

Do good to all

3 July 2022

INTRODUCING TODAY'S READINGS ...

Names are interesting. My name is Peter which means 'rock'.

I wonder if you know what your names mean?

Nyelle Near to God or a friend of God

Joelle Jehovah is God

Archie genuine or brave

Olivia related to the olive tree

We have several names for God ... Hebrew El ... hence Nyelle and Joelle

Hebrew Yahweh or Jehovah

Greek Theos or Kurios

English God or Lord

It's interesting that in all Germanic languages including English, the word for good is very similar to the word for God. So if we are good then we are living a bit like God.

This also works for **evil** which is very close to **devil**.

But I digress ... this morning we are thinking about doing good to other people ... how might we do good?

- Share what we have
- Tidy up our toys when we've finished playing
- Playing quietly in church

What might be some other ways of doing good to others ... that reflect the character of God?

BIBLE READING

Psalm 30

I will exalt you, Lord,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

**Lord my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.**

You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;

you spared me from going down to the pit.
**Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.**

For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favour lasts a lifetime;
**weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.**

When I felt secure, I said,
'I shall never be shaken.'

**Lord, when you favoured me,
you made Mount Zion stand firm;**
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.

**To you, Lord, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:**
'What is gained if I am silenced,
if I go down to the pit?

**Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?**
Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;
Lord, be my help.'

**You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.**

[Galatians 6:1-10](#)

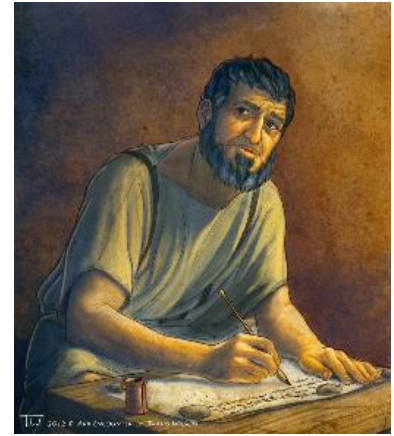
Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. ...

Brothers and sisters, do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what they sow. Whoever sows only to please their own desires, will reap destruction; whoever sows to please God's Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

MESSAGE Do good to all

The apostle Paul was a fiery and passionate person who stirred up controversy wherever he went according to Luke's portrayal in the book of Acts. And Luke should know ... as he was a travelling companion of Paul on several of his journeys.

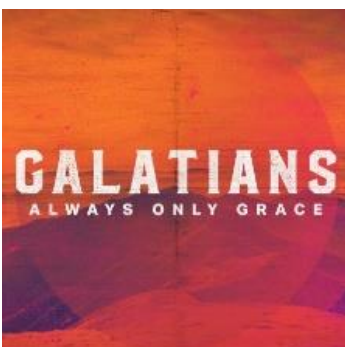
Paul was a towering figure in the early church – who influenced the church's theology and practice for centuries, right up to today. The fact that as Christians we do not follow the Jewish Law is mostly down to Paul and his insistence that we come to know God through faith in Christ and not by the Law, which is a key argument in this letter to the Galatian churches.



But Paul was also very practical and down to earth. So the latter parts of his letters often contain simple advice on how to live the Christian life. This letter is no different. His final appeal in this last chapter of the letter is to **do good to all people** – which is simple, memorable and practical.

But before we get to today's reading, let's briefly recap the letter so far ... Paul started with the story of how he met the risen Jesus and later how he met with – and disagreed with – the apostle Peter over hospitality protocols and who could eat with whom.

Galatians 2:11-14



These stories introduced Paul's understanding of the **gospel** – that we have right relationship with God **by grace** and **through faith in what Christ has done for us**. Paul uses the story of Abraham to illustrate this – Abraham trusted in the promises of God and so was blessed. We followers of Christ are similarly blessed when we trust in the promises of God

that come through faith in Christ. These promises and blessings are ours quite separately from following the Jewish Law. So, Paul argues, we have been **set free from the Law** with its many requirements.

In our **freedom**, though, we are not to indulge ourselves in selfish or immoral behaviour, but instead are to follow the **command** and **example** of Christ to **love our neighbour as we love ourselves**. As we walk in step with God's Spirit, this love will be seen in the fruit that the Spirit grows in our lives – joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Paul now has just a few more points to make ...



First is **how we help each other on this journey of faith**. What happens if one of our brothers or sisters should stumble or fall short of the high bar that Paul has set? Restore the person ... **gently**. No bawling them out or embarrassing them. But also no turning a blind eye and pretending that everything is okay.



Help to carry one another's burdens.
(Galatians 6:2)

Instead we are to **carry each other's burdens**. The gospel gives us freedom to stumble and freedom to occasionally trip up – and it also gives us encouragement to **support each other** when we are struggling. That is one way in which we fulfil the law of Christ, namely to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

This idea of **restoring** a brother or sister who has fallen into sin, though, is not something that we're very good at doing in practice. We may think that a particular person or committee has not acted in a very Christlike way, yet we find it really hard

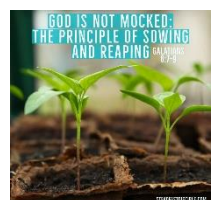
to bring this to their attention in a restoring and kind way. So we tend not to say or do anything ... except perhaps hold a grudge against this person or committee forevermore or avoid them, neither of which is healthy. Meanwhile the people involved may not realise that they have done anything wrong and thus continue with their unhelpful behaviour.

Just occasionally, I have seen Paul's advice put into practice in a restoring and healing way. In one church that we attended, everything was apparently going well. There were healthy numbers attending on Sunday, the music was good and the messages being preached were challenging. But not everybody was happy. Some people thought that the leadership was quite arrogant, that the musicians seemed to treat worship more like a concert and the views of ordinary members were being ignored.

These people had the courage to approach the leaders and their concerns were heard. The leaders realized that they had taken their eyes off what was actually important. As they were an independent church, they sought accountability and oversight from another denomination, the music was toned down and became less performance focused and people were encouraged to share their concerns. Due to these changes the church avoided going off the rails and was restored.

The second point Paul makes is that **we can't fool God** about any of this. God sees through us when we **brag** or **boast** to everyone about how **great we are** and how marvelously well we're doing on our journey of faith.

But neither are we to live just for ourselves, following every selfish desire we might have. According to Paul, God's kingdom works in a simple way – **we reap what we sow**. If we just look after ourselves then ultimately God will judge us accordingly. But if we follow the way of God's Spirit and follow the example of Christ then we will be blessed with eternal life.



Lest we think that this is starting to sound like we have to **earn** our way to heaven through how we live, then we haven't been hearing Paul right. Our standing with God depends on **grace** and **faith**, not what we do ... on the other hand, though, **if the gospel has no impact on how we live**, then perhaps we haven't really grasped the gospel.

In the Lord's Prayer, for instance, we pray that God would **forgive us our sins just as we forgive those who sin against us**. If we have received God's **grace**, then we are called to **extend** that grace to others.

As Jesus expressed it in the Sermon on the Mount ...

Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Matthew 7:12)

How do we live like this? By keeping in step with God's Spirit and allowing the Spirit to transform our thinking ... as Paul's letter to the Romans puts it ...

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but rather let God's Spirit remold your minds from within. (Romans 12:2)

Paul's third and final point is to **persevere** ... do not tire of **doing good**. Let us **do good to all people**, especially those who belong to the family of faith.

This idea of doing good might seem a little wishy-washy, but it's interesting that it's exactly how the apostle Peter describes the ministry of Jesus in the book of Acts. Peter states that ...



God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

For Jesus, doing good involved ...

- healing sick people
- feeding hungry people
- hanging out with people on the margins and restoring them to community, thus overcoming prejudice
- teaching that God seems to have a bias in caring for poor people
- praying for his friends and his enemies
- sharing meals with anyone and everyone, not just your best mates
- always pointing others towards the way to God

If we take our cue from Jesus, then doing good will include **doing similar things**,

starting with helping members of God's family, the church, but spreading out to include our neighbours both nearby and far away.

So rather than being wishy-washy, doing good is actually at the **heart** of living a Christian life that's modelled on the example of Jesus.



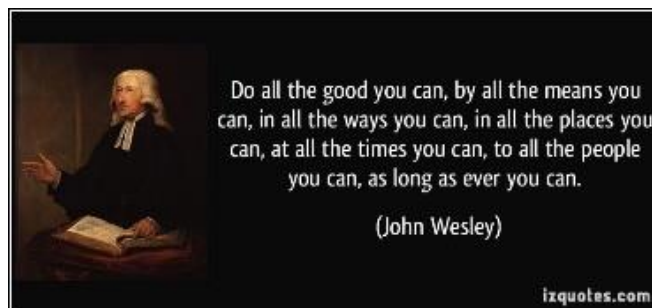
I suspect we all know **how** to do good. The deeper challenge is to **persevere** at doing good. As a person who runs a lot, I know that it's easy to get tired when you run or sometimes to feel weary before you even start to run, so that it's tempting just to stay home and

put your feet up. But that approach doesn't lead to perseverance.

Now when you run and feel tired, it's okay to stop and walk for a while.

I often do that. Or to have a week off. But then it's deciding to go again, knowing that there's a day eventually when I won't be able to run anymore.

So it is with living the Christian life and doing good, following the example of Jesus. We keep going as long as we can and encourage others to do the same. Perhaps John Wesley summed it up best when he wrote this ...



Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as even you can.

We're going to stand and sing now about doing good and shining our light in the world as Christ illuminates our hearts and minds.

HYMN Christ be our light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice.

Refrain

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Refrain

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Refrain

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Refrain

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