



**Galatians 6:10 -- What
Does It Mean?**

By Micky Galloway

"So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (ASV)

This verse has been so abused, misused, and misapplied as to make the context meaningless. It is strange indeed that a passage beginning with the words "so then" (ASV) or "therefore" (KJV; NKJV) could be so construed to ignore the context. However, the social gospel concept has so influenced many that they cannot see the expressions "good works," "work that which is good," or "do good" without seeing mental images of starving orphans, helpless old people, charitable institutions, and programs attached to the church. In my judgment, this passage deals with matters of much greater importance and loftier in application than the earthly considerations of money and benevolent programs. A close examination of the context of Galatians 6:10 will show that it neither authorizes congregational action, nor speaks of physical relief.

Does this passage authorize individual or congregational action? Some argue that because this letter is addressed "unto the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2), all of its instruction must be talking about church (collective) action. If, however, all of its instructions denote group activity, it would unquestionably have to denote the group composed of the parties addressed. Since churches (plural), not a church, are addressed, the argument would prove that diocesan action is scriptural, i.e., the churches of Galatia as a group "working that which is good toward all men." If being addressed "unto the churches of Galatia" means ch. 6:10 refers to organized church action, then why doesn't Gal. 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ," refer to churches? Likewise, why doesn't Gal. 3:29, "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed," refer to churches? Why doesn't Paul's statement in Gal.5:2, "if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing," refer to circumcising churches? By

what reasoning does one make such expressions as "a man," "every man," "he," "him," "us," and "we," which appear over and over again in Gal. 6:1-10, refer to organized church responsibility? One cannot properly use these expressions to refer to organized church action any more than he could properly apply fleshly circumcision (Gal. 5:2; 6:12,13) to the local church. These verses simply mean "we," "us," "each of us," as they are used in Gal. 5:25,26.

Is this passage speaking of spiritual or physical matters? Galatians 6:10 is the culmination of a line of thought begun in Gal. 5:13, "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only (use) not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another." Then in verse 16, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The following verses draw a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit and their works and fruit. Then Paul warns, "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (verses 24-25). The admonition is to walk by the Spirit and not according to the flesh. Now let us consider a verse-by-verse study of Galatians 6:1-10.

Verse 1- Paul enjoins the "spiritual" (one who lives by the Spirit) to restore the erring brother (one who now walks according to the flesh) by means of admonishing and teaching him. He is to do this with the proper attitude and motive of love for his brother's soul (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Mt. 7:1-5). There is neither congregational action nor benevolence in this verse. Saving souls, not restoration of physical health, is the context (Cf. Jms. 5:19-20).

Verse 2- There is no congregational action spoken of here. The burdens are not physical; rather, they refer to the burdens (moral infirmities, errors, dishonor and guilt brought on by transgression) of the soul -- to its being "overtaken in a fault." These are the burdens we must help our brethren overcome.

Verses 3 and 4- These verses warn against self-righteousness and self-deception. We must be careful, as we try to restore the one overtaken in a fault, lest we conclude that we are something (superior to our erring brother), when in reality we are nothing. One

proves his own life by living according to the proper standard, the divine standard -- God's word. There is no reason for the one who attempts to restore the fallen to develop an inflated view of himself. There is no reward in comparing myself with a fallen brother. These verses are strictly spiritual in nature, pertaining to the soul, and not to one's physical well being.

Verse 5- Every man must fulfill his own responsibilities before God. He must not shun his load, which he himself is expected to bear, to be borne by some other individual or the church (Cf. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). The original word "phortion," translated "burden" in this text has reference to burdens or obligations of a spiritual nature.

Verse 6- This verse has generally been understood to mean that the student (one "overcome in a fault," one living according to the flesh) is under responsibility to pay his teacher (one who is "spiritual," walking according to the Spirit). Can you imagine the fornicator of 1 Cor. 5 being rebuked by one who is "spiritual" in Corinth and his response being (as he reaches for his wallet), "Here, let me pay you for coming to my house to rebuke me"? Though it is true that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Lk. 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:14), I am not persuaded that is what is taught in Gal. 6:6. The instruction in this verse is, "Let him that is taught in the word (one 'overcome in a fault,' one living according to the flesh, mg) communicate unto him that teacheth (one who is 'spiritual,' walking according to the Spirit, mg) in all good things."

The verb "communicate" is from the Greek word "koinoneito" (root "koinos"). It is akin to the noun "koinonia," which is recognized as the Greek word from which our word "fellowship" is translated. Thayer defines the verb "to enter into fellowship, join one's self as an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner" (Grk. Eng. Lex., pg. 351,352). Though this word may, and sometimes does, refer to monetary support, this is not its exclusive significance in the New Testament. In Rom. 15:27, Paul wrote, "Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it (to them) also to minister unto them in carnal things." The Jews had the spiritual things (the gospel with its blessings); the Gentiles became their partners or sharers in these spiritual things. Is it possible that the "good things" the one taught (one overcome in a fault, one living according to the flesh) is to share (communicate) with his teacher (one who is "spiritual," walking according to

the Spirit) are the fruits of the Spirit possessed by the teacher that are no longer possessed and enjoyed by the student? The erring brother is not only to listen, but he is also to DO what he is instructed to do to correct the situation in order that fellowship with the Lord may be restored, and he may share with his teacher in the practice of all that is morally and spiritually good, with its attendant blessings.

"Fellowship, on the other hand, let him who is being instructed in the doctrine (... in the gospel ...) have with the instructor in all good (vs. 10), that is, let the disciplined make common cause (endeavor and action) with his teacher in everything that is morally good." (H.A.W. Meyer, Critical Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Galatians pg. 327,328).

Verses 7,8,9- In these verses, Paul enforces the admonition by the warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh (by walking after the flesh) shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not be weary (because of prolonged effort) in well-doing: (walking after the Spirit) for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Paul continues to contrast walking after the flesh with walking after the Spirit and shows the rewards of diligent efforts to walk after the Spirit. This contrast has been the context since 5:13.

Verse 10- Here, Paul gives all Christians a general admonition concerning the matter. The word therefore (KJV and NKJV) and the words So then (ASV) indicate that what follows is a conclusion to what was previously discussed. The do good of which he speaks is THE good he has been discussing -- correcting and instructing those in error, especially those of the household of faith -- who have been overtaken in trespasses. This is THE good that we can, and are obligated to, render to all men, especially to fellow believers. This we are to do as we have opportunity. The verse is not speaking of the occasional opportunities that come along from time to time, but of an ever-present season of opportunity to do THE good Paul discusses.

The context of this passage (Gal. 5:13 - 6:9) has been spiritual matters, specifically, walking after the Spirit, as opposed to walking after the flesh, restoring those who have

fallen, and being diligent in these efforts because "we shall reap, if we faint not." It would be strange indeed for the writer to begin his concluding remarks (verse 10) with "so then" or "therefore" and now abruptly change the thought to earthly considerations, such as preacher support and benevolent work, much less church institutional and social programs. These verses do not discuss helping those who are materially destitute. Those who try to teach congregational action in general benevolence need a passage that supports congregational action. Galatians 6:10 is not the passage, because it speaks of individual action. However, the entire context does not refer to material support, but to spiritual support. The good of the soul, not the physical body or its welfare, is under consideration. ***

Brother Galloway has done an excellent job of discussing the verses that surround Galatians 6:10. So many people, in discussing the Bible, want to isolate one passage to try to defend a false concept. The Bible must harmonize with itself, and we must consider all passages on a given subject before reaching a conclusion regarding that subject. Why do so many pervert the teaching in this passage? Because they have no passages to use to defend the practice of using the Lord's treasury to help those needy who are not saints. How can one transition smoothly from a spiritual context to social programs, sponsoring churches, and benevolent institutions? The one who attempts to do so does injustice to Galatians 6. -- KMG