

Series: Legalism. License. Liberty!

Message Title: ***The Shared Life and Spiritual Reformation of God's People***

Date: Sunday, November 19, 2017

Scripture: Galatians 6

Speaker: David H. McKinley

Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

If I were to ask you to tell me the name of a special holiday that occurs in the autumn of each year, what would you say? Let me give you a hint. It involves a gathering of extended family and friends, and table is filled with a bounty of food and seasonal dishes. This particular day bears the history of deliverance and provision with gratitude. Thanksgiving? No.

Actually, it is Sukkot, a special Jewish holiday described in Leviticus 23, also known as the *Feast of the Tabernacles*. This holiday looks back to the Exodus when Moses led Israel out of Egypt and when they lived in tents (outdoor structures or booths) until they arrived in the land of promise.

The Pilgrims in their plight to find a land of freedom (having fled from persecution and oppression seeking to find a new life

in a new land) would in their earliest days establish a day of thanksgiving to recognize that the God who had delivered Israel long ago, had also provided them with bounty and blessings together. They celebrated (outdoors and with others), sharing all they had received.

So we also gather with our families and friends, and rejoice in the goodness and faithfulness of God in our lives together. While we do this in our homes and around our tables at Thanksgiving, today we do this as we gather at the Lord's table to give thanks for grace, freedom, peace and community that we share in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we also conclude the series on Galatians by turning to the closing chapters of the book and reflecting on *The Shared Life and Spiritual Reformation of the People of God*.

In Christ, we are captured by grace, through faith, and are being reformed into the image of Christ. We are part of a new community in Christ, not one of ritual, tradition and legalistic obligation, but of grace, freedom

and peace with God. This life is *in the Spirit*, not *by the flesh*.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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 if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Galatians 5:16-18 ESV).

The bottom line of the book of Galatians is this: “It’s not our ability to sustain our faithfulness to God, but His faithfulness to us by the indwelling of His Spirit—enabling, empowering and expressing the life of Christ in us that changes everything!”

We are reformed from our former fleshly existence into Spirit life!

Having presented this truth and proclaimed such freedom, the Apostle Paul provides some evidences of the Spirit’s work in and through us.



Spirit Life Means Fruit-Bearing

Our character is no longer like that of fleshly impulse, but reflective of something much greater, grander and more glorious.

Fruit of the Spirit = “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-25 ESV).

This is Holy Spirit “animation” of our lives with fruit that is consistent with Christ-likeness.

Spirit Life Means Burden-Bearing

Our sense of care and concern for others is part of this new grace-orientation in life. Instead of being like legalistic Judaizers (adding burdens to those around us through critical, calculating judgments), we seek ways to point others to Christ who came to bear the burden of our sins.

“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29 ESV).

Just as Christ carried the burden of our sins, we bear the burdens of one another’s need and allow our faith to work through love in serving one another.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love... For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:6, 13 ESV).

Spirit Life Means Seed-Bearing

We are not only to care for one another, but we are called to helpfulness and holiness in life. To bear seed is to work, invest, anticipate and share the blessing of harvest.

“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches” (Galatians 6:6 ESV).

The word, *share*, is the word, *koinonia*. We get our words, *fellowship* and *community*, from this word.

Here Paul provides a precept that governs life in the Spirit—sharing, not hoarding; distributing grace, not gathering guilt; giving, not just receiving. In the truest sense, the teacher of the Word provides spiritual treasures, and those who hear and receive are to respond with material support for the minister and ministry. Why?

“What we do with material things is an evidence of how we value spiritual things.”
—Warren Wiersbe

But note the principle here:

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7-8 ESV).

Paul is challenging holiness by reminding people the most basic of all agricultural truths—*The Law of the Harvest*.

You reap what you sow. You don't sow corn and reap pumpkins. Like seed, like harvest. You reap in kind. But that's not all...

You reap later than you sow. You don't plant seed and immediately pick produce. There is a time sequence, but when it passes, then comes the harvest. Thanksgiving was a celebration of what came in after it had been sown and reaped. It was gratitude; it was good. But not always for the good!

You reap more than you sow. This is the principle of proportion—one seed, much fruit. Therefore, "sow to the Spirit." You can sow in one of two soils: flesh or Spirit. Where you sow and what you sow always determines what you reap. Spiritual life must be guarded and nurtured. The more you sow, the more you reap the blessing and benefit of honoring God and trusting His Word.

Note: "God is not mocked." You cannot fool God.

Some people spend six days a week sowing their wild oats then go to church and pray for crop failure. No!

Sowing and reaping are inviolable and irrefutable laws: "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:8 ESV).

*This is true in regard to **sin**.* If you sow to the flesh, you will reap to the flesh: disease, destruction, disappointment, addiction, etc. (Illustration of Samson)

*This is true in **giving**.* The Apostle Paul's concern was not just for support of ministry or indulgence for ministers, but growth toward maturity in the hearts of believers. How? Sowing seed!

"Giving is not God's way to impoverish you, it is God's means to enrich you."

*This is true in **preaching**.* I study and prepare to teach the Word because I believe in the living, life-giving power of the Word.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and

sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV).

*This is true in **marriage** and **family** life.* What you sow in has much to do with what you grow up: criticism, bitterness, etc. I remind myself that marriage can wither when we quit sowing for the future. No growth = No future!

*This is true in **witness**.* Many times it takes time—a long time—to see people come to Christ. However, some of the greatest victories I have seen and heard have come from those who have been wept over and waited on the longest.

This section ends with a promise: "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9 ESV).

How we need this! While it is great to sow good seed, there is weariness and this can quickly lead to discouragement. (Give up vs.

Grow up). “due season” is rational truth, but even more, it is eschatological—God’s future for us.

The God who designed the laws of harvest to work in this physical world will not fail to honor them in the future of all that is to come. Sow seeds that will have eternal results. As Paul moves to the end of this book...

“See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. 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... But 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. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Galatians 6:11-12, 14-15 ESV).

Spirit Life Means Cross-Bearing

Knowing and living in the glory of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, I have life through His

death. I have hope through His resurrection.
I will have joy eternal through His victorious
rule and reign.

Knowing and trusting Jesus changes
everything. It fills your heart with both thanks
and giving.

*My heart is filled with thankfulness
To Him who bore my pain;
Who plumbed the depths of my disgrace
And gave me life again;
Who crushed my curse of sinfulness
And clothed me in His light
And wrote His law of righteousness
With power upon my heart.*

*My heart is filled with thankfulness
To Him who walks beside;
Who floods my weaknesses with strength
And causes fears to fly;
Whose every promise is enough
For every step I take,
Sustaining me with arms of love
And crowning me with grace.*

*My heart is filled with thankfulness
To Him who reigns above,*

*Whose wisdom is my perfect peace,
Whose every thought is love.
For every day I have on earth
Is given by the King;
So I will give my life, my all,
To love and follow Him.*

—Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen” (Galatians 6:18 ESV).