

Galatians 6:1-6

Galatians 6:1-9—“1Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5for each one should carry his own load. 6Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. 7Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

1Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin,

. The word “caught” literally means to be “detected,” “overtaken,” or “surprised.”

. Because this word appears in the passive voice, as such it conveys the idea of surprise: someone; suddenly entrapped or discovered in an unseemly situation or heinous act.

• What's interesting about this is that people don't just suddenly fall into some kind of horrendous sin. There is always a progression that leads up to it.

However, this obvious progression is something that the person going through it all too often is oblivious to. It is obvious to those on the outside, but is frequently undetected by those experiencing it. Similar to the frog in the boiling pot of water.

. It seems clear that Paul was responding to some type of real life situation in which concrete acts of wrongdoing were taking place. What were those acts of wrongdoing? Probably the very things he had just listed in 5:19-21, “...sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

. The verb (“should restore him”) is instructive.

. *Katartizo* means to “put in order,” and so to “restore to its former condition” (Arndt-Gingrich).

o It was used in secular Greek as a medical term for setting a fractured or dislocated bone.

o It is applied in Mark 1:19 to the apostles who were “mending” their nets...they were “overhauling” (NEB) their nets “by cleaning, mending and folding (them) together.” NIV, they were “preparing” their nets.

. If we detect somebody doing something wrong, we are not to stand by doing nothing

because “it.s none of our business and we have no wish to be involved.”

- o Nor are we to despise or condemn him in our hearts. Still less, if he suffers for his wrong, say “Serves him right.”

- o Nor are we to report him to the minister or gossip about him to our friends in the congregation.

. Ills. Several years ago when I was pastoring at another location, a man in the church became aware of a woman in the church that was having an affair. The man.s wife came to me and told me about what he had discovered. I asked the wife what her husband said to the woman and how she reacted. The wife informed me that her husband had not spoken to the woman at all (and had no plans to). Instead, he told his wife, who told me so that I could go and intervene. I pointed out that this was precisely the wrong way to deal with the situation. He was the one that had first-hand information (not me), and it was he that was responsible before God to confront/restore her. The wife.s response was simply to say, “Oh, you know my husband. He.s just not that kind of guy. He doesn.t like confrontation.”

You who are spiritual should restore him...

. He is referring to “mature” Christians. “Spiritual” Christians are those that are “led by the Spirit,” they “walk by the Spirit,” so that “the fruit of the Spirit” appears in their lives.

. We may not use this as an excuse to avoid the awkward duty of confronting.

. How it should this confrontation/restoration be done?

...you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

. The Greek word for “gentleness” (praotes) occurred in 5:23 as part of the fruit of the Spirit, for “gentleness.”

. By way of reminder, Gentleness (prates): The word connotes submissiveness and a teachable spirit toward God that manifests itself in genuine humility and consideration toward others.

. It originated in the equestrian world, and was the term used for a powerful horse that had been broken.

. It is strength under control, power harnessed in loving service and respectful action.

But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

. Paul adds that we are ourselves are to be watchful, lest we also are tempted.

- o This suggests that gentleness is born of a sense of our own weakness and proneness to sin.

. The purpose of such disciplinary measures is always redemptive, never punitive.

- . Vigilance and self-examination are prerequisites for the would-be restorer lest he or she fall prey to the same temptation.
- . Restoration cannot be accomplished without confrontation, and this may require firm words and a stern rebuke.
- . Luther.s advise to a pastor charged with restoring a lapsed brother:

o Luther: “Run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.”¹

. Stott: “It is sad that in the contemporary church this plain command of the apostle is more honored in the breach than the observance. Yet if we walked by the Spirit we would love one another more, and if we loved one another more we would bear one another’s burdens, and if we bore one another’s burdens we would not shrink from seeking to restore a brother who has fallen into sin. Further, if we obeyed this apostolic instruction as we should, much unkind gossip would be avoided, more serious backsliding prevented, the good of the church advanced, and the name of Christ glorified.”²

. This passage is the New Testament answer to Cain’s irresponsible question “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9).

. It is a sign of the spiritual stupor that has befallen the body of Christ that church discipline is seldom if ever raised as a viable concern in evangelical churches today.

• Historically, the practice of discipline served a twofold purpose:

1. Restoration of the lapsed brother or sister to full fellowship, &
2. It clearly marked off the boundaries between the church and the surrounding culture.

• The loss of this historic distinctive has resulted in the crisis of spirituality that pervades so much of our church life today.

• The question is, can we recover this structure of accountability in our congregational life without lapsing into narrow judgmentalism?

• We will not find answers to these questions until we recover that pattern of personal striving and self-examination.

1 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols., ed. J Pelikan and H.T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986), 27:110-111.

2 John Stott, *The Message of Galatians in The Bible Speaks Today* series, John Stott, ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 162.

3 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 261.

2Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

. First, for Paul the “law of Christ” is “the whole tradition of Jesus. ethical teaching, confirmed by his character and conduct and reproduced within his people by the power of the Spirit.”³

. Second, Paul’s point in this statement seems to be that if we do not or will not bear one another’s burdens, it is because we think we are above it.

o Such, we think, would be beneath our dignity.

. Our conduct to others is governed by our opinion of ourselves.

o Just as we provoke & envy others when we have self-conceit, so when we

think we are “something” we decline to bear their burdens.

4Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5for each one should carry his own load.

. In other words, instead of scrutinizing our neighbor or comparing ourselves with him, we are to test our “own work” for we will have to bear “our own load.” That is, we are responsible to God for our work and must give an account of it to Him.

. It seems clear that the “actions” that are to be tested are: if and how we helped our neighbors with their burdens.

o Paul states that we should actually examine ourselves in this regard.

. Incidentally, there is no contradiction here between the two statements:

o V. 2, “Carry each other’s burdens,” and

o V. 5, “each one should carry his own burden.”

o The Greek word for burden in verse 2 is *baros*, meaning a “weight” or “a heavy load.”

o In verse 5 the Greek term, *phortion* was a common term for a man’s “backpack” or “daypack.”

o Stott: “So we are to bear one another’s burdens, which are too heavy for a man to bear alone, but there is one burden which we cannot share—indeed do not need to because it is a pack light enough for every man to carry himself—and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgment.”

. On November 4, 1790, the English Baptist Church of Horse Fair, Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, set forth as a part of its congregational covenant the following statement,

o “[We agree] to walk in love toward those with whom we stand connected in the bonds of Christian fellowship. [In an attempt to do this], we will pray much for one another. As we have opportunity, we will associate together for religious purposes. Those of us who are in more comfortable situations in life than some of our brethren, with regard to the good things of Providence, will administer as we have ability and see occasion, to their necessities. We will bear one another’s burdens, sympathize with the afflicted in body and mind, so far as we know their case, under their trials; and as we see occasion, advise, caution, and encourage one another. We will watch over one another for good. We will studiously avoid giving or taking offenses. Thus we will make it our study to fulfill the law of Christ... These things, and whatever else may appear enjoined by the Word of God, we promise in the strength of divine grace to observe and practice. But knowing our insufficiency for anything that is spiritually good, in and of ourselves, we look up to him who giveth power to the faint, rejoicing that in the Lord we have not only righteousness but strength. Hold us up, O Lord, and we shall be safe! Amen!”⁴

4 “The Church Covenant of the Particular Baptist Church, meeting in the Horse Fair, Stony Stratford, Bucks,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 3 (1926): 41-44; reprinted in C.W. DeWeese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 129-130.

6Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. 7Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

. At first sight, these instructions and exhortations appear to be very loosely connected. But a closer look at them reveals the connecting link; it is the great principle of sowing and reaping. This is stated in verse 7: “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

. John Stott: “This is a principle of order and consistency which is written into all life, material and moral.”

. Take agriculture. God promised Noah after the flood that, so long as the earth remained, “seedtime and harvest,” that is, sowing and reaping, would not cease (Gn. 8:22).

. If a farmer wants a harvest, he must sow his seed in his field; otherwise, there will be no harvest.

. Furthermore, the kind of harvest he will get is determined in advance by the kind of seed he sows. This is true of its nature, its quality and its quantity. If he sows barley seed he will get a barley crop; if he sows wheat seed he will get a wheat crop. Similarly, good seed will produce a good crop, and bad seed a bad crop. Again, if he sows plentifully, he can expect a plentiful harvest, but if he sows sparingly, then he will reap sparingly as well (cf 2 Cor. 9:6). Putting the three together, we may say that if a farmer wants a bumper harvest of a particular corn, then he must not only sow the right seed, but good seed and that plentifully.

. The same principle operates in the moral and spiritual sphere. Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. It is not the reapers who decide what the harvest is going to be like, but the sowers.

. This principle is an immutable law of God. In order to emphasize it, the apostle prefaces it with both a command (“do not be deceived”) and a statement (“God is not mocked”).

. Stott: “Many people are deceived concerning this inexorable law of seedtime and harvest. They sow their seeds thoughtlessly, nonchalantly, and blind themselves to the fact that the seeds they sow will inevitably produce a corresponding harvest. Or they sow seed of one kind and expect to reap a harvest of another. They imagine that somehow they can get away with it. But this is impossible. So Paul adds: God is not mocked.”⁵

. When it says God is not mocked, the word means to “turn up your nose.” God will not be snubbed.

5 Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, 166.

6Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his

instructor.

. Whether the instruction given is private, or in a catechetical school in which converts are being prepared for baptism, or to a whole congregation by their pastor, the principle is the same, that he who is taught the word should help to support his teacher.

o A minister should expect to be supported by the congregation. He sows the good seed of God's Word, and he reaps a livelihood.

o I remember when some Mormon elders came to my home. They took a tremendous amount of pride in the fact that they didn't take any kind of salary, nor was there a host of paid ministers in their church. But Paul makes it plain that "those that preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

o Corinthians 9:13-14 "Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel."

o 1 Timothy 5: 17-18, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, „Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain.. and „The worker deserves his wages..”

. Some people find this embarrassing. But the biblical principle is emphasized many times. The Lord Jesus said to the Seventy whom He sent out, „The laborer deserves his wages. (Luke 10:7).

. Paul makes explicit use of the sowing and reaping metaphor to teach the same truth: "If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits ?" (1 Cor. 9:11).

. Stott: "[The] scriptural principle is clear, that the minister should be set free from secular wage-earning in order to devote himself to the study and the ministry of the Word, and to the care of the flock committed to his charge.

. Luther "It is impossible for one man both to labor day and night to get a living, and at the same time to give himself to the study of sacred learning as the preaching office requireth."

