GALATIANS 6:10 IN CONTEXT by Steve Fontenot

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). As with any scripture, this must be interpreted *according to its context*. Ignoring context, materialists use the biblical statement “the dead do not know anything” (Eccl. 9:5) to teach that people are unconsciousness after death. Many use “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved” (Ac. 16:31) in support of salvation by “faith only,” not considering its following context. Let us not make a similar mistake with our text.

The doctrinal issue of whether or not Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved was addressed in this letter to the Galatian churches. When doctrinal issues are surging, brethren sometimes begin fighting one another rather than fighting the error. In chapter 5, Paul urges these brethren to serve one another out of love, not to “bite and devour one another” (vv.13-15). The law, *“love your neighbor,”* demands we “serve” rather than “bite.” One does a fellow man *good*; the other destroys him.

He then contrasts “works of the flesh” with the “fruit of the Spirit” which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,” challenging them to “walk by the Spirit.” (5:16-26) The works of the flesh promote “biting and devouring,” but the fruit of the Spirit promotes “serving” for another’s *good*.

Brethren are “neighbors” but more than neighbors. They also have a *special* relationship “in Christ.” Paul, in the verses before our text, discusses ways brethren should “serve” *one another*: restoring the fallen (v.1); bearing one another’s burdens (v.2); not overestimating ourselves (vv.3-5); and cooperating with the teacher (v.6).

In verses 6-9, Paul warns and encourages. He warns against deceiving oneself about the evil of “sowing to the flesh” and encourages perseverance in “doing *good*.” Contextually, “sowing to the *flesh*” refers to the selfish and unloving treatment of our fellow man prohibited beginning in 5:13, “do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the *flesh*...” and characterized by the “works of the *flesh*” (5:19f). Contextually, “doing *good*,” by contrast, refers to serving one another from love as required of neighbors by the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (5:14) and to affording special opportunities toward brethren (6:1f).

Then in our text, Paul sums up: “So then...” indicating that what he says here about doing *good* is based on the previous context. “While we have opportunity” we are to fulfill our responsibilities as “neighbors”—“doing *good* to all men”—and if to neighbors, how much more (“especially”) do we have the responsibility to “do *good*” to one who is not only our neighbor but also our brother in the “household of faith.”

To use Galatians 6:10 to authorize church benevolence to the world’s needy is foreign to the context, confuses the grounds of the moral obligations here demanded, and ignores the unique nature and work of the collective God instituted for saints to provide for duties “in Christ,” the church “of Christ.”

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