

Sermon preached by Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on Wednesday 16th August 2006. Reading Galatians 6:1-10
Topic: "Perseverance" (Down but not out)

Preachers are often criticized. They go on for too long; their jokes aren't funny; they mumble or they are boring. They talk too much about the theory of Christian living, or they do not have enough application. Many years ago there were a lot more people who would go to church on a Sunday, with their families. Over Sunday dinner they would talk about the sermon, and criticize the minister. And people used to talk about it as having roast parson for lunch. Sadly, today we have lost the art of talking about the sermons or even having a family discussion about the sermon.

On the issue of being practical in a sermon, we come to Galatians 6. I need to say at the outset that this is a very practical and down to earth passage. It concerns the whole question of going on as a Christian, perseverance. Staying the course, maintaining the faith, keeping on as a Christian.

There are many people who have suffered all sorts of problems in their life. And at times these problems have made them feel that they cannot continue to keep believing in Jesus. They may have been caught up in gambling, or working very hard to have lots of money, or drifting away from their marriage partner and falling in love with someone else, or it may have been the desire to have a more exciting life that led them to take drugs, such as alcohol or heroin, or marijuana. Or it may have been that they have had what the world might call a bad run of luck. They may have had friends or family make life hard for them. They may have had an accident or an illness which has been long and painful. They might have had trouble finding a good job, or any job at all. All sorts of problems arise in people's lives.

Christians do not have an exemption from temptations or troubles in our lives. And sometimes in the case of some people, these troubles and temptations can lead them away from the Lord. And this part of Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians gives us some very practical advice about how to deal with those situations and how to help those people who are drifting, or backsliding. And this is a very important part of the scriptures for us here at the Healing Ministry. For we know that it is vital that people know about the healing power of God that can be at work in their lives. We know that so many of the problems in all our lives are the result of sin in the world – sin in our lives at times and sin effecting the world in which we live, and the brokenness of the world and the people in the world, since the Fall in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. God is in the business of healing and restoration. He uses people like you and me, through prayer, to provide assistance to all kinds of people, with small or great needs.

Caring for a brother or sister

A background of fighting is seen in 5:15 and 5:25-26. We need to be on the lookout for one another. There is the idea of being trapped, or tripped up by some sin. All Christians face temptations and struggles. We can be restored through correction and calling to repentance. A spirit of gentleness/humility – fruit of the Spirit. Bear one another's burdens – the big stuff – larger than life problems. You do not have to do everything on your own. Share with one another. Pray for and share with others. There should be no Robinson Crusoe Christians, living isolated lives. Becoming a Christian and staying a Christian is the most important thing in the world. We are praying all the time for people to be healed of various problems, but the greatest healing is becoming a Christian.

2 Caring for yourself

Look out that you do not fall for the same temptation. Know your own weaknesses and frailty. Do not have an inflated or super-human view of yourself. We are all vulnerable. Allow yourself to be cared for by others, trust your fellow Christians. Be a trustworthy person with others. Carry your own load look after yourself spiritually, be responsible for your own Christian commitment and growth. We can better help other people if we have first looked to our own spiritual health and vitality. There are times and seasons in all our lives. Some people have a stronger faith and more stability than others. God loves each one of us, all equally

3 How to nurture your teacher.

Background: the false teachers were seeking support and followers. Paul is teaching the correct doctrine of grace and forgiveness, not law and works salvation. Those who teach correctly should earn their living through being set aside to teach and preach and pray. See Acts 6 and 1 Thess 5:17

Just as important as providing for the teacher, is taking notice of what they say.

How to nurture your faith.

Whatever you learn put into practice. Sow to the Spirit. Follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the word of God. Take it in. Prayer it through. Live it out – day by day. “You are what you eat”. “You are what you think”. You show what you believe by the life you live and the things you do. Sow to the flesh: ie follow the ways of law-keeping and the human nature and you will find yourself a long way from the Kingdom of God ie “corruption”. Sow to the Spirit: ie Walk by the Spirit, seek to bear the fruit of the Spirit, and you will reap life with God forever: “eternal life”

Putting the emphasis on the right things

The false teachers of Paul’s day put the emphasis on keeping the Jewish rules, the Laws of the Old Testament. They denied that Jesus had made all the difference in the world. When he died on the cross he fulfilled the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. In doing so he made it all obsolete, out of date and no longer relevant. The false teachers boasted about their ability to keep the law and do the right thing. Their problem was that not only were they behind the times, they were out of touch with reality. In fact they were all law breakers. No-one is perfect and holy and righteous. We all stand under the judgement of God and are found wanting. They refused to accept the necessity and sufficiency of Jesus’ death, as the complete payment for the sins of the world. Only through faith in Jesus can we know God’s forgiveness, God’s acceptance and God’s welcome into his family. That is what Paul emphasizes as he comes to the end of his letter. See verse 14. Whether you have a Jewish background or not is not important. What really matters is that through faith in the Lord Jesus, you have been born again, born of the Holy Spirit and are now a “new Creation.”

6 We all need peace and mercy and grace.

Do you want to have peace in your life? Do you want to know the mercy and grace of God? Then Paul says: “follow this rule”. Put your faith in Jesus and his cross, his death in your place. Believe in your heart that He died for me and I live for him. For our Heavenly Father is the God of peace. And the peace of God will be with you, day by day. You can be at peace now. But Paul is at pains to make it clear that this peace comes to us only through God’s efforts on our behalf, and never through anything we have done. That’s why he says in verse 16, “And as for those who walk by this rule, peace and mercy upon them, and upon the Israel of God”. When Paul talks here about Israel, he does not mean the old nation of Israel, or even the modern nation-state of Israel that is fighting for its existence. He means the Israel of faith, the new people of God, from every nation tribe and tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Mercy means that God does not give us what we deserve. Through Jesus he lets us off the hook. He provides forgiveness instead of his just condemnation. In verse 16 his prayer is that we might receive God’s grace, meaning God’s generosity, his kindness. By his grace God gives us much more than we deserve or could ever earn by our good deeds.