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Galatians 6:1-10 “Love in Action”

Intro. Don't you enjoy receiving some expression of love? You know, when someone gives you a gift or a hug. Or someone does something for you in a time of need. Or someone spends time with you when you are discouraged or lonely. We all have a fundamental need to be loved. Those who feel unloved tend to be depressed, or have other psychological problems. They tend to have more physical ailments. Well I believe that in order to receive love, we must give love to others. Though at times we may receive unconditional love, most of the time we receive love to the extent that we give love.

In chapters 5 & 6 Paul has much to say about love. In v.6 of chapter 5 he says that what is really important is “faith working through love.” In v.14 he demonstrates that love fulfills the law. In v.22 we see that love is produced by the Holy Spirit. In chapter 6, v.2 he talks about the “law of Christ,” which is the commandment to love one another. And notice that in that same verse he gives a specific way we show love, and that is by bearing one another's burdens. Back in chapter 5, v.13 we see that we also show love by our service to others. So it's not enough to talk about love or just sing about love. We must show love. The apostle John perhaps said it the best when he said in I John 3:18, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

The question for us to consider this morning is this, “In what ways should we show and demonstrate our love to others?” This morning I will show you from our text 3 other ways we should show love. First of all, in love we should:

I. RESTORE A WAYWARD BELIEVER

In v.1 Paul wrote, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Correcting sin is one of the most loving things you can do for someone, for sin hurts us. Jesus said in Rev. 3:19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” If you saw someone get seriously hurt, would love lead you to offer to help them get medical help? Of course! Even so, if you know of someone who is spiritually sick or hurt, love will lead us to seek to help them get right with God, and overcome whatever sin has gotten the best of them. Otherwise, they will reap the terrible consequences of their actions. Paul says in v.8, “...he who sows to his flesh [sin nature] will of the flesh reap corruption...” Don't let that happen to someone you love!

The first truth we see here is the fact that sin in the life of the Christian is a possibility. In chapter 5 Paul acknowledges that the sin still has a sin nature. Christians can and will sin, not because we have to, but because we allow sin to get victory over us. John specifically warns believers that, “if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). And notice that at times a Christian will be “overtaken” (*prolambano*) by a fault. Paul talks about temptation at the end of the verse. So this could describe a temptation that springs upon them by surprise and overpowers them, as a tiger in a jungle. On the other hand, it could refer to someone “catching” him doing or committing a sin. Thus, the sin becomes known at least to that person. Regardless of the exact interpretation, Paul is describing a Christians who becomes involved in a “transgression” (*paraptoma*). It is a very appropriate word in light of 5:25. There we are taught to walk a straight line by the orders of the Spirit. But this word literally means to step

out of line, or to cross into forbidden territory. Haven't you yielded to temptation before? Haven't you cross the line, and done something wrong? Of course you have.

So what are you supposed to do if you find out that your fellow believer in Christ has slipped up and gotten out of line of the Lord's will? Are you supposed to ignore the problem? Are you supposed to say with Cain of old, "Am I my brother's keeper?" No! Paul goes on to say, "...you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness..." The word "restore" means "to bring something or someone back to it or his former position of wholeness or soundness." The word means to mend or repair. The word was used of mending a broken net or setting a broken bone. So we should restore them to spiritual health.

Paul doesn't specify how. But I would say from other Scriptures that we must confront them, and gently rebuke them. Proverbs 27:5 says, "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed." We should share relevant Scriptures with them. The Word of God is like a mirror that shows us our sin, and it is like soap that cleanses us from sin (Eph. 5:26; Psa. 119:9). We can also share verses like I Jn. 1:9, and assure them of God's forgiveness if they will only confess their sins. Furthermore, based on the context, we should show them how to overcome that sin by relying upon the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul says that "you who are spiritual" are to seek to restore them to fellowship with Christ. Who then are the spiritual? They are simply those who live out what 5:16-25 is all about. Such people live by the leadership of the Holy Spirit and by the power of the Holy Spirit. They manifest the fruit of the Spirit. In fact, Paul talks about restoring someone "in the spirit of gentleness," which is one of the fruits of the Spirit. So he is not just talking about preachers and deacons, but all Christians who walk in the Spirit. This loving responsibility is too great for just a few people in the church.

Furthermore, notice the attitude we should have when we approach a wayward brother. We are to restore them "in a spirit of gentleness [or meekness], considering yourself lest you also be tempted." As vv. 3-4 also indicate, there is no room for pride, thinking you are better than the erring brother. This is one problem with legalistic Christians. They compare themselves with others outwardly, and become puffed up with spiritual pride. Instead of sorrowing when he hears about the sins of others, he delights in it, for it make him feel and look more "spiritual" in comparison. But our attitude should be, "There go I but for the grace of God." So if we are to restore them, we must convey an attitude of humility, or they will resist our ministry.

I must say that we have a great problem with this form of love today. The attitude of people today is, "Live, and let live." Their favorite Bible verse is, "Judge not, lest you be judged." Our society is going down the path of moral insanity, where no one is permitted to make moral judgments about behavior based on moral absolutes. It is grossly inconsistent for people to argue that there are no moral absolutes, when the physical world is regulated by absolute laws of nature. There are absolute laws in the physical world to demonstrate the fact that there are absolute moral laws in the spiritual world. And this attitude of "not pushing your morality on me" has infected the church of today. We must not allow ourselves to be so influenced by the thinking of the world. It is difficult to live a morally clean life. And one way God wants to help us is to be accountable to others for our actions. When we get out of line, God has given certain people the responsibility to help us get back in line. Children, God has given you parents for this very reason. Husbands, God has given you wives for this reason! That's another reason why married men live longer than single men! And God has provided you a church family to help keep you in line. I was glad to hear that some of our men got together and formed an accountability group.

Now I realize that correcting and restoring a wayward brother or sister is not a pleasant or easy work. So we need to put our faith in God to help us with this important work. He will help you say the right words, if you will only trust Him. And if we have failed to be obedient in this area, we need to confess that sin to God, receive forgiveness, and just become obedient.

Now let's consider together a second way we should show love to others:

II. SUPPORT THOSE INVOLVED IN VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

Notice what Paul said in v.6, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches." Love gives; love shares. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son...." In 2 Cor. 8, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to give to help meet the physical needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem. And then he said in v.8 that he was not giving a commandment, but testing the sincerity of their love. So sharing and giving is a vital expression of love. From the very beginning of the church, sharing was one of the marks of Christian experience. In Acts 2:41-47 we read that they had all things in "common." This is from the Greek word *koinos*, which is related to *koinonia*, and that word often refers to the sharing of material blessings with one another (2 Cor. 8:4; Heb. 13:16). The verb form *koinoneo* is found here in v.6 of my text.

Here, Paul identifies one specific group that we should share and give to. He commands (3rd person imperative) that those who are taught the Word share and give to those who teach. The word "taught" is from *katecheo*, which refers to the act of receiving oral instruction. We get our word catechism from this word. "Him who teaches" is likely the person who is devoting full time to the work of teaching.¹ Eph. 4:11 refers to the "pastor-teacher" in a church. Paul is bluntly saying, "Pay your preacher." Being a good pastor-teacher requires much time. When I preach & teach 3 times/week, I need to devote 15-20 hours of my workweek in study and preparation for my preaching and Bible studies. Paul realized that a disproportionate burden would rest on the leaders who gave instruction in the Word. It must have seemed almost impossible for a church-leader to earn his living and, in addition, to perform all of his spiritual functions. And in a real sense, v.6 is one specific way to obey v.2, for earning a living is a burden. So the Lord Himself (Lk. 10:7) taught that those leaders who give full or much time to the service of the church should be materially compensated (cf. also 2 Thess 2:6,9; Phil. 4:10, 15-16; I Tim. 5:17-18; 2 Cor. 9:7; etc.). Paul wrote in I Cor. 9:10, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

There will always be those who resist the idea that they should help support preachers, missionaries, and others involved in vocational ministry. They might even refer to v.5 and say that each person is responsible for earning their own financial support. In fact, my great-great grandfather, Johnson Pate, was a Primitive Baptist preacher in Georgia. His church did not believe in paying preachers. So he worked full time to support himself and his family, and then he tried to preach and take care of the ministry of the church. But guess what? Primitive Baptists have all but died out, and I believe one reason is the fact that they have not followed God's pattern of showing love to God's ministers by adequately paying for their support.

Now various reasons are given to justify not paying preachers today, as in the past.² So Paul gives his own reasons why we should give to support ministers of the gospel. In addition to his statement in v.6, he says in v.7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." That is a universal principle. It is as impartial, predictable, and immutable as the law of gravity. There are no exceptions. The physical illustration is simple and clear. You reap what you sow. If you sow corn seed, you will get corn. Sometimes a watermelon vine extends out twenty feet in one direction, but it has never been known to make the mistake of putting a pumpkin

¹ MacArthur disagrees with this interpretation, saying it relates to the person who is engaged in spiritual restoration (v.1) – MacArthur, 182.

² "We can guess that such disrespect was an extension of the Judaizing controversy; perhaps the teachers were part of the Pauline wing of the churches and were now being neglected by the Judaizing wing." (McKnight, 287).

on the end of it. The law is also true in the social and spiritual realms of life. For example, if you want to be loved, then you should give love. If you want sympathy in times of sorrow, then you should give sympathy to others in their sorrow. If you want to receive blessing, then sow blessing in the lives of others. Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom...." And be sure to keep in mind another principle of the law of harvest: the more you plant, the greater the harvest. This is what Paul says in 2 Cor. 9:6, "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." The more you give to support ministers and missionaries, the more you will reap blessing, including financial blessing. Isn't that the law of the harvest. You reap *what* you sow. If you sow material blessing, you will reap material blessings.

This law is widely recognized as an incentive for doing good. A farmer would not work hard plowing and sowing seed if he did not expect to reap a harvest. A man would not spend countless hours studying to be a doctor if he did not expect some day to reap the reward of a much better than average living. All men expect to reap what they sow in the physical world, and a man is foolish to believe the same isn't true in the spiritual world. Isa. 3:10 says, "Say to the righteous, that it shall be well with them: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." In Rom. 2:10 Paul said that there would be "glory, honor, and peace to every man that works good...." In I Cor. 15:58 Paul said, "...be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The most important way that you can be obedient to v.6 is to contribute to the regular offering of the church. This helps to support two full-time ministers, as well as several part-time staff members. Furthermore, part of what you give also goes to the Cooperative Program, which supports thousands of missionaries, seminary professors, and others. And when we have a revival meeting, we need to share our financial resources with the evangelist so he can give himself fully to the work of the Lord. You should also give to the mission offerings.

I realize that this expression of love can be challenging. Many of you are struggling to make ends meet. But as in other areas of living the Christian life, you must learn to trust God to enable you to do what He is asking you to do. Paul said in 2 Cor. 9:10, "Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness." God promises to supply what you need for your family, and to be able to share with others.

Now a third way to show love is given in the last part of our text:

III. DO GOOD WORKS

This is actually stated in two different ways. In v.10, Paul says we should "do good." That is the general word for good (*agathos*), and the word for "do" is the word meaning "to work" (*ergazomai*). So Paul is clearly talking about doing good works. Then, in v.9 Paul mentions "doing good." There the word translated "good" (*kalos*) refers to good works that are beautiful, commendable, admirable, and well-pleasing. So we see that doing good works are an important aspect of love. In Heb. 10:24 we see a connection between love and good works. There the author says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." Titus 2:14 says that God is seeking to "purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

There are many examples of good works that we could give. The highest good is to carry and share the gospel with someone. However, this good work must be backed up with other good works that even unbelievers recognize as good. In Mt. 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." So

what are some other good works you can think of? We have already mentioned two: restoring a wayward brother, and giving to support vocational Christian workers. Or you could share with someone who is facing a financial crisis. V.1 mentions bearing another's burdens. If you see someone struggling with a burden they can't bear alone, offer to help. You could take meals to the sick or bereaved, or offer to cut their grass. Other examples include visiting the sick, the lonely, and the discouraged (James 1:27). Working in Vacation Bible School is a good work for the children who come. Keeping the nursery to relieve parents, and so they can attend church, is a good work. There are many other examples.

Now there are 3 important instructions given by Paul in our text regarding good works that I must call to your attention. First:

A. Take Advantage of the Opportunities for Good Works – In v.10 he said, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good...” It would be easy to interpret these words in the sense of, “As opportunities present themselves.” But we have to see it in the context of reaping and sowing for in v.9 it says, “In due season we shall reap.” And the word translated “opportunity” in v.10 is the same Greek word translated “season” in v.9. You see, there is a season for sowing and planting. If we miss the opportunity that spring gives, we will reap nothing. We are almost into July. It is too late to plant many summer crops, such as watermelon. So the time, the opportunity to do good is now.” Jesus said in John 9:4, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” Pastor Johnny Hunt said, “We have all eternity to enjoy our victories, but only one life to win them.”³ Now you can witness to someone about Jesus or do some good deed for him or her today, but tomorrow they may be gone. Or tomorrow you may be gone! Let's do good this day and this coming week, and let's not put it off.

One of my great regrets is from the time I served as a church planter in Minnesota one summer. I led a Bible study in a home. The parents were active and supportive of the Bible study, and wanted to start a new church in their community. But they had a grown son living with them who was not involved. He did not attend any of the Bible studies. He remained in his room most of the time and watched TV. You see, he had been involved in an accident that left him paralyzed. We had exchanged greetings, but that was about all. I had good intentions of trying to counsel with him, and witness to him, but I kept putting it off. Then one day I received the tragic news. He had taken his own life. At that moment I realized that my opportunity to witness to him, and do good to him, was forever gone!

So as we have opportunity to do good, we must be diligent to take advantage of those opportunities. Show Christian love to that neighbor or coworker as soon as you can, for the opportunity may soon be gone forever. Perhaps you should set some goals for doing a good work each day.

Paul gives another truth about good works in our text. We should:

B. Understand the Recipients of Good Works – This is stated in the last of v.10. Paul says we should “...do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” This tells us 2 truths about the proper recipients of our good works. First, we should be inclusive in our good works. Some people limit their good works to family & friends, but even unbelievers do that! So Paul reminds us that we are to do good unto all. I do not believe that he means here that we should feel that we have to do good to all 6 billion people on earth. I believe he means that we should make no distinctions concerning whom we do good to. “All” includes rich & poor, Christian and non-Christians, white, black, or in between. All men are the objects of God's redeeming love, and

³ Spoken at the FBC Jacksonville Pastor's conference, Jan.'04.

they should be the objects of our love as well. One of the best ways to thwart criticism of Christianity is for Christians to do good to unbelievers. Loving concern will do more to win a person to Christ than the most carefully articulated argument. A Brahmin once said to a missionary, “Look here! Your Book is a good Book. If you were as good as your Book, you would make India Christian in 10 years.” Secondly, the priority for good works should rightly be our Christian brothers and sisters. With limited time and resources, you have to set some priorities. So Paul adds, “and especially the household of faith.” The first test of our love for God is our love for His other children, our brothers and sisters in Christ. I Tim. 5:8 says, “If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” So just as you give priority to your physical family, so we must give priority to the family of God. This is why our benevolence policy puts the priority on those who attend our church. This should not be a bad testimony to the world but a positive one. The extraordinary love of the early Christians to one another was a surprise to the heathen, and was, in many cases, the principle thing that recommended the new religion to their attention, and compelled them to see it in a positive light. But then again, this does not mean that the local church should become an exclusive clique with the members isolated from the world and its problems.

I want you to look back on this past month. Can you think of any good works that you have done from the motive of love? Now, can you think of any examples of extending those good works to unbelievers, or to those outside of family and friends? If not, make it your goal to do some good work to an unbeliever, or to someone outside of your circle of family and friends.

Finally, the Bible encourages us to:

C. Be Persistent in Good Works – Many Christians are like children; they want to sow and reap the same day. When we do not see immediate results, or when we do not receive immediate recognition or gratitude, we become discouraged and want to quit doing good. Furthermore, it is easy to become tired from sowing from sowing seeds of kindness, and doing good works. Indeed, doing good for others can be a tiresome task, but being fond of ease, we lack staying-power, and become easily discouraged. You can probably think of someone who used to be a good church worker, but has now quit. So Paul encourages persistence and faithfulness in doing good works. In every instance here where Paul talks about doing good, he uses the present tense, which refers to habitual action. Furthermore, in v.9 Paul makes an appeal, “And let us not grow weary while doing good...” Likewise, Paul said in 2 Th. 3:13, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” In the last of v.9 he also talks about the possibility of losing heart (*ekluo*). Growing weary and losing heart both refer to becoming exhausted and faint hearted. Are you at the point of giving up, and quitting? Are you tired of doing good works, and seeing little immediate results? Well Paul has a word for you in v.9, “And let us not grow weary while doing good...” We need the character qualities of persistence, endurance, and faithfulness.

In October 1982, a 25-year-old woman finished the New York City Marathon. No big deal—until you learn that Linda Down has cerebral palsy and was the first woman ever to complete the 26.2-mile race on crutches. She fell down a half dozen times, but kept going until she crossed the finish line, 11 hours after she started. Her handicap limited her speed but not her determination.⁴

Why should you persist in doing good works, even when you are tired, and even when people don't seem to appreciate what you do? Paul tells us the answer in v.9, “for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” This points back to vv.7-8. When a believer is genuinely and persistently faithful in doing good, he has God's assurance that in due time he shall reap blessing.

⁴ From “Secrets Every Achiever Knows,” *Reader's Digest* article condensed from *The 25-Hour Woman* by Sybil Stanton (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986).

Doing good works not only makes life sweeter, it may make it longer according to researchers at the University of Michigan. Stephanie Brown, Ph.D., asked 423 older couples if they had helped a friend or neighbor just once in the previous year. Five years later, those who had were 50% more likely to outlive those who hadn't.⁵

Paul reaped blessing in this life because he never gave up. At the end of his life he could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Oh, but dear Christian, don't overlook the warning. Paul says we shall reap "if we do not lose heart." The farmer who gets tired, and quits working his field, will not reap the harvest. The student who drops out of school will not enjoy the reward of the diploma. And if you get discouraged, and quit, then you can lose your reward. 2 John 1:8 says, "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward." Don't give up. Don't quit. Keep doing good works from a motive of love, and you will surely reap the blessings of a reward, both in this life, and in the life to come.

Conclusion: This morning I have talked about doing good works out of a motive of love. Do you see examples of good works in your own life? Are you involved in the good work of helping those who have gone astray from the right path? Do you gladly give to help support vocational Christian workers, and others in need? Are you good works given to those beyond your own little circle of family and friends? If not, you need to examine the reality of your faith. James said faith without works is dead. Paul said in Eph. 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...." God is the one who can enable us to live a life of good works. Trust in Jesus as Savior today, and He will create a new heart within. His love will fill your life, and you will be able to do the kind of loving, good works that I have been talking about.

On the other hand, many of us need simply to recommit ourselves to doing good works. If you have quit, it's time to get back to serving the Lord and others!

Sources: William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT & Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957); W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); Oliver B. Greene [vv. 6-10], *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1962); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians & Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968); Alvah Hovey, *An American Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887); J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957); John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Lehman Strauss [vv.6-10], *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957); Curtis Vaughan, *Galatians: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1975); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Galatians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944, 1973). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

⁵ *Reader's Digest* "Health".