

Galatians 6:1-10
Our Christian Duty

Have you ever heard of Vasil (Vuh-SIL-ee) Alexandrovich (ah-lek-SAHND-ro-vitch) Arkhipov (AR-key-pahv)? On October 27, 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a group 11 US Navy Destroyers and the USS Randolph located a diesel powered submarine in International waters. The Navy, unaware of the identification of the Submarine started dropping depth charges in an attempt to get the submarine to come to the surface for identification. The Navy was unaware that they had cornered one of the Soviet Union's finest submarines. The submarine was too deep for radio communication and had not heard from Moscow for several days. Those on board did not know if war had broken out between the US and the Soviet Union or not. As the submarine waited, the batteries began to weaken and the air-conditioning was shut off to reserve power. Panic started setting in for the Russian Crew. What the US did not know was that the submarine they had cornered was carrying what was called the "special weapon" most of the crew of the submarine itself was unaware that the "secret weapon" was a nuclear warhead. The submarine's captain, himself unsure of his circumstances decided to launch one of the nuclear warheads to decimate the group of US Navy ships circling above with one push of a button. This push of the button would also have started WW3, a war that as far as the Russian crew thought had already begun. There was one man who stood up against the Captain and convinced him to not fire the nuclear weapon, the one man who on that day stopped WW3 - Vasil (Vuh-SIL-ee) Alexandrovich (ah-lek-SAHND-ro-vitch) Arkhipov (AR-key-pahv).

This is our 13th week and final week in our series "The Church: God's Glory on Display" and throughout we have been laboring together, through the preaching of the Word and prayer, to ensure that we have a right understanding when it comes to Church. It's one thing to be wrong when it doesn't matter and another thing to be wrong when it matters most. Worship, how we live for God expressed in our daily life, matters most.

Today, as we close out this series, I want us to consider how it is that we live this life together as the Church. To do so, would you join me in Galatians 6?

READ TEXT

Galatians is a magnificent book written to confused people. The Church of God in Galatia had allowed heresy to creep in to such a degree that it was causing a misunderstanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the Kingdom of God. From our text today I want to give you 3 truths concerning Our Christian Duty:

1. Fight Together (1-4)

Nothing will quite bring people together like a common cause. Soldiers are willing to stand arm in arm and charge a front line for a common cause and common conviction. But though people come together for a common cause the key is to ensure that what we are coming together for is true, noble, and excellent. Just because a large majority of people agree that a cause is good does not make it good. As Adrian Rogers used to say, it is better to be divided over truth than to be united in error. And so Paul wants to warn these foolish Galatians not to be bewitched by heresies.

Galatians 1 tells the story of heresy that crept in that caused a distortion in grace (1:6ff). Usually when the gospel is distorted your entire focus shifts. The shift is self-centered instead of Christ-centered. In the case of the Judaizers of Paul's day, so in the case with any distortions of the gospel - a works based salvation syphons all of your attention and efforts towards elevating yourself when the gospel of grace says not me but he - He must increase, I must decrease.

Reminding them of the gospel's focus, Paul seeks to ensure that our lives are turned outward towards others. And what specifically are we called to do for others? Hold each other accountable to live lives of gospel expressiveness.

Paul wants there to be fighting but not the type of fighting that some might expect. We are to wage war against sin remembering that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities. If we see one of our brothers or sisters seeming to be caving in we rush to defend them from total disaster.

Look at the text in 1-5. It tells us how we are to interact with one another. In that interaction we see what it is that joins us together - holiness.

1 Peter 1:14 - *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy."*

1 Thessalonians 4:7 - (3) *For this is the will of God, your sanctification... For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*

To understand this we need to look back to 5:13-26.

So if we are to walk by the Spirit we will be fulfilling the law by loving our neighbor as our self. See the mutual accountability that is here. What would it be like if none of us were pursuing holiness? Do you have someone in your life who is bearing your burdens? Are you bearing the burdens of another? Do you have someone who knows just how to pray for you? Where on earth do you find such a one? - Where else but in church?

This is why we value small group time - whether it is on Sunday morning during Growth Groups or during another time of the week in another small group session. We want to be able to go through the Bible together and have that moment where the truth claims of the Bible rub us the wrong way and we have a brother or sister sitting across from us to speak truth into our lives, to be used by the Spirit to conform us into the image of Christ. Some of you aren't in a small group of any kind and you are doing so at your own cost of your spiritual vitality.

This is why we value church membership at Oxford - mutual accountability. We come together to confess that we value not just our own sanctification but the sanctification of our brothers and sisters in Christ. I saw this video one time where a fisherman caught a fish just by standing on the dock. The fish leaped right out of the water and into the man's net. I guess you can influence others without joining a church but I bet the guy who has put his line in the water to fish will catch more than the guy standing on the dock with his arms wide open ready to catch a fish.

Think about it, Why Church? The Church is composed of people who have a common confession, a confession that is made clear each week as we gather for teaching. In that teaching we hear the voice of God directing our lives and our paths towards eternity.

Number 2:

2. Keep Remembering Eternity (6-8)

Could you just imagine what would happen to our witness in the world if we were not particularly and purposefully pursuing eternity? How are we going to know the demands of our Lord unless we constantly tune ourselves in to what he teaches? How do we tune ourselves to his teaching? Through preaching. Verse 6 is one of the verses that advocates the full-time pay of a minister. Why does that matter? The minister's position in the church is to devote all of his effort towards delivering a message from God's word to His people that answers the questions, Who is God? and How should we then live? My job is to remind you to remember eternity so that we can all remind each other that there is more to this life than what meets the eye - there is an eternal perspective that we must have.

I got to see this in action while I was away at the SBC this year. This year the SBC passed a resolution concerning the use of the Confederate Flag. The historical significance of this is well grounded. SBC has roots in slavery (1845) and didn't apologize for this until 1995 (150 years later!) We were meeting less than 10 miles away from Ferguson, MS where it was revealed in 2014 that there are deep racial divides in this country on both sides. Here is what we resolved: (By the way, our own Kelvin Cochran, former Atlanta Fire Chief who was dismissed because of his Christian worldview, was on the Resolution's Committee this year)

RESOLVED, That we acknowledge both the importance of remembering family heritage and sacrifice, as well as the urgency of pursuing a unified Body of Christ and racial healing in America; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call our brothers and sisters in Christ to discontinue the display of the Confederate battle flag as a sign of solidarity of the whole Body of Christ, including our AfricanAmerican brothers and sisters; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge fellow Christians to exercise sensitivity so that nothing brings division or hinders the unity of the Body of Christ to be a bold witness to the transforming power of Jesus.

There was great discussion, one of the most heated moments of the convention. James Merritt, former SBC president and pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, GA reminded us from the floor of the convention that, "Southern Baptist are not a people of any flag, we march under the Cross of Jesus and the grace of God. All the confederate flags in the world are not worth the soul of one from any race..." (<http://baptist21.com/blog-posts/2016/james-merritts-motionamend-confederate-flag-resolution/>)

Eternity matters more than this present life. Now, I know you don't like it when I do this but I think it is appropriate for such a time as this. This is why I am so troubled by what is happening with so many people who are getting behind a particular political candidate with some silly argument of a lesser of two evils. Character no loner matters? Political views no longer matter? I

am not going to speak much on this today other than to say this. Don't violate your confession of eternity and our witness to the world for one vote that will ease the temporary comforts of this life.

The Bible tells us there is a harvest day coming where each man will stand before the judgment seat of Christ where "each one's work will be manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." (2 Cor 5:10 and 1 Cor 3:10ff).

The text is clear - if we reap according to our flesh it will result in corruption but to the Spirit, eternal life. We need men and women in our lives who are going to help us remember eternity. How are you encouraging your family to remember eternity?

Let's be honest. This is a whole life that God has called us too. A whole life full of toil and trouble. This is why all of us are crying "thy kingdom come." Why so many songs are about heaven, or God's coming Kingdom. Why the hymn writer wrote:

"Oh the day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face, Full arrayed in blood-washed linen, How I'll sing thy sovereign grace. Come my Lord, no longer tarry, *Bring Thy promises to pass, For I know Thy pow'r will keep me, Till I'm home with Thee at last." (*original reads "Take my ransomed soul away; Send thine angels now to carry me to realms of endless day.")

This is why Paul chooses to close this letter the way that he does here. He, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, knows that we all have a tendency to disregard our duty. We need this word from our Lord to encourage us not to give up.

3. Never Give Up (9-10)

Many of you are older than me here today. I'm not telling the seasoned Saints anything new, right? How are you who are older teaching me to never give up? How are you teaching our church? Have you given up? Have you bought into the lie that "you have had your time..."? There are times when the older generation needs to pass the baton to the younger generation, but that does not mean that the older gives up all responsibility. Giving the baton to the younger just means that you now have a different role on the playing field, you never get sidelined or become a spectator.

All of us want a harvest but most of us are immature in the way that we want the harvest. We are like the kids that get the new seeds, prepare the cup full of that beautiful black potting soil, put the seed in the cup, water the soil, go to bed, and then wake up angry that all of our work was for nothing! Remember eternity.

I want you to look at this phrase in your text this morning. "In due season." This phrase is the same phrase that Paul uses in 4:4 to refer to the fullness of time when God sent forth his Son, and 1 Tim 6:15 to refer to the Lord's second coming. The means that our call to persevere is a call until he comes or takes us home. There is no time for us to grow weary - the love of Christ keeps us going. This love is an eternal love.

How are you doing on your responsibility? Have you given up?

Perhaps the hardest lesson in the Christian life is diligent perseverance. Thank God for a passage like this one that directs our focus, that magnifies our resolve. I want you to connect these dots: *Do good to everyone and especially the household of faith.*

What is the good that we can do to everyone and the household of faith? Encouraging the whole world to love the Lord, to worship him in gladness.

I will never forget while in college God taught me this lesson. I was reading the Bible and growing closer and closer to God probably because of the environment that I was in. I had a couple of roommates who only knew how to live for the moment. It was a challenge. One time in my challenges with them I was frustrated. Frustrated so much so that I decided that I was not going to pray for them or engage them anymore with the gospel. Then the Lord took me in my daily readings to 1 Samuel where Israel demands a King. Samuel says, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and right way." (1 Samuel 12:23) So I got on my knees right away and prayed for my roommates. One day, the most vile of my roommates (he was the most hurting) knocked on my door and said, I need to talk to you. Guess what he wanted to talk about? He wanted to talk about Jesus and how he could know him. He made a profession for Christ on that day.

Far be it from us to grow weary in doing good, far be it from us to cease to remind each other about eternity, far be it from us to cease fighting the good fight - we still have a race to win and souls to save and a Jesus to love. Don't have a misconception about what we do here. Church is not something that you add to your life - We are the Church! We are His people calling all people to be reconciled to Him.