

What Christians Do  
Do Good – Galatians 6

I know you've heard the expression, "No good deed goes unpunished", right? Do you believe that? As a rule, I don't believe it but I do know that there are exceptions to the rule. Many, many years ago, some members of my family were going to go on vacation down to the Schlitterbahn water park in New Braunfels and a single father friend of the family showed interest in going and taking his two kids. But he said he couldn't afford it. So, several members of the family pooled together and raised enough money so they could all go with us. We all caravanned down there together and we paid for the guy and his kids to eat and have a place to stay. It didn't cost them anything. We bought all the gas and snacks and drinks and everything. We get down there the night before we are to go to the water park and we give him enough money to buy all their tickets into the park the next day. So, the guy goes to the local convenience store and buys all of us some junky little trinkets to say thank you – with our money. And he uses the rest of the money to buy himself a bunch of beer. So, then he gets drunk, gets real obnoxious and the next day says he doesn't have enough money to get his kids into the park. And the next morning, when we are getting ready to go to the park, he tells his kids he's sorry but they can't go. And now we look like jerks and of course had to pay more money so they could go to the park.

I know stuff like that has happened to you before. You did something nice for somebody and it came back to bite you. It happens. And when it happens, how does it make you feel? Does it make you want to help people? No, it makes you tired; not so much physically but mentally and emotionally tired. You don't want to do that anymore. It doesn't seem worth it, does it? The Bible has some words of wisdom for us when that kind of thing happens. Turn to the New Testament book of **Galatians**. After **1-2 Corinthians**, then **Galatians** and before **Ephesians**. This, like most of the New Testament, was written by the Apostle Paul. And that matters. It matters because we can see in Paul's life and through his writings that he had lots of experience with this kind of thing. He was often hurt, let down, even abandoned and abused by friends and people he thought he could count on. So, when Paul gives us advice on this matter, we know we can believe him. And remember, it's not just advice. If scripture tells us to do something or not do something, it is a command like it had been said by Jesus Himself. So, let's read **Galatians 6, verses 9-10**. It says, *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

I find it interesting here that Paul seems to be including himself in this encouragement. *"Let US not become weary..."* I find it interesting because Paul gives off the vibe of being an eternal optimist, always motivated and always cheerful and ready to give to his last breath. And I believe he was. But how many of you know how it is to have to be strong all the time? I'm talking to the husband and the father of kids who works a demanding job. I'm looking at the single mom trying to raise her kids right when all of society is against her. What about the Christian in the workplace everybody is looking at, waiting for you to make a mistake?

I was reading at the end of **2 Timothy** the other day and it almost made me cry. Paul has spent the whole letter giving Timothy great encouragement and great wisdom but at the very end, Paul, writing from prison, says, *"Do your best to come to me soon. Demas has deserted me. Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia."* Then he says, *"Alexander the metalworker did me great harm. Be on your guard against him."* In a rare moment of concern for himself, Paul says, *"I am being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure."* He knew he was about to die but he mentions it, almost like an afterthought, after four chapters of saying, *"Be strong, my son"* (2:1) and *"continue in what you have learned"* (3:14) and *"encourage others"* (4:2). He is all by himself, in prison for doing good, abandoned by friends and harmed by acquaintances, and he is encouraging Timothy to keep on keeping on.

How do you do that? How is that even possible? Obviously, Paul was some sort of Superman, right? Well, let's go back to the scripture we are looking at in **Galatians 6:9**. Paul says, *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* We will reap a harvest if we don't give up. Now, when Paul gives them the illustration of reaping a harvest, this is something they were well aware of. Everybody had a farmer in the family. This was in their wheelhouse. It would be like me giving you an illustration of a rock truck or a redneck. We know them. We understand them. We are them. He is saying that we shouldn't be weary, mentally or physically, of doing good things because we will reap a harvest. He is not saying the harvest is eternal life in heaven. Good deeds don't get us to heaven. We know that. The harvest is God's blessing and ultimately eternal reward. Some of those blessings may be in the here and now. Some may come then and yonder. It doesn't matter to our motivation because we know that God is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20) here or there.

As Christians, we want to be known for doing good things for people. As a church, we want the same thing. And I've told you before about telling some inmates where I went to church and one of them said, *"I've heard of that place. That's the church that helps people!"* And to me, that was like a home run in the World Series. That's what we want. The problem with being known for doing good things is...you have to actually do good things. It's not enough to want it or have good intentions. You actually have to do them and doing good things...is costly. It will cost you money, time, effort, patience, and more. The good news is that if you do it right and with the right motive and with the right mind-set, it won't feel costly. In fact, it will start to feel like you are gaining something, not losing something. Let me explain.

I was reading in a book this week called Rooted from a church in California. They say that so many times when we give to people who need help, we think of them as the victims and we are their saviors. We may not realize that we have a subtle air of superiority about us and that is not being or becoming more like Jesus. That's the wrong mind-set. We need to give – we are commanded to give – but we need to give to find out what we are to learn from those to whom we are giving. Almost every week, our church is asked by somebody in the community for financial help. It's a situation that happens to all of us and most of us have been there at least once in our lives and, while our church isn't rich, we try to help people when we can. So many times, people that are struggling financially will describe themselves as being powerless, shameful or worthless and terms similar to that. It's not just that they don't have money. The root problem is they don't have peace. So, when we give, we need to give with the mind-set of how can we truly help those people and what is God going to reveal to us through it. Then it's an opportunity to become more like Jesus.

**Isaiah 58:10** says, *"if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you always; **he will satisfy your needs** in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."* I want that! I need that! I want my needs satisfied and my frame to be strengthened. And how does that happen? Isaiah said that happens when we give to others. That book had a great paragraph that said, *"When we engage with the people we are serving, really listen to their stories and get to know them, it doesn't feel like service anymore. It feels like friends enjoying each other's company and doing life together."* So, do you see how that is good for both parties? It's a win-win if you do it with the right motivation and mind-set. It obviously helps the person who is asking but it also helps the person who is helping. Sounds like something only God could come up with. Sounds like what Paul would call reaping a harvest at the proper time. But what about when the person you are trying to help either doesn't want your help or misinterprets the help in some way? What if the whole situation comes back to bite you like we talked about earlier? What if it seems like you are being punished for doing a good deed? Then when it's over, you never want to help anybody ever again.

In 1955 Churchill was near the end of his life. He was physically weak. He was asked to give a commencement address at a British university. He was so weak that he had to be helped to the podium. He stood clinging to the podium for several minutes, his head down. Finally, he looked up and spoke once again in that familiar voice that had called Britain back

from the brink of destruction. It was his last public address. Let me read his entire speech to you. He said, *“Never give up. Never give up. Never give up.”* Then he went back to his seat. There was a long silence, and then the audience rose to their feet with a thundering ovation. This is Paul’s message to us today. When it comes to doing good, doing the right thing, being faithful to God, never give up. Sometimes, when we look at our world with evil present on every hand, we may feel like doing good is useless. Paul wants us to look beyond this world and remember that there is a God and a day of judgment. (Richard Bowman)

At the very end of the Bible, almost the very last page in **Revelation 22**, Jesus says, *“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”* Now, I don’t know what all those rewards are going to be but if Jesus is giving them out, I want it! Now, do you think Jesus is going to look at your good deeds and say, *“Okay, Bob, let’s see. You gave \$10 to Operation Christmas Child and Betty Lou gave \$20 so you get half the reward she gets”*? I guarantee that is not how it’s going to work. Do you know how I know it? Because way back in **1 Samuel 16**, God said, *“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* God sees your motivation. He sees your mind-set and you will be rewarded for that, not how much you spent on something.

I remember right after this church called me to be the pastor, I had lunch with the pastor of the church I used to go to. When he got there and sat down, I asked him, *“Tell me what advice you would give a brand-new pastor.”* His response was quick and bitter. ***“Be prepared when people you love stab you in the back.”*** That was his answer. And it obviously had made him bitter. He had been hurt over and over again. He was a good pastor and had a good ministry but he was tired of it. And I’m sure Paul was tired of it, too, but here he tells us not to give up. And the secret to not giving up is something else Paul wrote, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* (Phil 4:13) The good thing about doing good things is you don’t have to do them in your power. Some people take that verse out of context and say *“Jesus, give me the strength to make a million dollars”* or to get that promotion or that new bass boat. Jesus will give you the strength to do what Jesus tells you to do, if you do it with the right motivation. If you want to make you look good, well I hope you are strong. If you want to make God look good and you want to help other people because you have needed help yourself and you want to truly help them and not just look like you helped them, then God will give you the strength to do that...and do that...and do that...over and over again even if you get hurt doing it.

People can be jerks. Do good to them anyway. If you do good, people will accuse you of having selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway. If you do good, people will take advantage of you. Do good anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. The good you have spent years in building may be destroyed overnight. Do good anyway. Give to God your very best, and you’ll get kicked in the teeth. Give God your best anyway. He gives you the strength and He rewards you when you do it. So, like Nike says, just do it. And Paul ends this passage by saying, *“let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”* There are perks to being in the family of believers. There are benefits to being a Christian and not the least is having a church family that is here to love you and support you spiritually, mentally, physically and sometimes even financially. When one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts, right? Have you ever stumped your toe on the coffee table? Yea, you know.

Church members help church members. Believers help believers. It’s not how you get to Heaven. It’s what people going to Heaven do. So, do you know for sure that if you died tonight that you would go to Heaven? Is your assurance based on your good deeds? I hope not. Your only assurance is through Jesus. When you die and get to Heaven, God is not going to ask you about how many good deeds you did and then look on a chart to see if you did enough to make into Paradise. Your only hope for Heaven; your only hope for peace and joy in this life; your only hope for rewards when you die is God’s grace shown to you by Jesus who died on the cross to pay the price He didn’t owe for the sins you couldn’t pay for. And all you have to do is believe. Believe that Jesus, who is God, satisfied the wrath of God for your sins and they are all now forgiven if you will just make Him Lord of your life. Do it right now as the music plays. We aren’t guaranteed another breath.