Who Should Confront Sin?
Scripture: Galatians 6
Code: BQ11811

"Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

The first responsibility of a spiritual believer who seeks to restore a fallen brother is to help pick him up. When a person stumbles, his first need is to get up, and often he needs assistance in doing it. An integral part of church discipline, therefore, is helping a fallen brother get back on his feet spiritually and morally.

Even if a man is caught in any trespass, he deserves help and encouragement as well as rebuke. **Caught** may imply that the person was actually seen committing the **trespass**, indicating there was no doubt about his guilt. But the Greek verb (*prolambano*) also allows for the idea of the man's being **caught** by the **trespass** itself, as it were. That is the sense of the King James rendering, "overtaken in a fault," and seems appropriate in this context.

That interpretation is also supported by Paul's use of *paraptoma* (**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.

Responsibility for the discipline of those who stumble, as well as for those who commit more serious sins, rests on the shoulders of church members **who are spiritual. Spiritual** believers are those walking in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, who, by virtue of their spiritual strength, are responsible for those who are fleshly.

It should be noted that, whereas maturity is relative, depending on one's progression and growth, spirituality is an absolute reality that is unrelated to growth. At any point in the life of a Christian, from the moment of his salvation to his glorification, he is either **spiritual**, walking in the Spirit, or fleshly, walking in the deeds of the flesh. Maturity is the cumulative effect of the times of spirituality. But any believer, at any point in his growth toward Christlikeness, can be a **spiritual** believer who helps a sinful believer who has fallen to the flesh.

The spiritually and morally strong have a responsibility for the spiritually and morally weak. "We who are strong," Paul says, "ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please

ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). **Spiritual** believers are to “admonish the unruly encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men” (1 Thess. 5:14).

It is not that **spiritual** believers are to be suspicious and inquisitive. Those are hardly qualities of spirituality. But they will be sensitive to sin whenever and wherever it may appear within the Body and should be prepared to deal with it in the way God’s Word prescribes.

When the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus the woman caught in the act of adultery, they reminded Him that the law of Moses required that she be stoned to death. Instead of replying, Jesus bent down and began writing in the sand-perhaps listing sins of which those in the crowd were guilty. “When they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones.” When Jesus then asked her if any of her accusers had stayed to condemn her, she replied, “‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go your way: From now on sin no more’” (John 8:3–11).

Jesus was not interested in destroying the woman but in helping her, and that should be the attitude of His followers toward other people, especially toward fellow believers.

Jesus’ command “Do not judge lest you be judged” (Matt. 7:1) is often used by Christians to oppose discipline in the church and is sometimes quoted by outsiders in opposing the church’s taking strong stands against certain evils. As the context makes clear, however (see vv. 3–5), Jesus was talking about a self-righteous, condemning person who acts as judge, passing sentence on others, since he sees only the best in himself and the worst in everyone else. If such a person confesses and is cleansed of his own sin, the Lord went on to say, he then is qualified to confront his brother with the purpose not to condemn but “to take the speck out of [his] brother’s eye” (v. 5). He is then **spiritual** and has the right and even obligation to help his brother overcome a **trespass**.

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