

Text: Gal 6.6-8

Tonight, we come to a passage that seems out of place in the context. The first five verses are about burden-bearing, of our mutual responsibility towards one another. Then comes verse 6.

Read Gal 6.1-8

Constable says about verse 6:

“Here is a specific example of mutual burden bearing.”¹

Then he goes on to speculate on the reason Paul said this. We will go over those reasons in a minute, several others make similar comments.

Several commentators remark on this verse appearing just here as it does:

Robert Rapa: “This statement is at first glance rather puzzling, both in its form and in its placement here in Paul’s instructions to the Galatians.”²

Timothy George: “This verse has been more than a little puzzling to most commentators appearing as it does as ‘an independent piece of advice’ with no clear connection to the preceding passage or the one that comes after it.”³

I think most preachers find it difficult to address this topic, as it directly bears on church finances, giving, and paying the pastor.

Our late deacon, Bob Bader, used to urge me to address the topic more. I love the guy, but I still get queasy about addressing the subject.

Having said that, let’s think about our passage and how it fits into the context of Galatians.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Gal 6.6.

² Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 634.

³ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: B&H, 1994), 419.

I. The context

Three elements to the context:

1. The story of Paul's ministry in Galatia
2. The subsequent interference of Judaizers
3. The teaching theme of Gal 5-6

A. The story of Paul's ministry in Galatia

1. Acts 13-14 – Paul and Barnabas travel through Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe planting churches
2. They then retraced their route through each city and “appointed elders for them in every church”

B. The subsequent interference of Judaizers

1. The Judaizers came in and attacked the apostle Paul and his teaching

Now for the speculation of the commentaries...

2. The Judaizers possibly attacked the elders Paul appointed when they defended Paul's teaching

We don't know this to be the case, but it is a plausible scenario.

C. The teaching theme of Gal 5-6

I will develop this context more in a minute, but just a review of the teaching so far here:

1. The message of Galatians is justification by faith alone
2. The application of that message is, “saved by faith, walk by the Spirit” (which is a walk of faith)
3. From the walk of the Spirit flows the fruit of love, joy, peace, etc...
4. And, from that flows the “others-oriented ministry” of chapter 6

II. The principle of reciprocity

“The admonition is clear that as a teacher shares the good things of **the Word** of God, a believer is to reciprocate by sharing **all good things with his instructor.**”⁴

A. Paul taught this principle in other passages

¹ Cor 9.8-11 ¶ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He?¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*.¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

¹ Tim 5.17-18 ¶ The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

² Cor 9.12-14 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.¹³ Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,¹⁴ while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

B. The basic concepts of the principle of reciprocity

1. God grants grace to men through teachers he sends
2. Men give glory to God by supporting the teachers he sends

⁴ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 610.

(or the senders of the teachers in the support for the Jerusalem church)

Gal 6.6 ¶ The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*.

“The early church wished to free its leaders of material pressure so as to enable them to effectively teach the word and lead the flock. This is every bit as important today, and the leaders in turn must hold themselves responsible for the quality of their teaching and leadership.”⁵

III. The consequences of flesh vs. Spirit decisions

I plan to deal with these verses in more detail next week.

A. The warning of the law of harvest (7)

1. The immediate context is the instruction to support their pastors, but Constable adds, “these principles certainly have wider application.”⁶
2. The law of harvest is a principle put in place in our world by God
 - a. If you sow wheat, you get wheat
 - b. If you sow barley, you get barley
 - c. If you sow anger, hatred, selfishness, what do you get?

B. The warning spelled out (8)

1. The one who sows to the flesh reaps corruption
2. The one who sows to the Spirit reaps eternal life

Both of those terms need more spelling out, but that will wait for next week.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Galatians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 204.

⁶ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Gal 6.7.

C. In the context...

1. The church that **will not** support their pastor shouldn't be surprised when they experience pastoral instability
 - a. Notice the words "will not" in that statement
 - b. Pastoral instability means
 - 1) Pastors worried about finances are distracted from ministry
 - 2) Pastorates tend to be shorter when there is no support
 - 3) Attracting new pastors is difficult
2. It is a different matter when the church **can not** support their pastor
 - a. Various reasons: size, economy, etc.
 - b. In these cases, there is a heart to support, but not the means
 - c. The most important thing is the heart

On a personal note, for many years we were in the **can not** position.

Now we are in the **can and do** position – my outside work is helping me recover from the years when we were in **can not** position.

We are content with our lot, and trust the Lord for even better days in the future.

Conclusion:

The bottom line for our text, Paul preaches support for pastors. Another quote from George to conclude:

"It is well known that Paul himself did not receive a regular stipend from his churches (although he did receive with gratitude a personal gift of money from the Philippians) but rather used his skills as a leather worker to make and sell tents for a living. However, he never held himself up as an example to others in this regard. To the contrary, he persistently encouraged the churches he had founded to provide material support for the pastors and teachers in their midst (cf. 1 Cor 9; 2 Cor 11:7–11; 1 Thess 2:7–10)."⁷

⁷ George, *Galatians*, 419.