

# Rise Up And Build

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*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

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April 25, 2021

## Galatians 6:1-10

"There is no difference between the individual and the church, so what the individual can do, the church can do." I have no idea how many times I have heard that statement. Yet I confess to being somewhat amazed each time I hear it stated. "Surely," I reason to myself, "anyone who can discern the difference between a cow and a herd, a goose and a flock, a student and a school, a citizen and nation, etc., can see the difference between the individual and the church!" But many, including some who purport to be learned preachers of the gospel, claim that there is no difference. Could it be that they actually haven't read I Cor. 12:16: "*For the body is not one member, but many,*" or could it be that somewhere in their vast reading they have failed to look up the meaning of "*body*" and "*member*?" Then, too, it is possible *that they have neglected to read I Tim. 5:16: "If a man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that they may relieve them that are widows indeed."* Can any deny that the "*any man*" or "*woman*" in this verse is individual in application, and that this individual's benevolent responsibility is put in contrast to the church's benevolent work? Surely, if the "*church*" is not to be "*charged*" with the individual's responsibility, there must be a difference between the individual and the church.

But it seems the "there-is-no-difference-between-the-individual-and-the-church" position is most dangerously misapplied when these brethren read such scriptures as Galatians 6:10 and James 1:27. Presently we must forego a discussion of James 1:27, but the argument for both goes like this: "These books were written to churches, so all the action required therein has to be **church action** and not individual action." Our brethren then take the forced position that no book, written to a **church**, could have passages that are strictly individual in application. Hence, inasmuch as Gal. 6:10 says "*let us do good unto all men,*" it is assumed that both the church and benevolence are under consideration; therefore, the church has benevolent responsibilities to the whole world

Of course, a casual reading of Galatians confirms the fact that much of what is required

therein is required of individuals, as individuals, and not of churches as churches. Especially is this made evident in Gal. 3:27: “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Are churches baptized as churches, or are individuals baptized as individuals in order to “*put on*” Christ, and to become members of His church? Friend, I won’t insult your intelligence by telling you the answer to that question! It should be self-evident that it is possible for a book directed to churches to have instructions that apply to individuals, and sometimes only to individuals. Now let us read Galatians 6:1-10, verse by verse, and see if we can determine to whom these instructions apply.

**Verse 1:** “*Brethren, if a **man** be overtaken in a fault, **ye** which are spiritual, restore such an **one** in the spirit of meekness; considering **thyself** lest thou also be tempted.*”

**Comment:** Granting for the sake of argument, that “*brethren*” refers to the church, we ask “to whom is the require action herein addressed?” Surely the “*man.. overtaken in a fault*” is not the church! The “*ye which are spiritual*” refers to certain spiritually minded individuals within the church who sustain an obligation to the one “*overtaken in a fault.*”

**Verse 2:** “*Bear ye **one another’s** burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”

**Comment:** The “*ye*” of verse two refers to the same ones as the “*ye*” of verse one. Hence, inasmuch as the “*ye*” of verse one pertains to certain individuals, it is evident that the same are addressed verse two.

**Verse 3:** “*For if a **man** think **himself** to be something, when **he** is nothing, he deceiveth **himself**.*”

**Comment:** The noun “*man*” and the pronouns “*himself*” and “*he*” make it clear that the church as such is not described in this verse.

**Verse 4:** “*But let every **man** prove **his** own work, and then shall **he** have rejoicing in **himself** alone, and not in another.*”

**Comment:** Same as in verse three.

**Verse 5:** “*For every **man** shall bear **his** own burdens.*”

**Comment:** Same as for verse four.

**Verse 6:** “*Let **him** that is taught in the word communicate unto **him** that teacheth in all good things.*”

**Comment:** Once again the “*him*” identifies the who. In this verse a **pupil** and a **teacher** are designated; not the church as a collective body.

**Verse 7:** “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever **a man** soweth, that shall **he** also reap.*”

**Comment:** The “*man*” who sows is the “*he*” that reaps! And, contextually speaking, the “*him*” of verse six who communicates “*unto him that teacheth in all good things*” is the “*he that soweth to the Spirit*” of verse eight. Still **a person**, not a church.

**Verse 8.** “*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*”

**Comment:** Note preceding comments. Also note that sowing “*to the flesh*” does not in this context refer to matters inherently immoral. The unspiritual person who refuses to restore the fallen, bear burdens, and “*communicate unto him that teacheth...*” is sowing “*to his flesh.*” One can be lost by refusing to do something **right** as by persisting in doing something wrong!

**Verse 9:** “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.*”

**Comment:** Contextually speaking, the “*well doing*” of this verse is the doing enjoined in the preceding verses. “*Well doing*” is doing which we must **keep** doing. Moreover, the reaping of this verse is the “*life everlasting*” of the preceding verse, and we reap as we are judged — **individually**, and not as churches (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)!

**Verse 10:** “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*”

**Comment:** The “*we*” and “*us*” who are to “*do good*” in this verse are the “*we*” and the “*us*” who are to do “*well*” in verse nine, which includes the “*he that soweth to the Spirit*” in verse eight. There is, however, an extension of responsibility in this verse to include in a general way “*all*” as “*opportunity*” permits, with special emphasis still placed on our responsibility “*unto them who are of the household of faith.*” But, friend, note this: “*The household of faith*” is the **church**. The “*them who are of the household of faith*” are the individual members of the church. And likewise the “*we*” and “*us*” are individual members of the church (not the church in its collective sense!), and the responsibilities enjoined herein falls on the “*we*” and the “*us*” - individuals and not churches.

#### **Added Observation:**

Study these verses carefully, and you will note that the responsibilities enjoined herein are primarily of a spiritual nature. If benevolence is suggested, it is at best secondary to the primary spiritual requirements these verses enjoin. Moreover, the “*good*” of verse ten can be done to “*all*,” not simply to a select number who are financially impoverished. I can do “*good*” to a Gates or to a Trump by teaching them the gospel, but I am hard pressed to do benevolence to such people!

However, I readily admit that the “*do good*” of this verse can, and sometimes does, include benevolence, but the ones obligated in these verses are individual Christians, as they “*have therefore opportunity.*” And I confess that it really takes some doing for a person to substitute the church in the place of the individuals in this verse, and then turn

right around and substitute the orphan home in the place of **the church**. What is the difference between this and substituting sprinkling for immersion?

It seems strangely significant that brethren did not have much difficulty understanding the difference between the individual and the church until they started building human institutions which they wanted **the church** to support! It was simply the old story of a **position** in search of a **proof text!**

—by Bobby Witherington

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