

Inescapable Concepts

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good day everyone. Keep your Bibles open at Galatians 6 and there's an outline in the bulletin and we're going to have a look at this passage together, finishing off the book Galatians and here we are at a very practical section of Galatians, telling us really the application of the whole book. Here then is how you ought to live. So as we jump into it, let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the book of Galatians, a book which has been about the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ. We thank you that you've given us this word and we've been able to look at it over the last couple of months and we pray now as we look at this last chapter that you will teach and encourage us and help us to live this out. Amen.

So I want to start with thinking about what's called the inescapable concept. That is, it's a concept, it's a thing you can't escape, there's no opting out of it. So like imitation is one of these. You were made to copy people and you will imitate people. If you say, no, no, no, I'm not going to imitate anyone, I'm just going to be myself. Well, what's going to happen is you're going to find yourself just imitating whatever the current fad of society is or rebelling against that. And you'll find that you'll still be copying people, you just won't consciously choose who you're copying. You're going to make some stupid decisions in who you do imitate. So it's not whether you're going to imitate someone or not, it's just who you're going to imitate or what you'll imitate.

Or another one of these concepts is that of shame. It's not whether or not you'll be ashamed of something, just ashamed, but what makes you ashamed? All right, so some people are ashamed when they're caught in a transgression. Some people couldn't care less about God's standard, completely flaunt that, but they're ashamed to be associated with a church or, you know, to be called a total dag or whatever it might be. So it's not whether you'll be ashamed, but what will cause you to be ashamed. All right, not whether but which. It's inescapable. You can't opt out, but you can choose which option to do.

And so two such inescapable concepts are in this passage. Sowing and boasting. All right, everyone sows a harvest. Every word you say, every action you make is sowing for a future harvest, and you can't opt out of that harvest. You can't escape the consequences of your actions. The question is, what kind of sowing will you do? You can sow to the spirit or you can sow to the flesh, but they're the only two options. You can't say, no, no, I'll just live with no consequences.

[2 : 5 9] That's not an option. And the second one, everyone boasts. It's not a matter of, well, you know what, I'm just going to stop boasting, because as soon as you think you've done that, you'll be like, check me out, I've stopped boasting. All right, but it's a question of, in what will you boast?

All right, we will be ashamed of some things, and we will take pride in others. We're not trying to get rid of shame, we're not trying to get rid of boasting, but we're trying to be rightly ashamed of what is shameful, and rightly boast in what is worthy of glory. And so, these two concepts, Paul finishes the letter with these, encouraging us to choose what the whole letter has been about, how to live by the Spirit, and to boast in the cross. So, looking at our passage this morning, we need to think through, what does it mean to be a spiritual person? Because if you have a look of chapter 6, verse 1, it says, brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him. So, what does it mean to be this spiritual person? Well, the Spirit's been a major theme in the second half of Galatians, come with me for a whirlwind review. So, chapter 3, verse 1, Paul says, We receive the Spirit through faith in Jesus' death for us. In chapter 4, verse 6, flip there, we're told we've been adopted as sons, and because of that, we have God's Son's Spirit living in us.

Galatians 4, 6, And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. And then, in chapter 5, we have hope through the Spirit.

So, verse 5, For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

We walk by the Spirit, verse 16, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. And the Spirit bears fruit in us, verse 22, as we've looked at, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[5 : 31] Against such things, there is no law. And then, chapter 5, verse 25, it says this, If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit, and significantly, the negative, what it doesn't look like, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

And so, this Spirit, we have through faith, we've been adopted as sons, and so we've been given the Spirit of God's Son. We have hope through the Spirit, we walk by the Spirit, it bears fruit in us, we live by it, and we don't live conceited, provoking, envying.

That's what it means to be a spiritual person. So then, in chapter 6, which we're looking at this morning, it's the application of that chapter 5, we have the Spirit of Sonship, by faith, which produces fruit in us.

So then, when a brother sins, what do we do? Will we show our spiritualness? We show them, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

This chapter unpacks what it looks like to live by the Spirit. And there's instructions, and there's dangers. So, verse 1, if a brother is caught in a sin, restore him in a spirit of gentleness, rather than harshness, rather than judgment, condemnation, exclusion, the goal is to restore him.

[7 : 02] Restore him to fellowship, which is broken by his sin. Restore him to walking again by the Spirit. Restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Because there's a danger. The danger is that we treat our brother harshly.

He's transgressed, he's sinned, he does not deserve mercy, and so we can be severe, we can be critical. And in doing so, we can actually deny the grace of God, and turn faith into some kind of a law.

As we say to this brother who, you know, genuinely has fallen short, and has sinned, you have to do better. Rather than extending the grace of God, that God himself has extended.

Or we can become conceited, as we compare ourselves to a fallen brother. At least I didn't do that. But God has shown us grace, and so we're to show our sinful brother grace.

Restore him in gentleness. That's being sons of the Father. It's treating someone as we've been treated. It's being spiritual. And so, for us, there's implications, right?

[8 : 11] What your brother does matters. What your sister does matters. We're family. Don't think, it's not my business, but we're to restore gently.

It's not a claim of superiority. It's not, I'm spiritual, you're not. It's a kindness. It's a blessing to the one who sinned. It's helping someone see the kindness, and the goodness, and the faithfulness of our God, and trusting him.

And there's another danger. And the danger is, that in restoring the other person, you're actually tempted to sin also. Sin is deceitful.

It's sneaky. So, we need to keep in step with the Spirit, right? In line with the Spirit. Know that there's danger, and don't think that because you're spiritual, and they're clearly not, that you're immune to the temptation that they fell into.

Don't be conceited. Beware. Just as my brother or sister has sinned, so very easily could I. So, keep watch. Verse 2, to bear one another's burdens, or to carry each other's weights, is just what it sounds like.

[9 : 21] So, when someone's struggling with something, whether it's despair, or poverty, or sickness, whether it's relational conflict, or it is fight with ongoing sin, support your brother or sister.

Bear their burdens. Step in with them. That's just the application of love, isn't it? And we saw that, chapter 5, verse 13. It says, but you were called to freedom, brothers, and do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. And we've been set free. Not to be selfish, but set free to serve one another. Set free to carry each other's burdens.

Not out of obligation, not out of guilt, but out of real love. And real love isn't, oh, you're friendly towards me, so I'll be friendly back towards you. But real love is, I will give of myself for your sake.

Real love is loving someone who's painful. Real love is following our Lord, who gave his life for our sake, and giving of ourselves for other sakes.

[10 : 29] 5, verse 14 says, the law is fulfilled by loving your neighbour as yourself. And here in 6, verse 2, we're told that bearing each other's burdens fulfills the law of Christ.

What's this law of Christ? Obeying his commands. Is that just replacing one law, which enslaved us, with another?

Like, isn't the whole book of Galatians about being free from the law? Not at all. The book of Galatians is about that, but this isn't just replacing one law with another. Following Christ's commands does not grant us righteousness.

Being under the law as a way to earn our status with God doesn't work, has never worked. We're saved by faith in Christ. Faith means, you trust Him.

And so, you obey Him, because you trust Him. Obedience earns you nothing, but it demonstrates your faith.

[11 : 30] If you do not obey Jesus, you do not trust Jesus. So, we love one another in that gritty, messy, supporting them in the struggles and burdens of life, we're fulfilling the law of Christ.

That's how we live, because we trust Jesus. So, in verse 3, it says, For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

As you notice, the linking word there, the for, at the start of that verse, that is, if you think you are something, you won't be able to do the burden bearing mentioned in verse 2.

Don't deceive yourself. You're a sinner, set free by grace. You're still tempted. Don't become conceited. Don't be too proud to help the one struggling. And this was the critique that Jesus levelled against the Pharisees.

Matthew 23, verse 4, Jesus said, They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with a finger. They cause problems with people, and they're too proud and full of themselves to help bear any burdens.

[12 : 45] Don't be like them. Don't make much of yourself. Don't think you're something. You're a sinner, set free by God's grace. So use your freedom to serve one another through love.

Humility is a requirement of real love. But then, verse 4, can seem a bit confusing. Alright, if I'm not to deceive myself into thinking that I'm something, then why would I have anything to boast about myself?

But Paul is commending such boasting here. So, verse 4, But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour.

For each will have to bear his own load. Alright, Paul has told the Galatians, gently restore someone who's caught in transgressions, but keep watch that they're not caught into the same sins.

Bear each other's burdens, but don't think that they're something special. Don't deceive themselves. As they restore this brother, as they bear each other's burdens, don't boast or despair in your brother's work.

[13 : 53] That is, if I seek to restore someone, then I need to be aware of three dangers. Don't be tempted into their sin. Secondly, don't think I'm something special.

And thirdly, don't think that their work of repentance is to my credit. That is, if I restore someone gently, they heed my gentle warning, encouragement, love, they repent, they trust the Lord's faithfulness, they walk by the Spirit, and then I go, huh, check that out.

See what I did there? No, that's not right. That's what they've done, not what I've done. They're the ones who have repented under God by His grace.

I need to test my own work. Have I loved, have I pointed them to the Saviour? Have I kept myself in step with the Spirit? Have I avoided their sin? Have I avoided being proud? Well, then I can boast in myself alone.

And what's my boast? Well, the cross has set me free to live by the Spirit. Praise God. I'm dependent on God's grace. I'm nothing except for the grace of God.

[14 : 57] And so then I'm not boasting in my neighbour's repentance. I'm not boasting that I've done anything. I'm just boasting in Jesus Christ. And my responsibility under Him.

Because in verse 5, each will have to bear his own load. We've all got our own responsibility before God given to us in our circumstances and we have to carry that. We're not comparing ourselves to others.

We're not becoming conceited if we feel that we're more than them or becoming envious if we feel that we're less. But living by the Spirit with what God has given us. It also means that there's no spiritual dull bludges.

What it means is that there are times when we need people to help carry our burdens. When we desperately need people and life is whatever it is is too much and we have brothers and sisters around us to carry us.

But we each need to bear our own load. We're weak frail sinners. We need each other. God has given each other to be a blessing but we will stand before God as individuals.

[16 : 00] We can't put our load onto someone else and go, ah, you'll carry that for me. But we will all stand before God. So verses 1 to 5 are about restoring a brother.

Do it gently, supporting and encouraging them. But beware that you're not tempted to their sin. Beware thinking that you're someone special. Beware thinking that you could boast in them.

And beware not carrying your own load. not taking responsibility for your walk by the Spirit. And love your brother or sister who's caught or burdened. And then verses 6 to 10 continue on what does it mean to live by the Spirit?

And so it's a little unity kind of ended with verse 6 and verse 10. Verse 6, let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with the one who teaches.

Right? If you've received spiritual blessing from someone teaching the Word, it's right to share material blessings or encouragement or love all good things with the one who teaches. And we don't just take, take, take.

[17:06] We share with those who teach us. We include them in our fellowship and in our generosity. And look at verse 7. We're warned against self-deception in verse 3 and we're warned about it again here in verse 7.

And as far as images go, this one is pretty clear and obvious, right?

If you sow corn, what are you going to grow? If you sow potatoes, will you ever, ever grow corn? What you sow, you'll reap.

The problem is that we think in life that we can sow one thing and reap something completely different. And Paul warns the Galatians because that temptation to self-deception is real.

Do not be deceived. Right? The illustration, we're like, yeah, of course. Who would ever be deceived about that? But this is the warning. Don't be deceived. God cannot be mocked. Don't try it.

[18:13] Right? In verse 8, what does he say? For the one who sows to his own flesh, from that flesh, from the flesh, reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

And so, sowing to the flesh for the Galatians included getting circumcised. You think the flesh will save you, mark you in a special way? No, all you'll reap is rotten, decaying corruption. But it's not just being circumcised.

Anything that is opposed to the Spirit. Right? It's the works of the flesh back in chapter 5. Right? And they included some pretty hectic things, didn't they? Like sorcery and orgies. But they also included kind of more respectable things, not so noticeable things, like enmity, like strife, like jealousy, rivalries, divisions, envy, envy, envy, envy, things which, if you sow into, you will reap.

If, for example, you envy someone's riches, or someone's gifts, or someone's status, if you sow that envy, what are you going to grow? Corruption, and that harvest will come upon you.

Or any other work of the flesh, strife, enmity, whatever it might be, you'll end up corrupted, twisted, not held together by integrity, but a mess of sinfulness and horror to be swept away in destruction.

[19:45] You can't sow potatoes and expect corn to grow. You can't eat KFC for every meal and expect to run a marathon. You can't live for the flesh and expect to have eternal life.

Don't be deceived. To think that you could do that is to mock God. To think you've found the loophole. Oh yeah, no, I'm saved.

I trust Jesus' death for my sin. I've got a ticket to heaven. It's not dependent on my works. Therefore, it doesn't matter if I go and indulge the flesh a bit, does it? I can just sow away over here and it doesn't matter because I've got my ticket to heaven.

At that point, you're not really trusting in Jesus at all, are you? You're seeking to mock God. Do you think that God leaves loopholes?

Do you really think that's what God wants from us? Do you think you will reap spiritual blessings by continually opposing the Spirit? Don't be deceived.

[20 : 47] There might be a long delay between sowing and reaping, but you'll reap what you sow. So then what? Don't give up doing good.

Don't get tired of it. Verse 9, the harvest will come. Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

Verse 10, so then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith. I had someone point out to me during the week that Barnabas Aid highlights this verse in the work they do as supporting the persecuted church around the world.

Persecuted Christians need love, need us to be doing good to them. We sow love and goodness to each other to reap a harvest.

And verse 6 and verse 10 have a little inclusio at the start and end of this section. So verse 6, we share all good things and verse 10, do good to all.

[21 : 53] To the one who teaches the word and to the household who believes. This is how you sow to the Spirit, sharing all good things, doing good to all. Verse 1 to 10 have spoken of living by the Spirit.

What does it look like? Well, care for those who have sinned. Watching yourself, bearing others' burdens in humility, knowing that you have to bear your responsibility before God.

Sharing all good things with those who teach you, doing good to all, especially your brothers and sisters, because you will reap what you sow. So sow to the Spirit. Sow goodness, sow that the Spirit may bear fruit in your life and a harvest of eternal life.

and then verse 11 to 18 is kind of the second section of this chapter and it speaks of the cross. We live by the Spirit and we boast in the cross.

So verse 11, Paul dictates his letters but then he adds this handwritten bit at the end of each of his letters by way of personal greeting and authentication. Paul doesn't add any greetings here like in other letters but he wraps up the whole point of the letter.

[23 : 11] It's not about the flesh but it's about the cross and he brings the overriding concern of the letter of Galatians back into focus. Verse 12, it is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Here are those who sow to the flesh. They want to make a good showing but it's only skin deep. It's just externals. They would force the Galatians to be circumcised so that they might not be persecuted.

That is, if they demand that others go and get circumcised, that avoids persecution for them because of the cross of Christ. The cross is offensive. It says, there's nothing that you can do to be saved.

It says, Jews are not God's special saved people just by birth or law keeping. They need faith in Jesus Christ. Same as the Gentiles. It says, there's no special status that you can obtain other than utter dependence on God's grace.

And so, these people seek to avoid the persecution that comes from trusting in the cross alone by forcing Gentile Christians, these Galatians, to become circumcised.

[24 : 28] Because when they say, you have to get circumcised, that means the Jews are happy. They don't need to persecute these people because they're saying they don't need to change.

Jews don't need to change. Everyone else needs to change to become like the Jews. These guys are already circumcised. They're like, yeah, no problem, the cross isn't that offensive. You'd make your people get circumcised. But as soon as they say, no, no, it's the cross you need, not circumcision, that brings about persecution because it's a claim of people's helplessness and utter dependence on Jesus Christ and on His death.

But look at Paul's damning critique in verse 13. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, they may boast in your flesh.

They want to force the Galatians to be circumcised as part of a law-keeping requirement, but they don't even keep the law. They want to boast in your flesh. They want to take pride in having you submit to the law that they don't even submit to.

It's just a showing in the flesh. It's just this external kind of reputation, branding kind of a thing that that's all it is. There's no substance behind it. And we need to beware of such worldly showings.

[25 : 48] Doing things that we can boast in because they look impressive. They show impressiveness. We can boast in our ministries. We can boast in our status.

We can boast in our gifts. We can boast in our virtue. But rather, we need to be careful in what we boast. Have a look at verse 14.

Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Paul was the only boast in the cross.

Why? What has the cross done? It set him free. The world has been crucified to him and he to the world. That is, the world's got no claim on him anymore.

Just like in the death of a spouse, which Paul uses in the example of Romans 7, to say a wife is free from the law if the husband dies. So, if I were to die, then I would have no claim over my wife anymore and she'd be free to go remarry.

[26 : 55] But, while I'm alive, she's not free and doesn't want to be either. But, the world has been crucified to Paul.

It's dead to him. He's free from it. He's under no obligation to it. Through the death of Jesus, he has died to the world. He no longer lives for the elementary principles of this world.

He's not under law, he's not trying to make a showing in the flesh, he's not imprisoned under sin. But, he's been set free, the curse has been taken away, his sins have been dealt with, he's been delivered from this present evil age.

And so, he boasts, he glories, not in his works, but in the crucified Lord who brought all of this for him, through his death.

At the cross, that implement of shame and horror is the implement of salvation and of freedom and of God's grace to him on which he can fully depend and just glory in, rejoice in, boast about.

[27 : 53] So, you can boast in circumcision in the Galatians case, some other skin deep work of the flesh, something which is outwardly impressive, or you can boast in the cross of Christ, which is truly effective and has brought us true freedom.

The one that says, there is no work that can save you but only faith in Christ, the crucified Lord, who's taken your sin and your curse when he died. you're going to boast.

It's an inescapable concept. What will you boast in? You can't boast in both, they're mutually exclusive. How will we boast? Verse 15, Paul's wrapping up his argument and he says this, for neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

There will always while in this body be the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, as we saw in chapter 5, 5.17 says, for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do, but don't deliberately go back to the flesh, back to the world, back to slavery.

This is what this whole letter has been about. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. So live free, live by the spirit, that's the new creation, that's what counts.

[29 : 20] trust in Jesus, the Lord, walk by the spirit, bearing spiritual fruit, loving your brothers and sisters, restoring them gently when they sin, sowing to the spirit by doing good to all, that's the new creation, that's what matters, not whether you've got some sort of impressive thing to boast about.

And how do we have this new creation? Only through the cross of Christ, that's what we boast in. Last few verses, verse 16, slightly tricky. Who's he speaking to?

One group or two, he says this, and for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. Alright, so is Paul blessing all who walk by this rule, which is, everything he's just spoken about, as one group to have peace and mercy, and the Israel of God as another group to also have peace and mercy?

Well, I think that would undermine his whole argument. There's only peace and mercy for those who boast in the cross, who count circumcision and uncircumcision as nothing but only a new creation.

There is no other group that gets this blessing. And so it seems better to read that last and as even, which is how the NIV translates it.

[30 : 34] So it would be this, verse 16, and as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, even upon the Israel of God. Or that is upon the Israel of God.

That is, there's one group, those who walk by this rule, and that's Jews, Gentiles, slave, free, male, female, these are all the true Israel of God. These are the sons of Abraham, the sons of God, saved through the Son of God and led by His Spirit.

Verse 17, Paul says, from now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. What's he talking about? Well, the mark of circumcision means nothing.

People force others to get that just to avoid persecution, but Paul says he bears the marks of Jesus, which I take as the marks of being persecuted for following Him. He was stoned till they thought he was dead in Galatia, amongst many other persecutions.

The circumcisers are saying, don't give me trouble, I have the mark of obeying God, I have and I'm demanding circumcision. But Paul says, no, no, don't give me trouble because I have the marks obtained in obedience to Jesus.

[31 : 48] I've already got the mark of ownership gained through hardship, the mark on his body that he cares about is not circumcision, it's the marks that he got through obedience to Christ, suffering persecution because of the cross of Christ.

And in verse 18, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. The book ends with what this whole letter is about, Jesus' grace. May be with their spirit as they walk in step with the spirit and may we have Jesus' grace, walking in freedom, not turning back to empty law but trusting in our Lord, gratefully receiving his grace and his mercy for salvation, for loving our brother as we live by the spirit and we boast in the cross.

These are inescapable concepts. To what will you sow, how will you live? Not for the flesh but use your freedom to be free, restoring your brother, sowing to the spirit by doing good, without tiring, without giving up.

And what will you boast? Not in yourself, not in the flesh but boast in the fact that you're a dependent, you're enslaved, but the cross of Christ has set you free and made you a new creation.

So we live by the spirit and we boast, in the cross. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the word given to us in the book of Galatians.

[33 : 14] Thank you for the freedom that is outlined there that we have in Jesus Christ. We thank you for the cross, for everything that Jesus has done for us and we glory in the fact that we have been saved by him.

We've been made new creations. Jesus has taken our curse, he's given us freedom, he's taken our sins away, we have life with him. We thank you you've adopted us as your children and it's all through what Jesus did for us on that cross.

And Father, we pray as we live together as brothers and sisters that when one of us falls, the others might restore that person gently, in a spirit of gentleness, we might carry each other's burdens, we might help one another, we might just be careful, keep watch that we don't fall into temptation and sin ourselves.

Father, we pray that you'll help us to do good to each other, help us to sow to the spirit that we might reap a harvest of eternal life.

In Jesus' name. Amen.