

Title: Proving our Own Work (Rejoicing in Christ alone, not another)

Text: Galatians 6: 4, 12-14

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Paul exhorted the Galatians to restore fallen but repentant brethren. After speaking of restoring brethren, Paul gave another important word.

Galatians 6: 4: But let every man PROVE his own work then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another

Let every individual test, try, examine his own work. When it comes to dealing with brethren fallen in sin, let me see to it that I am looking to Christ alone. Let me make certain that I am believing on Christ, using only the gospel of Christ to speak to the brother asking Christ's will be done and waiting on Christ. When a brother is fallen the spiritual who God uses to restore him will draw nearer to Christ. He will speak to the fallen of Christ and the endless mercies and free forgiveness we have in Christ. The spiritual will not use bare precepts. The time for precepts is not after a brother falls. Only the great Physician can heal. Only our great High Priest can sprinkle the blood to purge the conscience and bring the fallen to a spiritual understanding of their sins and of Christ's righteousness. So let a man prove his own work that he is speaking the gospel in love to help the fallen.

Then he will have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. It means then Christ alone will be the rejoicing of his heart, the comfort in his own heart. In the case of restoring the fallen, the rejoicing will be that Christ has made the brother stand in the power of the Spirit rather than the wisdom of men. Christ did it and not me.

Then Paul gives a contrast using the Pharisees.

Galatians 6: 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13: For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

The Pharisee constrains, compels and coerces men with law. They intrude upon men's consciences. They force men into compliance. This is all for a vain show before men for vain glory. This is the very opposite of what Paul exhorts believers to do for one another.

Proposition: Having experienced the power of God's grace and mercy in Christ, Paul exhorts us to glory only in Christ and him crucified—use the gospel to restore that we might rejoice in what Christ alone is able to work in the hearts of his people rather than in what we made them do.

A FAIR SHOW IN THE FLESH

Galatians 6: 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised;

Why do Pharisees constrain men rather than use the gospel of Christ and him crucified? They constrained the Galatian brethren to be circumcised. The act is not what makes it law. We can put any outward act in place of circumcision because it is not the act but the motive and the means used that makes it law. Pharisees coerce others from a legal motive using the means of man's wisdom and man's power. No matter what they are telling others to do it is law. Why do Pharisees do so?

One, they *desire to make a fair show in the flesh.* They desire to show themselves superior before men. Legalists like for others to see what they constrained their followers to do. They do so to make converts to add numbers to their assembly to attract more to come and join them. There are many other ways they make a show in the flesh but these are a few. Paul called it "will-worship" in Colossians 2. Natural men desire this fair show because they have not seen their own depravity and inability and vileness before God. Nor have they seen that Christ alone is the only Righteousness in whom God is pleased.

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Two, they constrain others *only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*. Preaching the gospel of God's electing grace in Christ is offensive to sinners who see themselves worthy of being chosen of God. Declaring that Christ redeemed his particular people and accomplished our justification is offensive to men who look to their works. Preaching that Christ is the Sanctifier and sanctification who makes his people partake of his holiness—making us look out of ourselves, away from ourselves to him alone for holiness, to follow him alone as our pattern and our Lord, with no confidence in our works—is offensive to men who want to be recognized as growing more and more holy. Declaring Christ is not only the Author of faith but the Finisher—that all our acceptance is Christ alone—is offensive to those who want glory for self.

So the gospel will bring persecution. When God saves a preacher and he goes from preaching law to preaching Christ, he will lose numbers. Sinners will only be added to the church by Christ, such as should be saved (Acts 2: 47). It requires God-given patience and God-given faith to preach, pray and wait on Christ to work in the hearts of his people.

Three, legalists do not keep the law so they seek to glory in what they coerce others to do—*Neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh*. They do not keep the law. The law is only kept in perfect righteousness with no sin. Christ alone established the law. It is only through faith in Christ that God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer. We cannot keep the law. That is what faith in Christ is declaring.

But natural men have not experienced the power of God's grace through the gospel. They have not the rejoicing in Christ alone given of the Spirit of God in their hearts. Their rejoicing is not in Christ alone. They are double minded mixing grace and works. Lawmongers have no faith in Christ themselves therefore they have no faith in Christ's ability to work in others.

Therefore, they rejoice in what they constrain others to do by casting out some and coercing others to join. It is seeking vain glory (Gal 5: 26). Christ said men will even attempt to glory before him in the day of judgment.

Matthew 7: 22: Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Romans 8: 5: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6: For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

Philippians 3: 2: Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

This is what Paul means by let us prove our own work. Make certain we are glorying only in the cross of Christ. Examine ourselves so that we are trusting Christ, using the means of the gospel, waiting on Christ to work. The temptation in a believer's sin-nature is to play the Pharisee when a brother falls in sin.

Galatians 6: 1...considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4: But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5: For every man shall bear his own burden.

Believers born of Christ's Spirit are not out to make a fair show in the flesh. We are not out to make ourselves appear better than others. It is not to our glory but the glory of God's grace we seek. We want Christ who has called us and saved us by the power of his Spirit through the gospel to get all the glory in restoring a fallen brother.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

Galatians 6: 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

The Spirit of God has given us faith to behold that Christ, through the death of the cross, is all our salvation. Paul said those who make a fair show in the flesh *constrain you lest they should bear persecution for the cross of Christ*. But in order to glorify God and save his people from our sins, Christ bore persecution and reproach for our sakes.

Romans 15:3: For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Christ is the Gospel and he declared the Gospel. He would not take the offense out of the cross nor use any other means than God ordained. Christ pleased not himself but bore reproach and laid down his life on the cross accomplishing the salvation of his elect to the full satisfaction of infinite justice.

Then our risen Redeemer sent us the gospel of his finished work and by the Spirit gave us faith to cast all on him! So it was that Paul could say *the world is crucified unto us and we to the world*. Christ by the Spirit made us experience the power of the gospel. The power of the Holy Spirit quickened us to life and faith in Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2: 14: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He purged our conscious by his precious blood. That is how he granted us repentance from dead works. It was through the gospel of Christ crucified by the Spirit. His calling is by his will, not our will. It is by his power and wisdom, not the power and wisdom of men.

John 1: 13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

This calling is by his gospel which gives the triune God in Christ all the glory and the sinner none. He loved his people, we did not love him; he chose us, we did not chose him; he quickened and called us, not we ourselves. Christ irresistibly drew us to him and continues to do so; we made no decision for Christ. He took away all choices. God set our heart on Christ. He made Christ all in our heart.

This is the rejoicing we have in our own heart. Believers rejoice in God our Father and his Son Christ Jesus by his free Spirit, not in another. We are no longer comparing ourselves with others. We no longer desiring a fair show in the flesh. We no longer attempt to constrain others to do. But we still have a Pharisee in our old sin-nature which lusts to do so and sometimes we do. Therefore we need this exhortation to *prove our own work*. But is the power and wisdom of Christ by which we received mercy therefore it is the same power and wisdom of Christ that constrains us to use only the gospel that Christ might get all the glory.

2 Corinthians 4: 1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED MERCY, we faint not; 2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth [of the gospel of Christ] commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3: But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,

to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be OF GOD, and not of us.

RECEIVE AND RESTORE

By Christ's love and grace toward us, Christ makes his child more ready to receive and restore than to coerce and cast out. Legal religion is always in the business of their converts. If they find sin they are ready to cast them out. But the Spirit of Christ makes his child more ready to receive and restore, not doubt and dispute and cast out.

Romans 14: 1: Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

It is because having experienced Christ's power through the preaching of the gospel we know Christ is able to save to the uttermost!

Romans 15: 4:...to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand....19: Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another...23: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

Note verse 23. We believe in Christ by the faith OF CHRIST who lives in us. Our faith is of Christ by his faith. It is of Christ that we are given faith. Of Christ our faith is increased. We are even justified by the faith of Christ. In Galatians 2 the King James translation makes a vital distinction that most modern translations have omitted. The "faith of Christ" is Christ's faithfulness. "Faith in Christ" is the faith he gives to us.

Galatians 2: 16: Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith OF CHRIST, even we have believed IN JESUS CHRIST, that we might be justified by the faith OF CHRIST, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 2: 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Now, by his grace giving us faith we behold Christ who is the Head of his body the church,

Colossians 2: 19:...FROM WHICH all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the INCREASE OF GOD.

Who did the apostles ask for an increase of faith?

Luke 17: 5: And the apostles said UNTO THE LORD, Increase our faith.

So when a brother is fallen or cast down or turning to touch not, taste not, handle not—we must remember weak faith is OF CHRIST even as strong faith is OF CHRIST "*according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*" (Eph 4:7) And only Christ gives the increase.

So Paul says *let us prove our own work.* We will only do this by Christ working in us. But when Christ works in us then we trust Christ and look to Christ as we speak the gospel and wait on Christ to work. Then Christ gets all the glory for giving faith and increasing faith and making his child stand by his free Spirit.

But whatsoever is not OF FAITH—not OF CHRIST is not by faith in Christ and therefore it is sin. This is why Paul preached Christ and him crucified. The gospel is the means God ordained to save his people from the first hour to the last. So Paul said,

1 Corinthians 2: 1: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3: And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4: And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom,

but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

In order for a man to preach or even read a passage of scripture in demonstration of the Spirit and of power two things must be done in the man by God:

1) The Spirit must first make the man see himself as the chief of sinners laid utterly in the dust by the very word he intends to deliver. Of all flesh that God declares worthless grass, the very word he intends to deliver must first make him know that in his flesh he is the worst of the worthless grass.

2) The Spirit must make the man know that Christ alone is his righteousness concerning every word he intends to speak. The passage must resonate in his spirit revealing to him that every word has its light from Christ and redounds to Christ's glory so that Christ is his only perfection and acceptance in every word, and that, only by the free gift of God's grace.

This causes in him weakness, fear and much trembling. Anything less will leave him speaking down to his hearers in a demonstration of vanity. This is how we must approach the fallen with the gospel. This is how we must restore the repentant. We do so remembering,

1 Corinthians 1: 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

We have this rejoicing in our own heart—in Christ—not by power and wisdom of men—but by the constraint of Christ's love shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul prayed thus. This is our prayer for one another which we ask the Father through Christ to accomplish in one another because only God can do so.

Ephesians 3: 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Amen!