confident. And lastly, it should be opportunistic. We need to take advantage of the opportunities whenever we have them. In verse 10, Paul tells us when we should do good. It is "as we have opportunity." We can't solve all the world's problems. None of us can meet everyone's need. But there are needs that the Lord has placed before us. Those are the ones we should meet as we have opportunity to the extent that we can. We can't do it all, but each of us can do something. And we should do it now because when we get to heaven, there won't be any needs to meet.

This very week on facebook an old friend from my high school days posted a picture he took from his parents' front porch. He was saying good-bye to the house and the neighborhood because both his parents have now passed away. This house is across the street from my mom. The photo looked out upon the front yard. Brian commented on his memory as a youth of gathering plug after plug after plug after plug of grass and placing each of them in the red Carolina soil. How tired he grew of placing grass plugs. But they did so persistently without letting up. And now even after all these 50 years, you could sense my friend's satisfaction in the post. The photo revealed a yard that was lush and green and without a bare spot. If you don't sow bountifully, you will not reap bountifully. Sow sparsely and you will reap sparsely. If you don't sow persistently; you will not reap bountifully. And if you don't sow as you have opportunity, times will come when you wish you could but you will not be able to. But if you sow bountifully, persistently, and as you have opportunity, you can be confident God will bring an increase. You will reap bountifully and joyfully with great satisfaction in glory.

III. The Beneficiaries of Doing Good.

So we have seen the essence of doing good as Paul intends it in these verses. We have also seen the manner in which we should do good. Who benefits from the good we do? Paul provides three specific categories of beneficiaries.

Actually at the top of the list are those who teach. The context is the local church. And so those who devote their time to preparation and teaching are the pastor-teachers. The indication is that it is doing good to give materially and financially in order to support them. It is thought by some that Paul was mindful of having said in verse 5 that each of us must bear his own load. And he did not want that to be interpreted to mean pastors and teachers in the church should fend for themselves. So he states it strongly, "one who is taught the word **MUST** share all good things with the one who teaches." A corroborating text is found in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. There Paul tells how affairs in the church are to be handled. And he writes, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'"

Perhaps you never thought of it this way, but it is a mark of the Holy Spirit's work in a body if the people are attentive to providing well for their pastors and teachers. Here at GCC our ability to provide appropriately for our staff and pastors depends on those in our body giving generously. It may seem mundane, but adequate provision is a spiritual matter. And I hope you are mindful of that when you give.

But of course pastors are not the only ones in view here. Down in verse 10 Paul exhorts us all, "let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." One point to underscore here is that we in the church should do good even to those who are not in the church. We should not restrict our giving to Christians. Like God we should show kindness to the just and the unjust. And at the same time, our priority in doing good should be to those who are in the

family of faith. Did you know that part of every dollar that is collected in our weekly offerings goes to the needs fund? And I can testify that monies from that fund have been used to assist persons outside this church but especially persons who are of this household of faith. So be aware that when you give your offering to Grace Community Church, you are doing good. You are helping to supply salaries to our pastors and staff. You are funding mission work around the globe. You are supplying funds for people in need. You are helping to keep the lights on and the building in repair so that we have a place to gather together, to teach the Bible, to worship, and to fellowship.

We purposefully don't talk about giving a lot. But it is extremely important. When you look at your bulletin and you see the giving dip down below where it was a year ago and when you see that happen a few weeks in a row, please know that we operate on a tight budget. We strive to be careful about all the dollars we spend, but our ability to be generous as a church depends on its people being generous and bountiful. Let me thank you for your generosity and faithfulness, but let me also encourage you all the more to not grow weary and to keep sowing.

IV. The Significance of Doing Good.

And with that we come to consider Paul's incentive to encourage generous giving. It is the center of this text. He says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 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."

Doing good is significant for a number of reasons. Obviously, it blesses others. I am blessed because of your generosity. My family is provided for because of God working through you. But so are many others. And maybe you don't see it or think about it much. But you need to know that your bountiful giving blesses people. It is God at work through you. But it should also bless you. The scripture says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The truths we have seen in this text should bring encouragement and joy to your souls if you give bountifully. Doing good through giving blesses others, blesses yourself, but it also blesses God. He is pleased when his people reflect him and giving does just that. When we faithfully give, God is blessed when the recipients flow forth with praise and thanks to him for the gracious provision of his bounty through his people.

But there is another matter of significance to which Paul points here. Doing good in the form of sharing material goods is a mark of evidence that a person is truly born of God and possesses the Spirit. As we walk by the Spirit, we abound in doing good. Sowing to the flesh is what people do when they hoard their goods and behave with a stingy heart. They close their hearts to needs that they have opportunity and provision to be able to meet. But, loving this world and the things of the world, they do not love God. They refuse heavenly treasure in favor of what will rust and decay and pass away. They from the flesh reap corruption. Meanwhile, sowing to the Spirit is what people do when they generously give up earthly treasure in order to do heavenly good. They open their hearts to those in need and sow bountifully. They do not love the world and the things in the world, but they do love God. And from the Spirit they reap eternal life.

The contrast in what is reaped is quite stark. From the flesh one group reaps corruption and from the Spirit the other group reaps eternal life. Corruption versus eternal life points us to the difference between hell and heaven. The stingy go to hell while the generous go to heaven. What is Paul's point? Well one thing is clear. Paul is certainly NOT saying that those who go to heaven go there BECAUSE they are generous. That would be a complete contradiction with all he has said in this letter. Rather, those who are generous are generous because they are headed to heaven. Those who live by the Spirit walk by the Spirit. They sow to the Spirit because they have been brought to

life by the Spirit. They have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they have denied themselves to take up their cross and follow Christ. They walk by the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God at work in them both to will and to work for God's good pleasure. The generosity of these is evidence that their love for Christ is genuine. They love not the world but do the will of God and from the Spirit they will inherit eternal life.

Those who sow to the flesh have not the life of the Spirit or the power of the Spirit. They are dominated by the flesh. Like the world they are passing away; they will reap corruption. They are dominated by the flesh and those who live in this way will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So the ultimate significance here is that generosity, like the other fruit of the Spirit, is evidence that one is a child of God bound for glory. And the lack thereof is evidence that one is of the world, of the flesh, and bound for hell.

And so if you are a follower of Christ, then do good because that is what you have been made to do. We are created in Christ Jesus for good works that we should walk in them. Walk by the Spirit. Trust and obey. And if you are not a follower of Christ, heed the warning and turn to Jesus Christ today. Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow him who denied himself for you.

Conclusion

We conclude this morning with a look at the supreme example of one who truly did good. You know who I am talking about. I am talking about Jesus. Of him Paul wrote the Corinthians, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, through his poverty might become rich." Whenever we give for the benefit of others, it costs us something—wants, comforts, prestige. But it is a sacrifice of our excess so that others can at least have basics. Christ Jesus gave up the riches of glory to become an impoverished servant, to bear the burden of our sin on the cross—the God/man suffering God's wrath so as to justify the one who believes. And by his poverty, we receive not merely the basics but an eternal weight of glory beyond all comprehension. We who believe become joint heirs with him. We have unspeakable treasure in heaven for all eternity. Christ Jesus is the height of what it means to do good. And we who follow him have the privilege of being like him as, by the Spirit, we sow to the Spirit by doing good to all men especially those who are of the household of the faith.