Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Restoring a Sinning Brother
Scripture: Galatians 5:26-6:6
Code: 1291

As you know, we've been studying the wonderful 18th chapter of Matthew. We've been looking at the childlikeness of the believer there. And over the last few weeks and months, we have been emphasizing how important it is in the fellowship of God's redeemed people, the church, that we be actively and aggressively dealing with sin And we saw how the Lord instructs His disciples in regard to the disciplining of those who sin, and then we saw how the Lord instructs regarding the forgiving of those who sin and then turn from that sin. And so, we've discussed the whole matter of discipline, reproving, rebuking sin, being ministers of holiness, seeking to go after that sinning Christian and bring them back to the place of obedience. And as I was thinking it through the last week or so, I thought so much about the area of discipline, and we clearly delineated that; and I thought about the area of forgiveness, and that's so wonderfully presented in this 18th chapter. But there was one other area that we hadn't really discussed in detail, and the chapter, that is the 18th chapter of Matthew, doesn't discuss it in detail either, and that is the ministry of restoration.

What do you do when someone sins? You discipline them. What do you do when they repent and turn from that sin? You forgive them in the fullest sense. Then, what do you do after they are forgiven? You restore them. You take them all the way back to the place where they were before they fell in the beginning. And the ministry of restoration seems to me to be a vital and final link in the process of our thinking.

Now, with that in mind, I want to draw you to Galatians chapter 5 and 6, and take you out, if I may, of the Book of Matthew for this morning and, yet, keep you in the same subject as we've treated in Matthew's gospel. I suppose it would be sufficient for me to say again in reviewing your thinking that dealing with sin in the church is of great consequence. The Lord has so designed His church that the purity of the church is His great concern. The apostle Paul talks about wanting to espouse to Christ a chaste virgin. He writes to the Ephesians about the importance of having no fellowship with those who work the works of darkness. He says to the Corinthians, "When you find somebody in your assembly who's in sin, put them out." It is a very, very high priority to deal with sin within the family of God. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5, "A little leaven will leaven the whole lump," and so a pure church is the great concern of God. And we've been seeing how, because of that, it is essential that we deal with sin. By discipline, and then by forgiveness, and now, by restoration.

Now, with that in your mind, let me draw your attention to Galatians, and I want to read beginning in verse 26, which is the last verse of chapter 5, and really should be the first verse of chapter 6, I think,

and I'll read down through chapter 6 verse 6. "Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill 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. Let him that is taught in the Word share with him that teacheth, in all good things." Now, here you have a text that deals with restoration. Implied in it is discipline. Implied in it is forgiveness. But it majors on the theme of restoration. Now, this is an essential thing. There has to be discipline, there has to be forgiveness, and there has to be full restoration. I believe that is the intent of the heart of Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, when he said, "If you don't do that, you give Satan an advantage," and it's an open invitation for Satan to come in and tear up the church.

So, we ask this question as we approach Galatians: what do you do with the sinning Christian who has responded to discipline, who has repented of sin, who has been forgiven and brought back into the fellowship. What do you to restore them to that place of spiritual strength they had before they fell in the first place? And the answer comes in this passage. This is the ministry of restoration.

Now, in order to understand it in its context, I want to give you a little bit of a background. Galatia was a very special place in the life of the apostle Paul. On his three missionary journeys, he managed to come to that place. The first time to establish churches there, succeeding times to confirm their leadership and to strengthen and build them up. So, it was a place of marked ministry by Paul. Galatia is not a town. Galatia in an area. It is a district, and in it were many towns: Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, Antioch, Epicedia, and in all of those various places, Paul established the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the church was begun. He came back and reinforced the gospel of grace, taught them how to live in grace, taught them how to enjoy the power of the Spirit of God, and they were doing well. They had a good beginning, a marvelous beginning.

And then came some who were called Judaizers. They were Jews. They did not deny Christianity. The did not deny Jesus Christ. They did not deny the gospel. They just said that the gospel is incomplete, and there are some things that must be added to it, namely circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic Law. And they told those Galatian Christians, "You aren't really Christians, and you aren't really in the Kingdom, because you're Gentiles who are uncircumcised, and are not walking in accord with the law of Moses," and so they imposed upon them Jewish legalism, and, thus, we know them as the Judaizers. Basically, they taught three things, and we see them marked out in this letter: number one, they taught that Paul was not a legitimate, authorized apostle. And they had to teach that, because the best way they knew to discredit his teaching was to discredit him. If they could demonstrate that he was not an apostle at all, then they could begin from there to discredit his teaching. And so they attacked his apostleship, and that is why Galatians 1 and 2 are written: to defend Paul's apostleship.

Secondly, they said salvation was by circumcision, then faith. Faith alone wouldn't do it. You had to have that surgery, also. That's why chapters 3 and 4 were written, to answer that argument and to show that salvation was by grace through faith, apart from circumcision. And, thirdly, the Judaizers taught that the Christian life demanded complete observation of the Mosaic Law. And that's why chapters 5 and 6 were written: to answer that error.

Now, obviously, the Judaizers had had an impact. There's no question about it, and you can tell it by the fire in the eyes of Paul as he writes. I mean there are no nice little amenities. This is the one letter he writes that he never commends anybody for anything, and there are no personal notes to speak of. He just blasts away. And he knows they've had an effect, and it's marked out particularly in verse 1 of chapter 3. "Oh, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Verse 3, "Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" And so, he calls them foolish twice. Somebody had bewitched them. There had been a profound effect on them.

Now, by the time we come to chapter 6, these foolish Galatians, who were now sort of embroiled in this freedom-legalism battle, this law-grace battle, by the time we get to chapter 6, they've pretty well heard Paul. They've been told again in very strong terms in chapters 1 and 2 that he was, in fact, the apostle of God, and they've also been told in chapters 3 and 4 that salvation is by grace, plus nothing through faith. And they've also been told very well in chapter 5 that the Christian life is a life of liberty, not legalism. And so, it may be at this particular time that some of the light is starting to dawn and the fog is clearing a little bit.

But Paul is a very, very astute instrument for the Spirit of God to use, and he is very much aware of the fact that there will be in that Galatian assembly, as a result of the ministry that he had and the ministry the Judaizers had, there will be a division. There will be those who are the spiritual ones, the mature ones, the ones walking in the Spirit; and then there will be the legalists who try by the energy of the flesh to crank out all the things they're supposed to do as listed in the Mosaic economy. And he sees in that a potential for just shattering the assemblies in Galatia. He can see a warfare coming, and division, and discord, and separation, and he knows he has to deal with it. And so he does.

And, in effect, what he says is this, "You that are spiritual, who are on target, who've got it right, and who've got it together, and are walking in the power of the Spirit, your responsibility is to pick up the ones that are not; and he establishes for us a principle of life for the church of God till Jesus comes." The strong take care of the weak. The spiritual take care of the fleshly. The ones who are standing lift up the ones that are fallen. The church was never designed to be a place where you go and spectate. It's not a place where you're supposed to come and stare at the back of someone's head, and just go away and say, "God, aren't You thrilled that I came? I did my religious duty." The church is a place where you mutually minister together. And, you know, it would be very easy for the spiritual Galatians who really bought into Paul's doctrine of grace, and now we're reaffirmed by reading this wonderful

letter to really understand they were free in grace, not free to do wrong, but for the first time, free to do right, empowered by the Holy Spirit. And understand the liberty that is theirs in Christ, and they really were spiritual, and they are in terms of verse 16 of chapter 5, “Walking in the Spirit,” and in terms of verse 22, “Manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.” And they’re the spiritual ones to sort of look at these other ones in a condemning way. And that is a tendency, you know.

Spiritual people, the more mature people, the people who maybe have had the benefit of good teaching, who maybe have had the benefit of good modeling and good examples and good heritage, spiritually, and who have been obedient and, in the past, have walked with the Lord, sometimes can get to the point where they look down on all those who don’t live at their level spiritually. And instead of seeing that as an opportunity for ministry, it becomes an opportunity for spiritual pride and an occasion of self-conceit where you sort of congratulate yourself for your spirituality. And so he senses that. And there’s also that potential, too, that those who are weak and those who stumble and those who fall kind of look at the spiritual ones, and they envy them and envy. Envy turns to bitterness and jealousy, and you have just a rift running right down the middle of the church. And so, he knows there must be a coming together of these two groups. He does not want the spiritual ones lording it over the fleshly ones. He doesn’t want the strong taking advantage of the weak or disdaining them, and he doesn’t want the weak resenting the strong. He doesn’t want to see a spiritual-fleshly split.

And so he anticipates this in this section of Galatians. Look at verse 26 of chapter 5. He’s just concluded the statement that if we live in the Spirit, and we do if we’re Christians, we ought to walk in the Spirit. In other words, if our life, in fact, is in the Spirit positionally, then we ought to walk in the Spirit practically and live it out. And then he says this, “Let us not be desirous of vainglory,” *kenodoxos*. It means that you feel you have a right to claim glory. You feel you have a right to honor, thinking you have some reason for your conceit. What he’s really saying is, “Don’t get conceited. Let us not be desiring glory. Let us not be desiring honor,” and this is always the problem that you get pushed into by the enemy. When you get to the point of certain spiritual maturity and certain spiritual growth, you begin to perceive yourself as somebody worthy of special honor. And then you look down on those who aren’t quite at your level of maturity, and you begin to look on them with disdain. And then the fracture comes between the spiritual and the non-spiritual, the strong and the weak; and instead of the one helping the other, the one sort of gloats over the other. And I think that’s what he has in mind when he says, “Provoking one another.” Provoking them, irritating them. And the converse of it, at the end of verse 26, is the other is going to envy the one who appears to be more spiritual.

And this is not what Paul wants, in any church, is this kind of break between those who are strong and those who are weak. There’s no place for that. It’s on his heart, not only here in Galatians, but let me draw you back to Romans chapter 15, because I want you to see that this is not something unique to the Galatian churches, but was a common concern in Paul’s heart. In Romans chapter 14, you have just a tremendous section on how the strong are not to offend the weak, and we’re not to

cause him to stumble, not to destroy him in any way, but to build up that weak person. And it all comes into summation in chapter 15 verses 1 to 3. “We then,” based on all that he said in chapter 14, “we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification or building up, for even Christ pleased not himself.” And you can stop there. And he establishes that incomparable model, and the model is none other than Jesus Christ Himself who didn’t lord it over us and had every reason to do so, right? But stooped to bear the infirmities of the weak. And, believe me, if ever there was a weak and a strong dichotomy, it was between Jesus Christ and us, wasn’t it?

And so, Christ is the model, he says, and the attitude is that we want to bear the infirmities of the weak. We want to find those believers who are weaker. We want to find those believers who struggle greatly with the flesh, and not look down on them in vainglory and provoke them, but minister to them. Bear their infirmities, thus preventing them from looking up at us and envying us and becoming jealous and bitter.

And then, I draw you to one other passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 14. Paul gives this instruction to the Thessalonian church. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient toward all.” Whether you’re dealing with the unruly, the fainthearted, or the weak, you have to be patient, but you have to go after them. Supporting the weak. That, my friends, is the key to the unity of the church. Instead of the more mature spiritually-minded believer standing in pride over the sinning ones who’ve fallen, we have to help them.

I received about an 18 or 20-page letter this week. I can honestly say in all my ministry, I’ve never received a letter quite like it. A lady in that letter went on and on sharing about her spiritual pilgrimage and, toward the end, she said that she went one morning into her bathroom. She was a mother of several children. Very active in a church in the Midwest. Took out a razorblade, and prepared to slice her face up. She said, “I am unworthy. I am useless. I am meaningless.” This is a lady who is a Christian, spent all her years in the church, and she explained to me in the letter why she had come to that point. She said, “Because the people in the church felt that I didn’t live up to the standard that they had set, and so the pastor told everyone in the whole church to shun me. And so they shunned me, and every time I saw one of them, they would turn their back on me, and no one would speak, and I was to be shunned. And I decided that if I wasn’t even worthy enough to be cared for by the people of God, that I wasn’t worth anything, and I would just slice up my face and then take my life.”

Then, she went on to say, “I couldn’t do it, however, because my mind kept going to my children and how my children would have to answer so many questions about what their mother had done, and I was restrained from doing it because of my concern for my children.” Then, she went on to say that she turned her radio dial along and found our radio program, and in the midst of the horror of trying to live according to the legalistic code of this church, we were teaching a series on law and grace. And

she said, “Thank God I’m free,” and went on to share what the Lord was beginning to do in her life. The letter was so moving that we called her on the phone and offered personal help in any way we could to her.

What a horrible thing. That a church, thinking it was doing the will of God, would shun a person who didn’t come up to their standard. By the way, one of the issues was that she wore slacks; to the point where she was going to slice up her face? That’s the very antithesis of the ministry of the church to its own, isn’t it? Support the weak. Support the weak. Bear their burden. And so, we are called to discipline, yes, and we’re called to forgiveness, yes; but we’re also called to restoration.

Now, what do we do to restore? Let’s go back to Galatians. Three things Paul mentions in this text. Three things. First one, very simple points, pick them up. Pick them up. Verse 1, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Now, the term brethren indicates that we’re talking in the family, folks. This is how the church takes care of itself. “If a man be overtaken in a fault,” the word fault here is the word *paraptma*. It means a stumbling, a blunder, a fall. And some people think it to be something less than a sin. I don’t think so at all. I don’t think it’s less than a sin. I think it is a sin. And people say, “Well, why didn’t he use the word *hamartia*, a sin? Or why didn’t he use the word *anomia* , a trespass?” Why does he use the word a fall here? Well, I don’t think it has anything to do with theology. I think it has to do with the literary approach. He is talking about walking in the Spirit. Verse 16 of 5, “Walk in the Spirit.” Verse 25 of 5, “Walk in the Spirit.” And in the process of your walking, if you happen to what? To fall. He’s not giving us a theological definition of sin as if it were something less than serious. He is simply staying with his metaphor.

And so he says, “If a man be overtaken.” Now, let me talk about the word overtaken a minute, because I think it’s been misunderstood as well. I don’t think it’s a guy walking along who gets overtaken by a sin, and says, “Oh, this sin is overtaking me.” I don’t think that’s the idea. I think the idea is that, when a believer is walking along and overtakes someone who has fallen into a sin, see the difference? It isn’t that the sin overtakes him; it’s that you overtake the person who’s fallen into the sin. If a man is overtaken, now the word is a very interesting word, *prolamban*, to take unawares. I don’t really think sin can take us unawares. I think we have the faculties if we’re walking in the Spirit, to discern that. So, what I’m saying is there’s no such thing as unwilling sin. I think what you have here, and the best rendering of the text, and I can’t be absolutely dogmatic, but this is a preference, is that it refers to the act of detecting another Christian in the process of sin. You come across someone in sin, and he becomes the whole point of the verse. Then, you restore such an one.

Now, you couldn’t be involved in the restoration if you hadn’t taken him, overtaken him in the sin, right? I mean you’ve seen it. You know it’s there. You’ve come across it. And so you find someone in a sin, and the situation is established. You know someone in sin. You come across someone in sin, and the thing that I think it’s trying to say is that you’re not going through life sniffing around

everybody. It's that, as you walk in the Spirit, you come across that. It's not that you belong to the spiritual SS, and you're nosing into everybody's affairs all over the world. It's that you, as you walk in the Spirit, as you move along, you that are spiritual, you come across someone overtaken in a fall. To me, that's the preferred rendering.

It is not necessarily wrong to say that it refers to someone who's overtaken by some sin, but I prefer the one that I suggested. Now, notice further in the verse, if you come across this, "You who are spiritual." Now, that's very important. Now, who are the spiritual people? What does it mean to be spiritual? We talk about that. We say someone's spiritual or someone's fleshly. Let me show you what it means to be spiritual. Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 15, and this is just a very brief definition here. "But he that is spiritual discerns all things or judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have," what? "The mind of Christ." What does it mean to be spiritual? To be spiritual, in verse 15, is the same as having what in verse 16? Mind of Christ. The one who is spiritual is the one who has the mind of Christ.

To look at it another way, in Ephesians 5, it says, "Be filled with the," what? "Spirit, then all these things will happen." And then, in Colossians 3, it says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, and the same things will happen." Therefore, we conclude, that being filled with the Spirit is the same as letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Therefore, being spiritual, that's what it means to be filled with the Spirit, is the same as having the mind of Christ. So, the spiritual person is the person with the mind of Christ. The person with the mind of Christ is the person who's under the control of the Holy Spirit. To have the mind of Christ means you know, because the mind of Christ is revealed here, right? You know the Word of God, and you are walking in obedience to it. See, when you learn the Word of God, the Spirit energizes the obedient response. So, a spiritual person is one walking in the Spirit. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? It means to have the mind of Christ. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? To know the Word of God and obey it. And so, that's a spiritual person: one walking in obedience to God's will revealed to him through the Word of God, energized by the Spirit of God. That's the spiritual one.

So, we've got one person, two people here walking in the Spirit. One falls into the fleshly activity. The one who is still walking in the Spirit has the responsibility to pick the other one up. It's not that profound, folks. It's obvious. The strong take care of bearing the infirmities of the weak. That's the basic concept. And Paul goes on to illustrate that immediately in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 as he goes and approaches the Corinthians and calls them fleshly, and does everything he can in that entire letter to pick them up again by giving them instruction, and the instruction is the mind of Christ. He tries to pump into them the reality of the mind of Christ and call them to a walk in the Spirit.

So, back to Galatians chapter 6. We find then that in picking the person up, one who is spiritual, that is walking in obedience, energized by the Holy Spirit, knowing the mind of Christ, and responding to

it, is called to restore the one who was overtaken in the sin. The word restore is a very, very common word in the New Testament, *katartiz*. It is used very frequently. It simply means to repair something, only in the sense of bringing it back to its former condition. To restore it to its former condition. It is used of reconciling two arguing factions. It is used of setting bones that are broken. It is used of putting a dislocated limb back into its proper place. It is used of mending broken nets. That word is a very common word for knitting something together, for restoring something to its original condition. And that's exactly what it's calling us to.

Listen, we not only reprove and rebuke and discipline a person who falls into sin, we forgive them with our heart and relationally restore them when they repent, and then we begin the whole building process of restoration that puts them back on the walk with the Spirit where they were before they sinned. So, there is a spiritual restoration process involved, and I'm really committed to the fact that the church has to be involved in doing this. That this is part of melting our lives together. That it is not enough to just come and go. It is not enough to just watch what happens. There's a spiritual rebuilding process that we're all involved in: the strong helping the weak. And let me just give you another thought along that line, too. This is not necessarily only an absolute issue. We are all weak some places, right? And so, we're at some point on that long line of spiritual growth. We all need somebody who's stronger than we are in some other area to strengthen us. So, we all are to be involved in those interpersonal relationships which are for strength to those that are weak.

So, when you see a person who's in sin, the implication of verse 1 is that you've got to pick him up. And that means there's discipline involved. You confront him about the sin. You go through the process. If he doesn't listen to you, you take one or two witnesses that it may be confirmed in their mouths. And if he doesn't listen then, you tell it to the whole church, and the whole church goes pursuing with love. And if the person doesn't listen to the church, then the person is put out, treated like a tax collector, one who is an alien person until the time that they are repentant. And then, when they repent, there's full relational forgiveness that restores them back. But it doesn't end there. Then, there's the full rebuilding process to restore them to where they were before.

Now, notice the attitude of this person who picks up, verse 1. "The spirit of meekness. The spirit of meekness." Humility. And again, I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the model in this regard. In 2 Corinthians 10:1, Paul says, "I, Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Christ who came into this world and looked at ungodly, wretched, vile, disobedient, ignorant sinners, and quietly and patiently waits for us to come back to the place that He would have us to be, who desires to restore us to that place that we knew before ever we fell. And that is the model. And we do so in a spirit of meekness. Only our meekness changes from that of Christ in a sense, because it says, "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And in that, we would add this, that we are to go about this understanding that we could be in the same position, right? While Christ could not because of His perfection, we could. And before you stand up and consider yourself to be spiritual and quite far along in terms of your pilgrimage toward perfection, you

never want to get to the point where you look down on someone else, but rather where you bend down to help someone else in humility, which is what meekness means, realizing that you could be in the same situation, because you're not exempt from that, either. In fact, it's going to get you sooner or later, because sin dwells in you.

There's no place for spiritual pride and vainglory. There's no place for people thinking themselves to be better than others. There must be meekness when we consider that we ourselves could also fall. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul has given, it's a marvelous illustration of the people of God, Israel, how they were taken out of Egypt. Verse 1 talks about them passing under the cloud and through the sea, and they wandered in the wilderness, and they were guided by the Shekinah, glory of God, and they, of course, went into the Promised Land, and talks about how God carried them through the wilderness prior to that. But it says, "With all the blessing of God, some of them fell into fornication, and 3 and 20,000," verse 8, "were killed."

Now, these are people with great privilege, but these people with great privilege committed sin. Now, look at verse 11. "Now, all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he," what? "Fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." And he goes on to talk about the way of escape, but you never want to get to the point where you think you are invincible. There needs to be a very, very basic meekness about our personality and our heart attitude that says, when seeing someone else sin, "I'm not going to be arrogantly conceited and lord it over that person. I'm going to be thankful to God that my own life isn't so marked by sin."

So, pick them up, and be willing to stoop to pick someone up knowing that you could just as well be the one who needed picking up. And sooner or later, you will. Though your sin may not be the same as that one, there'll be sin from which you, too, need restoration.

Second point, first one is pick them up; the second is hold them up. Hold them up, and that's verse 2 through 5. It's a beautiful passage. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The word bear means to carry, to hold up. Whatever is really burdensome, you hold it for them. Now, what, you say, "What does he mean by this? Bear ye one another's burdens?" The idea, again, is the walk. This guy's going along the road, and he falls. What made him fall? Well, he had something that was too heavy, and it did it to him. It crushed him, and he fell. You can imagine that, a long trek and a burden. And all of a sudden, the burden becomes crushing and down goes the guy. And you say, "Now that you've picked him up, you're going to have to get under the thing, and you're going to have to help him carry that load." Now, what is that burden? Well, I believe it is whatever weakness is in that person, spiritually, that threatens to induce him to fall into sin. Whatever kind of opening there is in his kind of, well, his life, whatever bridgehead Satan can find, whatever weakness of personality or character, whatever that thing may be that tends to be his Achilles' heel, that's where you've got to

get under and carry the load, because he can't carry the load himself. So many times, a person will sin, repent, forgiven, brought back into the fellowship, and then nobody bothers to get under the load, and they're carrying the same load of temptation in the same difficult circumstance they were carrying before, and they just fall again.

Had a man come to see me, young man. He said, "I," and he was distraught. He was tearful, and he said, "I've given my life to Christ", but he said, "I was a homosexual before I was saved." And he said, "I have terrible problems." He said, "I keep stumbling back into relationships." And he said, "I repent, and I turn from those, and I ask God to forgive me," and he said, "And then, I go and I do it again." And it was just a terrible, destroying kind of thing. Well, I didn't really know how to help him, so just on the spur of the moment, I said, "Okay, I'll tell you what I want you to do. Every time you have a homosexual relationship over the next two weeks," and homosexuals can have them very frequently, "and every time you cultivate ungodly thinking in that regard, I want you to write it out in a full paragraph and explain it to me. Every time you think about it and every time you do it, just write it all out. And the next two weeks when we meet, you can just go through the whole list with me."

And he was kind of stunned that I had said that, and I just covenanted with him to do that. So, two weeks later he came back, and he had this huge grin on his face. And he walked in the door, and no sooner did he say hello, than he said, "I don't have anything to write. I didn't do anything." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, and that's the first time. That's the first time, two weeks." And I said, "Well, what's the difference?" He said, "I don't want to tell you about it."

That's one way to carry his load, isn't it? You carry his load by forcing an accountability on him. There are a lot of ways to carry somebody's load. There are a lot of ways to bear someone's burden. I can't tell you how many people I've said to, "Now, if you feel that you feel that you have a problem in that area, and you're tempted in that regard, you know, here's what I suggest you do. Or here's, pick up the telephone and make a phone call and get somebody to carry the load with you." I don't know how you go about doing that. Basically, it's by staying close to somebody and holding them accountable. That's the way I see it. I don't know any other way to carry peoples' loads than by hanging around them and making them accountable. But it's more, restoration is more than just saying to a guy, "Be warm, be filled," you know? I mean we'll let you back in. Now, you're all right, and then the person is still struggling under the same load, because nobody's underneath there helping to carry that load until eventually it lightens in the process of spiritual obedience.

And, by the way, don't just say to them, you know, like so many do, Psalm 55:22 or something where it says, "Cast your burden on the Lord, for He will sustain you." Or 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care on Him." The Lord wants to do that through you and me. We have to be mutual burden bearers. And you'll notice at the end of verse 2, will you, that this fulfills the law of Christ. Do you know about the law of Christ? You certainly know about the law of the Old Testament, right? What's the law of Christ? Very clear. John 13:34 and 35, "A new commandment I give unto you," said Christ, "that you," what?

“Love one another.” So, what’s the law of Christ? It’s the law of love. It’s the law of love, and love picks up and love holds up. James calls it the royal law. It’s called the perfect law of liberty, and it is our responsibility. To be a burden bearer is our ministry to each other. And frankly, most Christians don’t do this. I ask myself, and I ask you. Who are you currently helping to carry the burden of temptation and weakness? Anybody? Anybody you’re nurturing? Anybody’s burden you’re carrying? Anybody you got in the process of restoration? So easy for us to be so uninvolved. You say, “Well, I don’t like to get down there. You might get affected by that stuff, and I’m very spiritual. Just don’t want to stain the pure.”

Well, verse 3’s for you: “For if a man think himself to be something when he is,” what? “Nothing, he deceives himself.” Basically, that verse is a wonderful verse on anthropology. Simply stated, man is what? Nothing. That’s what it says. Take out all the modifying phrases. We’re nothing. What are you protecting, anyway? You’re nothing. If the best of us is the chief of sinners, what are we? We’re nothing. That’s what he’s saying, and I’m not saying this in terms of denying the image of God in us. I’m just saying that, in terms of having to promote ourselves to glory, or having to think highly of ourselves, that’s completely opposite. We’re nothing. All we are, we are by the what? By the grace of God, and so who are we to be so self-deceived that we can’t give ourselves to the bearing of the burden of the weak? And so, we don’t shun people. When they are honestly desiring to do what is right, and when they want to repent, and they want help, we won’t just, hopefully, just take them back. We’ll take them back and get under the load and carry it with them. And if you think you’re too good for that, you are so wrong. You are so deceived.

You know why you think that? Because your standard of comparison is wrong. Whenever I think I’m better than someone else, it’s because I’m comparing myself with someone else, and I can always find people that are, you know, worse than me. I mean, if I just wanted to feel better than other people, all I have to do is see a drunk lying in the gutter. I feel terrific. I don’t do that. You can always find somebody worse off than you. But to stand, that’s what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 11 when he said, “We are not those who compare ourselves with ourselves.” We compare ourselves. Who is our standard? Christ. First John 2:6, “If we say we abide in Him, we ought to walk as He walked.” So, Christ is the standard. We compare ourselves to Christ. Guess where we come out? We come out on the low end. So, that’s not self-deceiving. So, you compare yourself with Christ. And so he says, “Pick them up. Hold them up, and if you think you’re too good for that, you’re self-deceived.”

And then, in verse 4, he adds another, verse 4 and 5, another little thing here that really has some teeth in it. “But let every man prove his own work.” Hey, you know something? You can claim you’re working for the Lord, and you can try to claim that you’re spiritual, but you’re going to have to prove it. You’re going to have to prove it. “Then, you’ll be able to rejoice in himself alone,” he says. In other words, someday you’re going to have to stand there all by yourself with verification of your claim to spirituality. And I think verses 4 and 5 take us to the *Bema* seat judgment, the time when believers are going to be rewarded. Revelation 22:12, “Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give

to every man according to his work shall be." I think that's what we see here. We are all going to have to stand a test. Second Corinthians 5, "We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive for the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad." First Corinthians 3, "Our works are wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones." And the wood, hay, stubble is going to be what? Burned up. And I think that's where we are in 4 and 5. "Every man of us is going to have to prove his own work, and have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." In other words, there will be a day of testing. And then, on that day, verse 5 says, "Every man shall bear his own burden." So, you better get now under the burden of somebody else, or you're going to bear your own burden someday for not having done that; and the loss of reward.

By the way, the two words for burden here are different. The burden of verse 2 is the very, very strong word, *baros*. It means a heavy, heavy weight. And the word in verse 5, beautiful, *phortion* means a little backpack. That's great. Sin is a heavy, heavy burden. Losing a reward is just a little backpack.

So, I don't want you to think that someday we're going to face Jesus Christ, and we're going to have this crushing. It's a small burden, but it is, nonetheless, a burden. Someday you're going to have to bear your small backpack of failure to prove your spirituality if you're not willing to get under somebody else's heavy, heavy load and help them carry it.

Finally, pick them up. Hold them up. Build them up. Verse 6, "Let him that is taught in the Word share with him that teacheth, in all good things." Now, you've become the teacher, and the person you're restoring's become the student. And some people have used this verse to indicate that a preacher who preaches or teaches should be paid, and they take the term good things, *agathos*, to refer to money, and what it's saying is that whoever teaches you the Bible, you ought to pay him. Now, I'm not here to argue that. As a fact, that's a fact. I would prefer to go to 1 Corinthians 9 to support it. Not this text, because I don't think that's what it's talking about. Why slam a verse in here about paying somebody who's a teacher? The word good things, *agathos*, listen carefully, is never used in Scripture to refer to money. Never. So, using it that way in this verse is rather arbitrary. There are two words for good, good things: *kals*, goodness in form. Goodness in form. *Agathos*, goodness in essence, and this is *agathos*. And it means spiritual essence, or spiritual excellence.

For example, Romans 10:15 talks about the preaching the good things, the proclamation of the good things, same term. It's used twice in Hebrews, once in chapter 9 verse 11, once in chapter 10 verse 1. And again, it refers to the good things of God's Kingdom. Spiritual excellence. If you want to know the best way to translate it, it would be this. "Let him that is taught in the Word share with him that teaches in all the spiritual goodies." That's really what it's saying, literally. What is he saying? Oh, that's a beautiful thought. "Now, in the process of restoring this person, you, who teach, and you, who are being restored, mutually share in all the spiritual goodies." In other words, it's an ongoing, reciprocal, interacting kind of edification process, isn't it? You're building up. You're building up.

You’re building up. Make sure that the sinning brother submits to the teaching brother, and they share together in all the spiritual goodies.

And so, this is the process of rebuilding a life, and rebuilding is key after sin. So, what are we learning then? Pick them up, and then hold them up. Strength to their weakness. And then, build them up, because you don’t want to be under that load all your life, and you don’t want him under it either. So, get in the process of sharing all the spiritual goodies that’ll bring about strength. That’s the process. And so, Paul calls us to the ministry of restoration. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” which is the law of what? Of love.

Father, we now thank You that You have been teaching us in these days about our childlikeness, and how much we need each other. We have to be cared for like children, protected like children, disciplined like children. We have to be forgiven like children, picked up, held up, and built up. Father, we really desire not to be hearers of the Word only, and thus self-deceived, but doers. Give us the ministry of restoration, and show us how to do it. Show us how to find the weaknesses in people around us and build them up. Help us when we come across someone who’s fallen, to be able to restore them fully. And help us, Lord, when we fall, to seek someone who can restore us as well. That instead of the spiritual looking down on the fallen, and the fallen envying the spiritual and division coming, that the two may walk side by side. Strength to weakness. For Your glory. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

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