

**Gal. 6:1-10**  
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**A. Overview**

5:2-6:10 is the application section, and 5:13-6:10 is the more reasoned part of the argument. Three major structures dominate this section:

1. A chiasm from 5:13 through 6:2. Theme: danger of yielding in the conflict of flesh vs. spirit.
2. An alternation from 6:1 through 6:5. Theme: correcting error in believers' lives.
3. Another chiasm (or at least, *inclusio*), 6:6-10. Theme: providing for other believers.

Note the movement through these three, from warning through correction to positive help and encouragement.

**B. Alternation between 6:1-2 and 6:3-5**

Theme: correcting error in believers' lives.

Combines examination of others (first panel, 6:1-2) with examination of one's self (second panel, 6:3-5), per Matt. 7:5 and 1 Cor. 11:27,29 (though in reverse order here). After outlining WHAT the errors are that cause problems in the church, he now goes on to indicate HOW believers should deal with them.

Note how vv.1,2 do double-duty, serving at once as the completion of the earlier chiasm and the first panel of this alternation.

1. Dealing with the Errors of Others (6:1-2)

a) The Cause (the error): trespass, 6:1a.

"Overtaken," trapped. Sin in the unbeliever is wilful rebellion against the law of God. In the believer, it is against the will, a trap into which we fall. This expression guards us against two errors. One is thinking that a believer can never sin. The other is thinking that a believer is free to sin flagrantly. Believers do sin, but they do so "by accident," not in wilful rebellion against the Lord.

b) The Correction: by spiritual people (6:1b)

Three details of this correction require attention: its *agents*, its *purpose*, and its *manner*.

- 1) *Agents*: "You who are spiritual." Correcting others is the ministry we all exercise most casually, but it is properly reserved only for the spiritual. Defined in 1 Cor. 2:14-3:4 and echoed in Rom. 7-8.

The definition in Cor. characterizes the three kinds of person in two dimensions: their apprehension of spiritual

truth, and (for those who are believers) their conduct.

	Understanding	Conduct
Natural	"receives not"	(not discussed)
Carnal	"milk, not meat"	v.3, like unsaved
Spiritual	"judges all things"	"is judged of no man"

Thus the spiritual man both has the Scriptural insight to discern right from wrong and to see the way out of problems, and also is himself blameless, so that others will not go pointing the finger back at him.

This condition is the result of Christian growth, and is the same thing as "maturity," "being full of [not filled with] the Spirit."

- 2) *Purpose*: "Restore." NOT pull down, but make right. Verb is used of mending nets in the Gospels. The unbeliever (and sometimes an immature believer) may tear someone down in order to make oneself look better. The spiritual person does it in order to make the other better. Cf. Col. 1:28, "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."
- 3) *Manner*: "Spirit of Meekness." We studied this character in 5:23, as one facet of the Fruit of the Spirit: "a trust in God that refuses to compromise obedience for self-enrichment or self-preservation." The spiritual corrector is looking out for the other, not self; and is doing so trusting in God for guidance and direction.

c) The Caution: need to consider oneself (6:1c)

- 1) Note shift from plural to singular. Each individual corrector must watch himself very carefully.
- 2) "Considering" is present participle, emphasizing ongoing action. Not just "check yourself out, then go at it." Rather, exhorts the corrector to a continued alert for the dangers he will face in the course of this action.
- 3) *Purpose*: "lest thou also be tempted." At least two dangers need to be kept in mind here.
  - a> Through exposure to the sins of others. If we reach down into the gutter to help others, we must be careful not to slip and fall ourselves. When our attention is drawn to ungodly behavior in others, the adversary may find occasion to lead us to dwell on it and thus lure us into sin.
  - b> Tempted to go about the task in a prideful way, boasting ourselves in our relative superiority and spirituality.

d) The Cost: Bearing burdens (6:2)

- 1) Bearing burdens: taking on ourselves the pain of others. Examples: denying ourselves so that a poor believer, perhaps impoverished through the effects of sin, can have food on the table. Or the kind of comfort that the friends of Lazarus brought Mary and Martha, weeping together with them (John 11:31, 33). It is not enough to stand aloof and read Bible verses. We are called to share their suffering--to deprive ourselves in ways that will lessen their load.
- 2) "The law of Christ." As we noted before, believers do have a law--that of Christ, the royal law of love (5:14; James 2:8). This emphasis is noteworthy in a book whose major point is that believers need not keep the Jewish law. He does not want them to fall into the opposite error, that of anarchy.
- 3) This task of carrying the burden of others is distinctively Christ's law, because it is the pattern for his ministry of substitution toward us.

2. Dealing with the One's Own Errors (6:3-5)

Correcting others is a necessary ministry, but it is a difficult one, and there are few qualified to undertake it. How much better it would be if we could each keep ourselves clean.

a) The Cause (the error): pride (6:3).

Paul here focuses on a specific shortcoming: that of pride. Specifically: thinking oneself to be something when one is not. NB: pride is not an honest estimate of one's own capabilities, but rather, an inaccurate one. Cf. Rom. 12:3 (and notice how Paul acknowledges the spiritual enabling that even he must receive in order to make this exhortation).

b) The Correction: self examination (6:4a).

1) "Prove" is here in the sense of "test."

2) "His own work." Hold the light up first to your own work. Each of us ought to be his own severest critic.

c) The Caution: need to consider oneself (6:4b)

The verse can be rendered, "then shall he keep his reasons for boasting to himself, and not to another." The idea is not that he boasts only in himself, but that he does not walk around talking about the things of which he boasts. If we consider our own works in the light of Calvary, we will be as reluctant to boast of them as Paul is in 2 Cor. 11:16ff; 12:11.

d) The Cost: Bearing burdens

While certain spiritual people can help others bear their burdens, every one of us must bear his or her own burden. The Christian life is not one of leisure. The burden here is Mat.

11:30, the burden of Christ--and he bears it with us, in a double yoke.

### C. Second Chiasm, 6:6-10

Theme: Providing for one another

The section is chiasmatic, with references to sharing good things on the outside, and an agricultural metaphor in the middle.

1. v.6 is often quoted to justify a salary for preachers. If so, the verse is orphaned from its context, which has nothing to do with the teaching ministry in the church *per se*. But it does have a lot to do with helping one another; cf. v.10, which like 6 talks about doing "good" to others, and the intervening verses, which are along the same line. It may help to focus our attention on three details of v.6: the *relationship* between "him that is taught" and "him that teacheth", the *responsibility* that Paul places on him, and the *sphere* in which it is to be exercised.

a) Relationship: "taught," "teacheth." Not usual NT word for "teach." This is not the word that describes, for example, the spiritual gift (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28). It is much rarer, and reflects informal verbal instruction; cf. Acts 21:21,24; 1 Cor. 14:19. Probably Paul has in mind here the exhortations and rebukes that would naturally result from the exhortation in vv.1,2. If you are on the receiving end, don't be offended or rebuffed, but recognize what you have received as a help, and return the favor.

b) Responsibility: "communicate." "Share," "have in common." Not a contractual salary that makes merchandise of the Word of God, but gifts of love that reflect the common ownership of worldly goods.

c) The things shared: "all good things." Not just \$\$.

2. v.10 builds on and extends this picture.

a) What: "Do good." Rom. 2:10; Eph. 4:28, *ergazwmeqa to agaon*. How does this contrast with v.9, *poiountes to kalon*?

1) EA is more concrete. One can do it to someone; not so with PA. Almost means "benefit all men." Compare Rom. 13:10, *ergazomai kakon + dative*.

2) K in PK is "good-beautiful." Emphasis not on moral right (PA is the expression for "do righteousness"), but doing what is fitting and appropriate.

3) EK never appears! Surprising.

4) Data: **(NOT SERMON)**

a> Misc. observations

1> *poiiew* is what a tree does to fruit. Matt. 7:17-19.

2> Rom. 3:8 "let us do evil, that good may come"--perversion of Paul's gospel. *Poiiew + kakon*

3> Acts 9:36, *poiiew erga agaqa*

4> Eph. 2:10, *ergon agaon* is a common phrase; E+A may be a verbalization of it.

- 5> ergazomai kakon, Rom. 13:10, what love doesn't do to a neighbor.
  - b> P+A: more abstract. Never with dative, "do good to." Righteous life.
    - 1> Matt. 19:16, what the rich young ruler expected would win him eternal life.
    - 2> Mark 3:4, healing a man on the Sabbath; what it is lawful to do on the Sabbath.
    - 3> Luke 6:33, agaqopoiew, cf. kakopoiew
    - 4> John 5:29, those who do good see resurrection, but those *faula pracontes* face judgment.
    - 5> Rom. 13:3, what we should do if we are not to fear the civil ruler. Opp. 13:4 poiew kakon.
    - 6> Eph. 6:8, of a servant's faithful service to the master, for which the Lord will reward him.
  - c> E+A More concrete; note dative in Gal. 6:10, cf. Rom. 13:10. Also concreteness of Eph. 4:28.
    - 1> Rom. 2:10, those who receive glory, honor, and peace. Pc. v.9, those katergazomena kakon.
    - 2> Gal. 6:10, what we are to do to all men.
    - 3> Eph. 4:28, opposite of stealing; "work good with his hands." Honest labor.
  - d> P+K
    - 1> Rom. 7:21, "when I would do good, evil is present with me."
    - 2> 2 Cor. 13:7, the Corinthians should not poiew kakon, but rather kalon--Paul's desire for his people.
    - 3> Gal. 6:9, what we are not to be weary in doing.
    - 4> James 4:17, it is sin to know to PK and not to do it.
    - 5> 1 Pet. 3:11, to see good days, eschew evil and PK.
- b) When: "As we have opportunity," "while we have opportunity." Not an excuse to say, "I never have an opportunity." Rather, reminds us that our chances to benefit others will not always be with us. Cf. Eph. 5:16, where "time" is "opportunity" here. We need to be on the lookout for occasions on which we may help others.
- c) Who: All men, especially those "of the household of faith." Cf. Eph. 2:19, "household of God." God is our Father, but this is more than "family," which simply implies blood relation. I am in my earthly father's family, but I am not in his household. The church is God's house (1 Tim. 3:15), and his household are those who exercise the life they have from him in the context of church life. Thus the first focus of our acts of charity and love should be toward believers, through the church.
3. Sowing and harvest metaphor  
A four panel alternation in "sow/reap".
- a) The motive, 6:7a. God can't be mocked. Warns them against an attitude that would make fun of God, by denying his principles.

- b) The physical principle: You reap what you sow. This is the basic principle that people try to deny, and in the process, mock God. He is the one who makes corn corn and beans beans. You can't sow corn and get beans. It would be mocking at God's basic natural order to do so, running directly against the most fundamental laws of nature. And of course, no one would seek to do this in agriculture. When Dave plants cucumbers, he doesn't expect to get turnips.
- c) 6:8. The spiritual parallel: Here is where people do try to mock God, by sowing one thing and expecting another. Paul's point is that the law of sowing and reaping operates just as strongly here as it does in the agricultural realm. Two panels of the alternation here, both emphasizing *speirw eis...qerizw ek*.
- 1) **(NOT SERMON)** *speirw* takes different prepositions, with slightly different meaning.
    - a> *en* for the field, Matt. 13:24,31.
    - b> *epi* for the ground or the rocks, since the seed rests upon them, Matt. 13:20.
    - c> *eis* for the thorny ground, Matt. 13:22, since the thorns surround and hamper the seed. Then the flesh would be like thorns, and the spirit like marigolds, protecting tomatoes from cutworms. BUT the point required by the underlying principle is "you reap what you sow," not "you reap where you sow."
  - 2) Preferable to see *eis* here used in the sense of "for," like dative of advantage, BAG p. 229, 4g. To sow for the flesh, thus to do the things that will advance the flesh. When Dave plants his garden, he probably takes into account what the members of the family like to eat. It's not a good idea to plant okra if no one likes okra!
  - 3) The Flesh:
    - a> How do we sow "for the flesh"? (Note "his flesh"--to satisfy his personal lusts.) What vegetables does the flesh want to see in our garden? Pornographic literature, films, and TV shows; Intoxicants; Extravagant creature comforts; Activities that advance our own egos.
    - b> The crop: corruption. The flesh belongs to the old order; ultimately, it rots in the grave. If we live our lives to satisfy it, ultimately all we have sought to do will vanish. And we will damage others with it as well.
  - 4) The Spirit
    - a> How do we sow "for the Spirit"? Time in Bible study and prayer; encouraging believers; speaking to unbelievers

about the Lord.

b> The crop: eternal life. Not that we can merit salvation; but it is the appropriate outcome of a life characterized by serving God, and thus those who have been promised that outcome should spend their lives in this way. NB: part of the emphasis here may be eternal life in the lives of others!

d) 6:9, The practical application: does not mention "sowing" explicitly, but does mention reaping, and thus we can identify the associated sowing. Here is a particular example of sowing for the Spirit.

1) Doing good. Not in the purely moral sense of righteous deeds, but doing lovely things, nice things for people, as in 6:6.

2) Note emphasis on the effort involved: "not grow weary"; "if we faint not." Such exertion is difficult, and will tax us, but we are to have our eyes on the reward. "Run looking unto Jesus." "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

4. So the point of vv.6-10 is our responsibility to do good to others, particularly those in the assembly with whom we share the life of Christ. We will find it tiring and costly thus to "sow to the Spirit," but we are raising a crop for eternity, both in their lives and in our own.

Ps. 126 for closing hymn.