

Galatians 6:1-5 “You Who are Spiritual”

GAL 6:1-5 “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”

As we approach a new chapter in our study through Galatians we come to a portion where Paul now takes his previous instruction and begins to put feet to it as he now applies this teaching to practical living.

It's one thing to talk about walking in the fruit of the Spirit, but it's quite another thing to actually apply it to our lives as we seek to please our Lord and Savior.

And what Paul wants from these Galatians is for them to begin to move away from a legalistic approach to salvation and sanctification to a spiritual and Spirit led approach to where the fruit of the Spirit effects every area of their lives, not the least of which is to put aside any bickering and division within their ranks.

You see Paul has thrown down the gauntlet. He has forced these Galatian Christians to choose between Moses and Christ. He has forced them to choose the truth over the Judaizers who were promoting falsehood.

But in making these choices the last thing Paul wants is for these Christians to go about approaching other brothers and sisters in Christ in an ungodly way as they choose to go forward with Christ, leaving the false teachings behind.

After all, they are still part of the same spiritual family and they need to learn to live with each other, realizing that other brothers and sisters in Christ are not the enemy. Now, granted some of the Judaizers may in fact have been unbelieving Jews who were trying to disrupt the body of Christ and they need to be encouraged to repent and embrace Christ alone for their salvation.

If they are not willing to do that then they need to be put outside of the church. The leaders cannot tolerate heretical teaching which could adversely affect the rest of the body.

But whenever you have a situation where someone in the church has made an impression on the body and division has taken place, where sides are drawn up over these people, then feelings are going to be hurt, along with some anger expressed.

And unless the approach with other brothers and sisters in Christ is loving reconciliation then the walls stay up and the work for Christ's Kingdom doesn't go forward, which is exactly what the enemy wants.

This is precisely what happened in Corinth as Paul writes to them the first time over such a problem.

1CO 1:11-15 "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name."

The Corinthians had taken up sides over different people they had aligned themselves with. And this was certainly a problem which could be found in any church, and the church in Galatia was no exception.

And so, Paul instructs them as to how to deal with someone in the body who might be sinning. If one of these people didn't happen to be in a particular clique then those outside of that clique might be tempted to treat them more harshly.

In keeping with the theme of the fruit of the Spirit in the previous chapter Paul now instructs them how to apply that fruit to each other.

GAL 6:1 "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

The idea of being caught in a sin might be taken two ways. One way could include actually being caught in the act of committing a sin. But there is a second way to interpret this and the KJV alludes to it as it translates this portion, "overtaken in a fault."

John MacArthur subscribes to this second approach as he says, [this] "interpretation is also supported by Paul's use of [the Greek

word for] trespass, which has the basic idea of stumbling or falling. The man does not commit the sin with premeditation but rather fails to be on his guard or perhaps flirts with a temptation he thinks he can withstand. Or he simply tries to live his life in his own power and fails, producing a deed of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit.”

This is a potential problem we all face. But instead of taking a “get in your face” approach Paul would suggest, in most cases, (there certainly could be exceptions), to go to that brother or sister with all gentleness.

The idea is not to drive them away from the means of God’s grace, which is the fellowship of the church and all that that entails, but to encourage them to repent of their sin as they continue to take advantage of the means of growth found in the word of God.

But notice who Paul says to approach such a person caught in a sin. “You who are spiritual should restore him gently.”

Who are these people who are spiritual? Well, it’s not an elite group within the body of Christ, but would and should include anyone who is faithfully walking with Christ. This doesn’t mean perfectly walking with the Lord because no one can qualify as spiritual if that were the case.

Remember, this is in the context of the fruit of the Spirit and so would include those whose walk generally demonstrates that the fruit is evident in their lives which indicates they are pursuing the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh.

This would include the leadership, but would also include anyone else in that local body who may have contact with that person.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome he pointed this out to them.

ROM 15:1-2 “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”

Now the context in which Paul made this statement had to do with eating meat as opposed to eating only vegetables.

ROM 14:1-2 “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.”

Here the matter does not deal with sin, but with disputable matters; in other words Christian liberty. But the principle is the same. Simply because someone may be weak in the faith does not give the strong in the faith the right to squash them, and so we are to bear with the failings of the weak and not please ourselves.

And so, the spiritual person whom Paul addresses here is the one who is an example of what it means to walk in the Spirit; one who can restore the other gently. Remember, one of the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.

The spiritual person is one who is mature in the faith, not always chronologically, but more times than not spiritual maturity does come with time since we've had longer to make the mistakes the Spirit can correct in our lives and from which we can learn to avoid in the future.

And so, as I like to refer to them, seasoned saints are a real attribute to the body of Christ because they bring with them experience and a life of walking in the Spirit whom others can look up to.

But simply being spiritual does not exempt anyone from finding themselves in the middle of being tempted by sin, which is why Paul adds at the end of verse one, "But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

Now, what does Paul mean by this? Does he mean to suggest that if you gently correct someone in their sin that you could be tempted to be a party to their sin? Well, I suppose that's always possible but there is something more basic here that Paul is referring to. And it has to do with the context of being spiritual.

There is always a potential problem if we consider ourselves to be spiritual and therefore untouchable by sin and its temptations. What Paul seems to infer here is that the one who considers himself or herself spiritual must not to fall into some spiritual pride.

PRO 11:2 "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

When trying to correct anyone we want wisdom. But when pride gets in the way, wisdom usually takes a back seat to self. And then of course, that famous saying of Solomon which we've all heard.

PRO 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Paul is warning those who are spiritual not to find themselves in a situation where in their desire to help other brothers and sisters in Christ they create the opposite effect. If the one who is considered spiritual takes a “holier than thou” attitude or a superior attitude then not only does it negate the ability to correct, it also negates one’s ability to effectively help others in the future.

The last person I want correcting me is someone who is going to rub my face in it. And if you’ve rubbed it once you won’t get a second chance. But if you come along side me with gentleness and understanding, I may not like your wisdom and correction, as few people do in those situations, but I’ll trust you that you love me and you’re there to help me.

This is why Paul adds the next section.

GAL 6:2 -3 “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

In other words, don’t shy away from trying to help someone because if you’re really concerned for their spiritual welfare then the Lord can use that and turn them around. This is the way we can truly fulfill the law of Christ which is to love your neighbor as yourself, or as Paul puts it, to consider one another as more important than yourself.

But if we think we’re a somebody; the designated Holy Spirit police, then we’re in for a sad wake-up call when the Lord shows us we’re really nothing. And by that Paul means we’re probably not as spiritual as we thought we were.

ROM 12:3 “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”

Again, Solomon has something to say about those who think of themselves more highly than they ought.

PRO 26:12 “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

GAL 6:4 -5 “Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”

Each one should test his own actions. This is not a bad thing for the believer to do periodically. And what Paul is saying here is that when it comes to doing a work for God, or simply walking with God on a daily basis, it is ultimately between you and God where your own conscience is satisfied with the way you approach this Spirit filled life with Christ.

But our conscience before God must still be measured according to the word of God. We can deceive ourselves, and therefore our consciences, if we are not keeping in step with the Spirit according to God’s standard.

This testing or examining of ourselves is a look into what in fact we are doing for the Lord and each other in Christ. Are we using the gifts God has given us for each other? As we examine our lives in Christ, can we say we are growing or are we standing still, or maybe even going backwards?

The way in which we answer that will often parallel the way in which we are being servants for our most High God. But, this examination is not meant to discourage us if we’re not where we want to be. It is meant to come to grips with where God wants us to be and how He can make that happen if we’re willing to keep in step with the Spirit.

But, if in your examination you realize that you are doing what God wants you to do to the best of your ability there is nothing wrong in taking delight that God is pleased with your efforts as Paul points out at the end of verse 4....

“Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else...”

The first part of this phrase might sound a little odd in light of what we’ve been taught about pride. Paul himself addresses this in a number of places.

ROM 12:16 “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

1CO 13:4 “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

So, why the contradiction? There is no contradiction. Being proud can carry two different attitudes depending on the situation. As in the case where Paul pointed out to the Romans in the verse I just read, he said, “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

Pride is defined right in the context. If you think yourself better than others to the point where you won't associate with people of low position then you are conceited. That's not a good thing.

The same thing is true in 1Cor.13:4 where the context defines what love is not. Pride is sandwiched in between envy, boasting, along with being rude, self-seeking, and keeping a record of wrongs done against you.

And so, the implication is clear that in certain cases pride or being proud is something which places us above other people and our behavior reflects that. But in our text Paul actually encourages pride in a good sense, a heart-warming sense.

If you've got children there's nothing more delightful than seeing them succeed at something in which you can take pride; be it succeeding at Little League Baseball, or graduating from college or landing a good job.

You can take pride in providing for your family and helping others grow in Christ. This kind of pride doesn't puff itself up, it doesn't try and put yourself above others at the expense of other people.

It's the kind of pride which actually assesses the truth and the reality of a situation and enjoys that reality in the best possible way. As we look at our text Paul is simply saying that if you are a servant of God and you are actively seeking to be the best servant of God and you've accomplished His work in your life, as the Spirit is working in you, then rejoice in that situation.

Thank God that He is using you to touch the lives of other people. Just don't lose sight of where that desire and ability and gift or gifts comes from. And be careful not to compare yourself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load as Paul says in our text.

If we are always trying to compare our spiritual walk with someone else we will do one of two things. We will either become envious or boastful. Why? Well, our eyes are on people, not God. And if when comparing ourselves to others we notice that we seem

to be doing better than someone else there is the tendency to puff ourselves up.

That is a bad sort of pride, because in the process of making that comparison we are actually taking delight that someone isn't where we think we are. And if we are using that sort of comparison we will usually take the lowest standard which is not very high. And when the standard is not very high we can always make ourselves look better even if it's just a fraction higher than the lowest.

The other extreme compares ourselves with those who seem to be more spiritual and seem to always be beyond the reach of our own lives. And in this comparison we can become envious and bitter toward those who are doing the work of Christ.

Now, there's nothing wrong with aspiring to be like those who are faithfully serving the Lord. They can be great examples. In fact, this is precisely what Paul told the Corinthians.

1CO 11:1 "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

But if those same Corinthians had no intention of following his example, but only compared themselves to Paul with the idea of concluding that no normal person could serve the Lord like him, then their response would reflect that attitude.

And so, what Paul is saying in our text is that you can take personal satisfaction in serving the Lord as you compare yourself to God's standard, not man's. And really, this is what we want to strive after. We want to be God-pleaser's not man-pleaser's.

If we're desiring to effectively walk in the Spirit as we seek and serve the Lord we can know that we're doing what God has revealed in His word and we can take pride in the fact that Jesus Christ is the one who is working in and through us to His glory.

On the heels of verse four where Paul says, "he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else," comes verse five where he says, "for each one should carry his own load."

Now, this doesn't contradict what Paul had just said in verse 2 where he commanded the believers to carry each others burdens. In that verse he was talking about burdens of life which others couldn't carry themselves and needed the help of the body.

That word in the Greek is *baros* and means heaviness, weight, burden, trouble.

But here in verse 5 Paul doesn't use the same word he uses in verse 2. He uses the Greek word *phortion*, and it means a burden or load or freight that might be put on a ship. And its inference is to the obligations Christ lays upon his followers.

And so, as John MacArthur points out "phortion refers to anything that is carried, and has no connotation of difficulty. It was often used of the general obligations of life that a person is responsible to bear on his own.....

..... For a Christian, load can refer to "his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad", for which he will give an account "before the judgment seat of Christ." (1 Cor.5:10; 1 Cor.3:12-15). His load can also refer to fulfilling his personal calling and ministry for the Lord."

And so, when Paul says that each should carry his own load in this context he's saying that what God has given us in the way of gifts and ministry we need to fulfill. We can't pass that load on to someone else because at that point it becomes irresponsible.

If God gives us something to do, then we must do it for His honor and glory. Now, I know that that may be scary and intimidating to think that God has given me a task, but He never gives us anything to do without providing the means to accomplish it.

This by the way, is one reason Jesus can say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (MAT 11:29-30)

He has given us His Holy Spirit to be able to accomplish those things for the betterment of the body of Christ and to bring glory to His name.

MAT 16:27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

LUK 6:22-23 "Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven."

1CO 3:11-14 "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his

work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.”

It is the highest privilege to be able to serve the living God and to know that all that we do for Him will not go unnoticed. Every act we do for Him in faith; every work which advances His kingdom, no matter how small, is something He is keenly aware of and is pleased with.

And this is why we must not become discouraged in doing good as Paul tells us.

GAL 6:9-10“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.”

If we'll simply approach our walk with Christ as an opportunity to be a vessel used in God's hand it will make whatever we do, not some little insignificant act for the Lord, but a useful and important work which God Himself is trying to accomplish in our lives. And this is why we take the attitude Paul speaks of in Colossians.

COL 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

If it is the Lord Christ we are serving then we will walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh which has a tendency to boast in the practice of the law. Because we know that the flesh produces no good thing as it pertains to advancing the Kingdom of God and the good name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

COL 3:17 “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”