

## Reading: Galatians 6 1-10

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup> for each one should carry their own load. <sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup> Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

(NIVUK)

### Preaching notes:

As we come to the last segment in our series on Paul's letter to the Galatian churches we should remind ourselves of where we have started from. In these 6 chapters Paul has set out a clear case of error, a deserting from the One true Gospel. False teaching, like any good forgery can be deceptively similar but it is still false, no matter how close to the original. Past success is no protection, Paul points out "you were running well; but who now prevents you from obeying the truth?"

We are exhorted to restore, with gentleness and love, those who have taken a wrong step towards sin and a different teaching but we are warned -with very good reason- to take care that we ourselves are not tempted as they have been. Paul then raises three incredibly challenging issues for the Galatians and I believe for us today also:

Firstly, is the need for a faithful, learning, loving, self- correcting community (a family of believers) that will continually measure itself against Gospel truth. Without which, how can we ever consider the "restoring" of a brother or sister in error, by what means will we do so and who will recognise the need to do so?

Secondly, we are to bear one another's burdens, not partly as a "nice to do" or for those we like or know well but for the family of believers, so that we fulfil "the law of Christ" (our Lord's command). How do we know what someone's burden is unless we are close enough to know their struggles and problems?

Thirdly, an issue that goes to the very heart of our sinful nature and the danger of sin being within the church, the issue of being "puffed-up". That some may think that through the benefit of education or knowledge they know more than another. Clearly there were some in the Galatian church who were leading others astray with deceitfulness and self-importance. Some may compare this to the idea of a clerical class that sees itself aloof from

the rest of the church. Paul explains that each person should take a good look at themselves and test their own actions and motives rather than judging others.

Verse 5, rather than being a contradiction to verse 2, explains about being prepared to be responsible for one's actions much like an adventurer on an expedition who very carefully packs his bag knowing that he will be the one carrying it. Verse 6 concludes this section on the church family by explaining that in a learning relationship there must be respect and equality between teacher and student, both of whom are also family members.

Verses 7-10 contain the "sting in the tail", a warning, the wrapping up of what has just preceded. Perhaps a paraphrase could be "don't think you can just pretend to do this and get away with it! God knows your heart, do it half heartedly and it will gain you nothing, do it with your whole heart, never giving up, and you will gain all.  
Amen.