

Galatians Chapter 6

Restoring A Sinning Believer - Galatians 5:26-6:6

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Paul begins this final chapter with instructions for dealing with sinning brethren. In context, this most likely refers to those who have stumbled into legalism, but by extension it can refer to any sin that a believer may fall into.

This is a most appropriate subject, as one of the glaring problems in the church today is the ability to deal with sin. Most often two opposite extremes are practiced. The first extreme is to completely overlook sin in the life of members. Those who follow this method quote Matthew 7:1-3 which says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” Their point is that they have enough problems of their own without dealing with the problems of others. After all, God is the one who is the ultimate judge and he is the one who will eventually make everything right.

The second extreme is to become judgmental, legalistic, and harsh. Anyone who commits a sin in the eyes of those who follow this extreme are likened to lepers. They are treated judgmentally and harshly as though they have committed the most heinous sins imaginable. In addition to this, many of these people consider themselves better than others, after all, they have not committed “that sin”.

There are problems with both of these extremes. In the first case, sin is allowed to run rampant through the Church. When this happens, the testimony of the church is tarnished and Christ is dishonored. Paul scolds the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 5 for tolerating a man who was committing incest. He writes in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.” Apparently the Corinthian church patted themselves on the back for their patient tolerance of this man’s sin. Paul, far from commending the charitable actions, denounces them and tells them to discipline this man.

Another example of Paul’s attitude towards sin in the congregation is his words in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-14 which says, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.” Apparently some of the Thessalonian believers had taken Paul’s instructions about the Rapture and Day of the Lord to heart so well that they had become busybodies. Instead of working and providing a living for themselves, they were walking out of line. The word for disorderly is *ataktos*, and was used secularly to refer to a soldier who was marching out of step with the company or for an apprentice to a trade who skipped his duties for the day and played hooky. Dealing with sin in the body of Christ was something Paul was very concerned about, and something he wanted all of the churches to take seriously as well.

However, the second position can turn a church into a Gestapo-run organization. Anytime anyone steps out of line in the least bit, the wrath of the church falls. In the first case, love has overcome a love for the truth producing sentimentality, in the second truth has overcome love producing a cold and harsh church.

Where we need to be in this is in the middle. We need to deal decisively with sin in the body of Christ, but we need to do that in such a way so as we do not become judgmental, harsh, and critical. It is too easy to stray one way or the other. That is why Paul takes some time here in the sixth chapter of Galatians to deal with this topic. He starts out by telling the Galatian believers to not become desirous of vainglory, contentious, and envious of others. These are characteristics that are the opposite of a caring and nurturing attitude which is to characterize our relationships with other believers. If we fall into the trap of being cantankerous and contentious, then we will fall into the second of the extremes mentioned above.

The key to this passage is the word “restore.” When a fellow believer sins we are to seek for his restoration, not condemnation. Too often we opt out for the latter since it makes us feel better and more holy than others. However, this is not the mindset we are to display. Someone has once said that if he were to ever fall into sin, he would like to fall into the hands of the barkeepers, prostitutes, and other sinners since they would exhibit more care and concern for him than the self-righteous churchgoers who would cut him to ribbons with their gossip and condemnation.

Help Him Up - Galatians 6:1

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.

The first step in restoring a sinning brother is to help him up. The word for overtaken is *paralambano*, and has the idea of being tripped up. This is not a brother who was out looking to fall into sin, but it appears as though the sin caught him by surprise. This is further emphasized by the word fault which is *paraptoma*. This word emphasizes the sin which is inadvertent, something which one falls into.

The attitude towards one who falls into sin is that those who are spiritual restore him. Spiritual here is used in a comparative sense, and not an absolute sense. In other words, those who are spiritual are spiritual only in comparison to the one who fell into sin and not because they have reached a level of maturity in their life. They are not a spiritual “Gestapo” who have arrived and have the task of disciplining others who fall into sin. Rather, they are as weak as the one who fell into sin, it is just that they have not done so by the grace of God.

Those who do the restoration are to do it with a spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. This means that those who take part in the restoration of the sinning brother do not do so with a “holier-than-thou” attitude, but rather that they do it with the understanding that unless they depend on God’s sustaining grace they could fall into the very same sin. It is a very dangerous thing for any Christian to get to the point where they feel that they will not commit a sin. Usually when that happens they are setting themselves up for a fall. The restoration of a sinning brother must be done by those who meekly and soberly understand their own weaknesses and temptability as well.

Hold Him Up - Galatians 6:2-5

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his

own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.

The second step to restoring a sinning brother is that of holding him up. What Paul has in mind here is the body-life concept of mutual dependence and encouragement. When we bear another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ which, according to Romans 13:8 is "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." If we truly love others, then we have fulfilled the law of God. The burdens in view here are the heavy burdens that others bear (burden is *baros*, which is heavy). Every one of us has a heavy burden that is difficult to deal with on our own, but when others come alongside and share in that burden, it becomes significantly lighter and more bearable.

Why is it so necessary to bear one another's burdens? It is because we are so proud. We would like to think that we do not need anyone else to deal with the Christian life, that Jesus and me alone are enough. What we fail to realize is that ultimately we need others. One of the great things about the body of Christ is that there are others to help us with our burdens. We cannot get so proud that we think that we need no one else or think that those who fall into sin are bums anyway, and who cares about them. They fell into sin, let them deal with it. When we get this mindset, we fall into the trap of thinking we are something, when in reality we are nothing.

The story is told about a country preacher who was visiting one of his flock who had missed a lot of church. During the conversation the parishioner made the statement, "Well preacher, I don't really need anyone else. After all, I have Jesus. I don't really need to be around other believers." The preacher picked up a poker from the fireplace and moved a hot coal to the side. As they sat there and conversed the coal grew dim and gray. When the preacher again picked up the poker and moved the coal back with the others, it soon became warm and glowed again. The parishioner got the message.

One of the requirements for helping others is that we prove our own works first. The word for prove, *dokimazo*, has the idea of testing for genuineness. Too often we are quick to run and help others or point out their faults when we have bigger ones of our own. This is what Christ was trying to say in Matthew 7. His statements are not to be construed as prohibiting us from pointing out the faults of others, but pointing out those faults when we have bigger ones of our own. When we have proven our own work, then we can see clearly to help others.

At first verse five appears to contradict the rest of the passage, but what Paul is saying in verse five is that we need to bear our own burdens of life. The word for burden here is *phortion*, and does not carry the idea of load but was often used to refer to the general responsibilities of life. In context this can refer to the believer's responsibility towards others or the responsibility for bearing the load of his own ministry. In any case, the idea appears to be that we need to bear one another's heavy burdens, but always be ready to carry our own load of responsibilities. Just because we are Christians does not give us the right to unload all of our duties on others.

Build Him Up - Galatians 6:6

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

The third and final step in restoring a sinning brother is to build him up. Those that are taught in the word, and by extension live what they know, are responsible for communicating that truth to others. As believers are encouraged and edified in the Lord, they get to the point where they are able to carry their burdens better themselves. Furthermore, the word translated communicate is *koinonia*, which means sharing. In the body of Christ those that

know the word share with those that do not. There is not indication of inferiority or superiority here, but of a healthy body-life in which one member cares for the others within the framework of mutual responsibility and care.

Divine Agriculture - Galatians 6:7-10

Stated - Galatians 6:7

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

Why is body life so important? Why is it necessary that we be concerned about helping others live godly lives? It is because whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. Paul tells the Galatian believers to not be deceived. The word for deceive is *planao*, from which we get planet. It means "to wander." Don't be deceived, Paul says, whatever you sow you will also reap.

This is a divine and inviolable law. History is full of men who sowed to their flesh, and reaped the whirlwind as a result. Ernest Hemingway made it his life's goal to mock God, only to end his life by putting a bullet into his own head. Oscar Wilde mocked God, only to be imprisoned as a homosexual. Sinclair Lewis mocked God, and died an alcoholic in Italy. Somerset Maugham mocked God, and died in terror at the age of ninety-one. Belshazzar mocked God, and had God's own hand write the story of his doom. Whenever men mock God they place themselves under God's divine judgment. No one gets away with mocking God, and no one escapes the ultimate punishment of God.

How do men reap that which they have sown? First, men reap what they have sown in their own bodies. Paul alludes to this in Romans 1:27 when he writes about the homosexual, "*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.*" There is a physical price to pay for sin.

A second way in which men reap that which they have sown is in the lives of their families. We are reminded of David. Because of his sin with Bathsheba Nathan told him, "*the sword shall not depart from your house.*" That was fulfilled literally in the death of Amnon, the death of Absalom, and the rape of Tamar. Jacob saw this divine law operative in his own family, as his sin resulted in incest in the case of Reuben and the murder of an entire city in the case of Levi and Simeon. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

A third way in which this law is seen in operation is in the eternal sense. Every sin that a man sows in this life will reap a just and necessary punishment in the next. We often see guilty criminals commit some great crime and seemingly get away with it. Not so! That which they escape in this life will catch up with them in the next. That which a man sows, will he also reap.

Explained - Galatians 6:8

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.

There are only two fields in which a man can sow. He can sow to the flesh, and reap the necessary consequences, or he can sow to the Spirit, and reap everlasting life. Every act that a man does is in a sense sowed into one of these two fields. Those who sow to the flesh reap

corruption. Corruption is from the word *phthora*, which denotes something which goes from bad to worse. The more one sows to the flesh, the more corruption is reaped.

It is interesting to note that most sin is self-destructive. That is, the more one indulges in a sin, the more of a grip that sin has on the life. Eventually, the grip of that sin becomes so strong that it overcomes the sinner and destroys him. Those who start down the path of alcohol wind up as alcoholics, completely destroyed by liquor. Those who become addicted to drugs eventually “burn themselves out” using these substances with no thought of stopping. Those who start down the path of immorality eventually kill themselves to commit one more sin. It is interesting to note that the men of Sodom who were struck blind by the angels wearied themselves to find the door even after they were blind. Their lust was so great that even the supernatural act of blindness did not stop them from attempting to seek gratification.

Fulfilled - Galatians 6:9

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

For the believer how is this spiritual law fulfilled? It is fulfilled in the eternal fruit which we will bear in heaven. As we sow our spiritual seed, it is easy to become disillusioned and disheartened about the apparent lack of fruit. The words used for weary and faint, *enkakeo* and *ekluo*, both have the idea of being tired and faint. We need to rest assured that most of the fruit of our labors will not be seen in this life, but the next. Just like the farmer must wait for the harvest, so we need to patiently wait for our eternal harvest.

Applied - Galatians 6:10

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

How is our attitude towards sowing and reaping to be carried out? It is to be carried out in our actions and deeds towards others. If we really believe we will reap eternal dividends, then we need to be active in our actions towards others, especially towards those who are other believers. The word translated “let us do” is *ergazomai*, and means to “actively work at with diligence.” Our labors towards others should be diligent labors.

The Flesh or the Cross - Galatians 6:11-18

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Paul has now reached the end of this letter. As he closes the letter, he wraps it up by reminding the Galatian believers of the fundamental issue which he has discussed with them, glorying in the flesh or glorying in the cross. Those that follow the path of legalism will always glory in their flesh. They will point out their good deeds and actions. Those that glory in the cross place no confidence in their flesh, but point all glorying to the cross of Christ.

Glorying In the Flesh - Galatians 6:11-13

What are the foundational characteristics of those who glory in the flesh. Paul lists three.

The Legalists Gloried In Their Religion - Galatians 6:12a

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised;

The first characteristic of those who gloried in their flesh was that they gloried in their religion. The motivation of the Judaizers were not the welfare of the Galatian believers, but the aggrandizement of themselves. They were more worried about how the Galatian believers would reflect on themselves than they were about how the Galatian believers would reflect on Christ.

We have modern-day Judaizers in the form of many religions. Some require that believers worship on the Sabbath. Others require that believers submit to infant baptism, or some other ceremonial ritual. The motivation for many of these is that they desire to garner as large a following as possible. This is fueled by the church-growth mentality in which numbers are more important than people. Those with the mega-churches are the bigshots, and the faithful pastor who ministers to his small flock is overlooked.

The Legalists Were Cowards Regarding the Cross - Galatians 6:12b

only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

The second characteristic of those who gloried in their flesh was that they were cowards about the cross. See, one of the major characteristics of those who are in false religion is that they avoid the scandal of the cross, and hence avoid persecution. A person can put on a bathrobe, walk up and down the street telling everyone he is Moses, and most won't pay any attention to him. The second a person claims to know Christ and believe in the redemption obtained for men at the cross, they are branded a loony-toon and avoided. It is easy to avoid the scandal of the cross, don't talk about it. However, if anyone has the gall to stand up and claim to know divine truth they are immediately ridiculed and told to sit down. The cry of the day is believe anything, just don't believe you are right.

The Legalists Were Hypocrites - Galatians 6:13

For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

The third characteristic of the legalists were that they were hypocrites. Their great desire was that they get as many followers as they could. They strove to get men to follow them even though they wanted those men to do things they couldn't do themselves. Christ blistered the Pharisees in Matthew 23:4-5 with these words, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." **The Pharisees were concerned with external show, not inward reality. They would bind heavy burdens on others, most notably the burden of the law, while they themselves broke that very law.**

Paul alludes to this same idea in Romans 21:7-23 where he writes, "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" **Paul's point is that while the Jews prided themselves in the keeping of the law, they in fact broke the law and dishonored God in the process.**

Glorying In the Cross - Galatians 6:14-16

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

In distinction to those who gloried in their flesh, Paul gloried in the cross of Christ. The legalists prided themselves on their own accomplishments and righteousness, Paul prided himself on God's accomplishment and on God's righteousness. To that end, Paul lists three aspects of the cross of Christ.

The Cross Frees Men From The World - Galatians 6:14b

by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

The first accomplishment of the cross is that it frees men from the world. James tells us in James 4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." John tells us in 1 John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The point of both of these passages is that it is not possible to both be a friend of the world and a friend of God. One of the most important things the cross does is to free men from the world so that they can serve and love God.

When Paul saw the glory of the cross he trashed the world and everything that went along with it. The idea behind crucifixion here is that Paul became dead to the world and the world to him.

The Cross Transforms The Sinner - Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Secondly, the power of the cross transforms the believer. Under the Mosaic law all of humanity was divided into the Jew and the Gentile. In Christ, both Jew and Gentile are "one new man". The cross transforms the sinner into a saint.

Paul makes a direct slap against the Judaizers who made circumcision an essential part of saving faith. In Christ, circumcision or uncircumcision mean nothing, only ones belief in Christ and the power of the cross.

The Cross Brings Salvation - Galatians 6:16

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Finally, the cross brings salvation. "Israel of God" refers not to physical Israel, but to spiritual Israel, those who come to Christ by faith and follow in the steps of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Rule refers to the facts of the Gospel, that of divine accomplishment as opposed to human achievement. Those who come to God by faith receive peace and mercy. Peace in the sense that the war is over and mercy in the sense that their sins are covered and dealt with.

Conclusion and Postscript - Galatians 6:17-18

*From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.
Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

Paul closes the letter to Galatians with the statement, "Let no man trouble me." What he is saying is "Look, I've said everything I am going to say, now leave me alone about this." To substantiate his statement he reminds the Galatian believers that he is bearing about in his body the marks of Christ. The Judaizers wore the marks of the flesh, circumcision, Paul wore the marks of Christ, the physical scars of mistreatment at the hand of sinners.