

*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5For all must carry their own loads. 6Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. 7Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. 10So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.*

*11See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! 12It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. 14May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! 16As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

You work to get paid. If they did not pay you would you hop out of bed on a Monday morning with a smile on your face, grab some breakfast and scoot off to work? I don't think so. Most of us work because we are paid.

But once we get to work how we work may not have much to do with our being paid. Most of us want to do a good job – to please those who have authority over our work. The pay will be the same whether you pick up that scrap of paper or not – whether there is a smile on your face when you greet the customer or not – whether you are gentle as you correct a subordinate or whether you are harsh. Your paycheck will be the same – you all know people who please hardly anyone and still get paid each Friday. But my guess is that most of you who do the little extras and the big extras at work do not do these things for the pay. Your reward is in the job well done – in knowing you did your best – in bringing a smile to a customer's face.

In thinking of your life before God think of eternal life as the paycheck. Jesus did all the work in his dying on the cross – through faith in him you receive the paycheck he earned – eternal life. Trust in him for that and you will not be disappointed. Eternal life is yours in Christ. It is. In his letter to the Galatians St. Paul makes this

clear. “We have come to believe in Jesus Christ, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law.” You are made right with God through faith in Christ – not by what you do.

So how will you spend your time now that you believe that eternal life is a gift to you through Christ? Will you just put in the hours? Or will your joy be in pleasing the Lord for whom you work?

The second lesson is the conclusion of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. I want us to begin two verses before the second lesson. Listen: *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.”*

Some people at work are only competing with other workers. Some do not have their eye on serving the customer, on producing a better product but on beating out the guy at the next desk.

Sometimes you and I may be like that in our life before God – more concerned about looking better than our neighbor than about pleasing God. Then when our neighbor stumbles or falls joy is in our heart rather than sorrow. But our second lesson begins with these words:

*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.* Not joy over a neighbor’s falling but love.

But we have all experienced it otherwise in the church. We see a neighbor’s face light up as they hear about our sin - the way one salesman might find joy in another salesman’s losing an account. But God’s Spirit in you will never find joy in anyone’s sinning. So when I feel joy over another’s falling, I know it is a sign that I am not living by the Spirit of Christ but living by my own flesh.

Paul writes: *Bear one another’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* I help you, you help me. I rejoice with you, you rejoice with me. I share with you, you share with me. In the church there are not some strong ones who do all the helping, and some weak ones who are helped. But God wants each of us to be the one helping, to be the one helped. *Bear one another’s burdens.* If you are not helping another something is not right. If you are not letting others help you, something is not right.

Paul writes: *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.*

All these things Paul is talking about here are the sowing of seeds. The joy I feel when another sins, or the sorrow I feel when another sins, these are seeds sown into the soil of my life. When I see my life always in comparison to your life – competing – rivaling - it is my flesh, my power, my goodness that I am depending on, hoping in, trusting in. As life goes on I find more and more that my flesh fails me – I grow older – my hair grays, my hips ache – my mind is not as quick. But when the Spirit of Christ is my hope and my life then that Spirit will not fail me – not even in death. Love for God and love for others remain at the center of who I am – not competition – getting my own way – being better than someone else. The Spirit of Christ which is love and only love carries me with you into eternal life.

Paul writes, *“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at the harvest-time, if we do not give up.”*

You see it at work. The ones who are only competitive – only in it for the money – may seem to thrive for a time but it is the ones who are deeply concerned about serving the customer and supporting others at work who have the deepest satisfaction.

So it is in our life before God: Sowing to the Spirit – bearing one another’s burdens – gently restoring those who have fallen, doing what is right all bring blessings. Yet like the cross of Christ some of those blessing will not be apparent until God has the final word.

In one sense faith in Christ is trusting just that – that God has the final word.

Which brings us back to where we began – trusting in God’s final word. For you that final word will be:

“Come enter into my kingdom - come, enter into my love - come, share my presence with your sisters and brothers in Christ for all eternity.”