

**Helping Others Walk by the Spirit**

Scripture: Galatians 6:1-6

Code: 90-35

**The Sufficiency of the Spirit, Part 6**

I told you last week that I was going to complete the series on "The Sufficiency of the Spirit." And that was my intention. But several elders came to me and said, "John, you can't stop. You have to preach one more message."

And I said, "Why is that?"

"Well, you need to go into greater detail in Galatians chapter 6 to discuss how we help one another to walk in the Spirit."

And so in response to all of them, I want you to turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter 6 and this is message number six and I can safely say this will be the last one in our series-- Galatians chapter 6. For those of you who haven't been with us, we've taken a break in our study of Philippians. We ended chapter 2, we were about to start chapter 3 and I felt compelled in my heart to speak on the subject of the sufficiency of the Spirit. We've been using as a text Galatians 3:3 where Paul says, "O foolish Galatians, have you begun in the Spirit and are now made perfect by the flesh?" We've been talking about how there is a new kind of sanctification in the church today, it is a sanctification without the Holy Spirit. It is the sanctification by pragmatics, or sanctification by human methodology, or sanctification by psychology, or whatever you want to call it but it leaves out the Holy Spirit. And so we've been going back to the fact that Christian living which was begun by the Spirit can only be perfected by the Spirit, it cannot be perfected by the efforts, ideas, ideals, means and methods of men. And this will be week number six.

Now in this process we have considered the whole problem of a church that is turning more to human solutions than it is to the power of the Holy Spirit. We have discussed in detail what the Holy Spirit did when we began in Christ. And then we have discussed what it is that the Spirit is now doing to perfect us. And the overarching theme has been to call the whole church to walk by the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, to live in the power of the Spirit and not try to accomplish spiritual means with human methods, spiritual goals with human ideas. And so we come now today to the realization that was introduced last Lord's day that in spite of all that we know now about the Holy Spirit, in spite of all the affirmation that the Spirit of God will accomplish great things in our lives and in spite of the exhortation to walk by the Spirit, the fact of the matter is we will fail. All of us at times in our Christian

experience will walk by the flesh. We will fall to the fleshly level. We will sin. We will be disobedient. And when that happens in the body of Christ, in the fellowship of God's people, we all have a responsibility to one another to help each other back to the spiritual level. And I want to share with you a little about that in our message this morning.

The Spirit is sufficient, without question. But it is obvious that because we live in unredeemed flesh and we still have a tendency toward sin that we are going to become fleshly or carnal occasionally, some of us more occasionally than others. And in those times when we are not walking by the Spirit but by the flesh we can expect other believers to follow a biblical responsibility and come to us and confront us about that. And on the other hand, when you are walking by the Spirit and you are a thus spiritual Christian, you have the responsibility when you see a fleshly Christian to go to that person and confront that and do your duty to restore that person to the spiritual level.

It would be wonderful if all of us could do it on our own, the fact of the matter is we don't. That's why Hebrews 12 says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Why? Because you want to stimulate one another to love and good works. We are for stimulation of each other. This particular Lord's day as we gather together, some of you are spiritual. That is you're living in the Spirit, you're walking by the Spirit, you're filled with the Spirit, you're in obedience to the Word of God. You are sensitive to the Spirit's moving in your heart. The Word of Christ is dwelling in you richly. Others of you are fleshly. You are in disobedience to the Lord. You have a bad attitude today. Or you have skewed relationships or you were unfaithful in your worship to the Lord this morning, or you were selfish in the matter of giving and didn't give as you should to the Lord. You've been unfaithful in your prayer life, or whatever this week, and you're in the fleshly role. The responsibility of the church is the spiritual, come alongside the fleshly and lift them up.

What is really interesting about this is that there are only two possibilities. These are absolutes. You're either spiritual or carnal at any given point in time. And next week when we all come back together, the groups will have changed. Some of you who were...are spiritual today will next week be fleshly because you will succumb to some temptation. And we are all ebbing and flowing back and forth in those absolutes, hopefully the frequency of fleshliness is limited. It is the responsibility of believers then to come along side one another, the spiritual to lift up the fleshly.

Now keep this in mind. Being spiritual or carnal, spiritual...I like the term fleshly better...is an absolute. You either are one or the other, there's nothing else. It's not relative, it's absolute. You're either spiritual or fleshly depending on whether you're walking in obedience to the will and the Word of God, sensitive to the Spirit, being moved along by the Spirit because you've confessed your sin, you're yielded to Him and He's controlling your life. Or you're running your life according to the way you want and you're not obedient to the Lord. At that particular point you're fleshly. A person whose been a Christian five minutes can be spiritual because he's walking in the Spirit. A person whose been a Christian sixty years can be fleshly because he's not obeying the Word of God and he's not

walking in the Spirit at that particular point.

So, those are characteristics of every Christian's life and we move between those two. Obviously the ideal is to be spiritual. And let me give you a little hint. It is only when you are spiritual that you're in a growth mode. Your spiritual growth occurs when you're walking in the Spirit. That's the maturing process taking place.

Now, looking at Galatians chapter 6 we receive instruction on how we are to help one another to be spiritual. And this is very very important. By the way, maybe I need to say as a sort of beginning footnote here that all Christians sin. Do I need to remind you of that? I don't want somebody to say, "Well, this doesn't apply to me since I don't sin." If you say you have no sin you make God a liar...1 John 1:8, you wouldn't want to do that, that would be a sin obviously of proportions that would be very great. If you say you have no sin in you, the truth is not in you, 1 John 1:8 and 10 says. James 3:2 says, "We all stumble in many ways."

So there is ever and always a remedial ministry going on in the body of Christ. And that remedial ministry is the spiritual calling the fleshly to live on the spiritual level. That's just basic. This is essential because if you are fleshly, your usefulness is destroyed. Paul writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:21 says, "If you want to be a vessel fit for the Master's use you have to be purged, cleansed." If you are fleshly, if you are in sin, if you're not walking in the Spirit, if you're using human means to apply to spiritual matters and you are functioning in the flesh, you are useless. Your ministry is debilitated. Furthermore, you infect other believers, 1 Corinthians chapter 5 says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." And if there is sin in your life and you're touching the lives of other people, you are infecting them negatively. So from a positive standpoint if you're functioning in the flesh, you're not useful to God. From a negative standpoint, you're more than not useful, you're useless, you're more than useless, you're trouble because you are negatively impacting the body of Christ. You're not only not helping, you're hindering. And since a truly sensitive Christian would embrace the whole body of Christ and desire that the whole church be strong and not just himself, he would be therefore concerned or she would be therefore concerned that all believers be walking in the Spirit or by the Spirit.

So we then have this great spiritual responsibility not only to walk by the Spirit ourselves, as we confess our sin and as we stay richly involved in the Word of God and its application to our lives, flowing in the Spirit as He moves us along, but we also have the responsibility to stimulate that in one another. That's very important. I want to deal with my own life and be sure my life is right for my own sake so that I can be useful to God. Secondly, so that I can be useful to you, so that I can confront what isn't right in your life and be used by God's Spirit to lift you from the natural or fleshly level to the spiritual plain.

The most important pursuit then of the believer is virtue or holiness. Not only for its own sake but for the sake of usefulness to others. I cannot take the stick out of your eye until I get the beam out of my own eye, said Jesus in Matthew 7:1 to 5. I can't deal with your problem unless I've dealt with mine. And so as a believer I am really called to self-examination, personal holiness, personal purity not only for its own sake and not only for God's sake but for your sake that I might be useful in ministering to you. You remember I said that we are called as believers to minister to each other two ways. One is through our spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is a divine enablement by which the Spirit of God ministers through me to the body of Christ. And if I'm fleshly, that ministry isn't going to function. That unique spiritual gift isn't going to operate properly. But secondly, we are called to the one anothers...praying for one another, all of that, comforting one another, encouraging one another, exhorting one another, loving one another, teaching one another. And we must be spiritual in order for those one anothers to function.

And now I want you to focus on one of those one anothers and that is the responsibility we have to deal with one another in regard to sin. It would be nice if all of us would walk by the Spirit all by ourselves, we wouldn't need any encouragement, we wouldn't need any help, we wouldn't need any reproof but that's not the way it is. We need one another. And that is a function for all of us to take seriously to heart. So I pursue my own holiness not only that I might be used for God but that I might be used for you.

In fact, I have shared a number of times a conversation I had a few years ago in talking about church discipline, someone and I can't remember the exact words but it was something like this, "If you're at Grace Church, you want to keep your life right before God, you want to be spiritual, walking by the Spirit for two reasons: one, you want God to use you to confront someone else in sin to help that believer; and two, you want to make sure somebody else doesn't confront you." That's good. If the church begins this ministry of confrontation of sin and restoration, then I want my life to be right. One, I want to be used to confront. Two, I don't want to be confronted. And so it has this self-purging effect. If a church does not engage in this kind of ministry, there's really a great motive removed for holy living.

So we are called then to the ministry of caring for one another. We must cleanse the church. And that's the way it is done. We are to be engaged, for example, in what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, is purging out the leaven, dealing with those in the church who are sinning. The church must cleanse itself. It cannot allow itself to tolerate sin among its people for its testimony sake and for the sake of the joy and effectiveness of the people themselves. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 6 it says, "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us." In other words, when someone leads an unruly life and they have been confronted and they have been endeavored to be brought through the process of restoration and they refuse to come, we have to stay away from them. Why? Because of their negative effect. So both from the standpoint of

purging the church and saving the church from evil influence, we must engage in a confrontation of sin. And leaders are not exempt. Paul writing to Timothy said the elders that sin should be rebuked before all that others may fear. There is a great responsibility that we have for the purity of the church and we cannot back away from that.

Paul writing to Titus also points out similarly in Titus that there is a need for this kind of direct confrontation and commitment. He says in verse 10 of Titus 3, "Reject a fastuous man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned." Beyond that in chapter 2 verse 15 he says, "Let these..." he says, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority, let no one disregard you." God wants a pure people, a people zealous for good deeds, speak it, exhort it, reprove those who don't do it, do it with authority and don't let anybody disregard you. In other words, you've got to confront sin, whether it's a fastuous man whose divisive, or whether it's a believer who is not pure, you have to do it, you do it with authority. That's part of your responsibility.

The question is then: how do we do this? Given the fact that we are either spiritual or fleshy at any point in time, we can assume that a portion of the church is fleshy at any time. How is it then that those who are walking by the Spirit are to help those who are fleshy, who are failing to walk by the Spirit? Which, by the way, cuts them off from all the perfecting work that God wants to do in them. Well let's go to Galatians 6 and find out. I'm going to give you three principles, three very simple points. When you come across someone who is fleshy, who is sinning, who is not obeying the Word of God, not walking by the Spirit, and I do not mean by that some scandalous sin alone, but we'll see how broad this injunction is. In any sense they are fleshly. We have a responsibility.

Responsibility number one, let's call it "pick them up...pick them up." That is our obligation. Look at verse 1. "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." Would you please notice "brethren" refers to Christians. He's talking about those in the church. And he says even if a man is caught in any trespass. You might want to identify that little word "any." If I ask you what sins in the church are we to confront, what's the answer? All of them...all of them. Any time a believer is not walking in the Spirit, he is caught in a trespass. Caught means trapped, bound by, in bondage to. And the trespass has the idea of a fall or a stumbling into sin. It does not have to be an inadvertent sin, it does not have to be a non-premeditated sin. Anytime anyone falls into a sin and is caught in it, that is reason for us to act.

The isolation of our American culture sometimes makes it difficult to do this admittedly because we don't get close enough to people to see the way they live like they do in some cultures where they all live together and everything is made manifest. There's much that can be hidden today. But when you know that a man is caught or a woman, for that matter, man is generic here, if a man or woman is caught in any trespass, then you have to go into action. This is a mandate for the church. Now let

me go back and just remind you of what I'm saying. Yes we must each individually walk by the Spirit. Yes it is in walking by the Spirit that we are perfected and we must use spiritual weapons to fight spiritual battles and spiritual solutions to spiritual problems, not earthly ones. But the fact of the matter is, even though we were begun in the Spirit and we may be being perfected by the Spirit, we fall to the fleshly level, don't we? And when we do that we are not always able on our own to lift ourselves back up and we need another person to stimulate us again to love and good works. That is why the church must function as more than a Sunday morning meeting where it stares at the back of people's heads. It must be more than that. There must be an actual confrontation of lives.

So, if a person is caught in any sin...now the next line is the key...you who are...what?...spiritual. You have begun in the Spirit, you're being perfected by the Spirit, you are being led by the Spirit, and you are walking by the Spirit, you are filled with the Spirit, you are being borne along by the Spirit, you are responding to the Spirit, you are thinking spiritual thoughts, the Word of Christ is dwelling in you richly, you are a spiritual believer. This then is your obligation. He's not saying you who are perfect. He's saying you who are spiritual, you're walking by the Spirit, you're confessing your sin faithfully. You're seeking cleansing day by day. You're doing your best to obey the Word of God. You want more than anything the Spirit to control your life. You're consciously yielded to the Spirit in prayer. You're constantly submissive to the Word. You're moving in the flow of the Spirit. This is your ministry. This is your ministry.

In fact, back in verse 26 of chapter 5 he says, "Walk by the Spirit." In verse 18 he refers to being "led by the Spirit." In verse 22 he assumes that the result is "the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Now may I make a suggestion to you? If you wonder how you can tell if you are filled with the Spirit or how you can tell if you are walking in the Spirit or how you can tell if you're really following the Spirit, very simple. If you go back to Ephesians chapter 5 it says, "Be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately after that it says, "Speaking to yourselves in...what?...psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody in your heart to the Lord." How can you tell a Spirit-filled person? Joy, praise, worship. And then it goes on to say, "Spirit-filled husbands will...what?...love their wives as Christ loved the church in a sacrificial way. Spirit-filled wives will submit themselves to their husbands. Spirit-filled parents will not provoke their children. Spirit-filled children will obey their parents. Spirit-filled employers will be kind to those who work for them. Spirit-filled employees will give service from the heart as if they were serving Christ to their own employers."

In other words, you can look at the life. You can't feel it. You can only demonstrate it. There's a sense in which you only know you're walking by the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit as you see what is happening. You don't feel it, you experience it. And here if you're walking by the Spirit you will experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

You say, "Well I don't know if I'm filled with the Spirit or not." Well let me ask you a few questions. Are you filled with love? Are you filled with joy? Are you filled with peace? Are you patient, and so forth? To flip it around. If somebody says, "Well, I don't know if I'm filled with the Spirit," I might say to them, "Are you impatient? Are you out of control?" Those are characteristics of not walking by the Spirit, not being filled by the Spirit. So the sense in which as you flow in the Spirit and as He moves you along because you're obedient to the Word and you're praying and you're yielding consciously and you're applying the Word and you're obedient to the Word, you experience these things and you can know by that that the Spirit is in control. If there's a lack of love, if there's a lack of joy, if there's no peace in your heart, if you're utterly impatient, if you're unkind to people around you, if you're unfaithful to what God has called you to do, if you are anything but gentle and if you're not exercising self-control, then guess what? The fruit of the Spirit isn't there, you're not walking by the Spirit.

So look at your life. Not perfection, but if you can see the Spirit producing this fruit in your life as a general pattern, if you have song in your heart, worship toward the Lord, you're filled with praise, if you're seeking right relationships in your marriage and in your home and with others around you, if you long to be obedient to the Word of God, Colossians says that when you're filled with the Spirit the Word of Christ will dwell in you richly, and you love the Word and you want to apply the Word and you want to commune with God for the Spirit cries in your heart "Abba Father," and you commune with the almighty God, if you're experiencing those things, those are the evidences of the spiritual life.

So, those who are spiritual...now let me say this, we go back and forth from these categories, don't we, very fast. Have you ever just gotten up from your devotions in the morning, you spent morning in the devotion time, you prayed and you read your Bible and five minutes later you're yelling at the kids? That's how fast you can go from the spiritual to the fleshly. Did you ever go to a Bible study, a flock meeting, and you spent three hours studying the Bible, the deep things of God, and then get out in the car and argue with your husband all the way home? That's how fast you flip. That's how strong the flesh is.

And so, we must maintain that spiritual walk. But the fact of the matter is it's hard to do alone. So the point here is whenever you see a person caught in any sin, you who are spiritual do...what?...restore. We have to help each other. We have to help each other. You who are spiritual are the only ones that can help those who aren't. That's why Romans 15:1 says, "We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves." So many of us are content to please ourselves. We don't even want to get involved with anyone else. But Paul says the strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are without strength. In 1 Thessalonians 5 this is a wonderful verse, verse 14, "Brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak and be patient with all men." The strong help the weak. The spiritual help the fleshly, that's our responsibility.

Now how do we help? We restore...we restore. That basically means to pick them up...lift them up. That is the responsibility that we as believers have.

Now you say, "How does that work? What is that process? How do we do that?" And that's a very valid question. The verb "to restore," katartizomeans to mend, or repair. And that's a very important concept. Something is broken, something isn't right, something isn't working properly, something isn't functioning and it is their spiritual walk. So we're to come along and strengthen that. Listen to Hebrews 12:12, "Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble." Boy, that's good. You see, sin is a result of weakness at the point of temptation. You lost in the conflict, lift the weak, help the weak, restore the weak. We remember James 5, don't we, where James says, "Any weak among you," it's a better translation than the word "sick," "any weak among you," verse 14, "call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him." Why? Because they are the spiritually strong. "And the prayer offered in faith will restore," there's that same word, restore the one who is weak. The Lord will raise him up.

And then it talks about confessing sin one to another, praying for one another. And that tells us that's the process of restoration. If you're going to restore someone, how do you do it? You do it by causing them to face sin as sin, to confess that sin and ask forgiveness from God and then to pray for their spiritual strength. That's the process. Help them see sin as sin, confess to God and then pray for cleansing and pray for strength to walk the spiritual walk.

That process is more highly defined if you will look with me at Matthew 18 by the words of our Lord Himself. A familiar text we have studied. But I bring it back to your attention because of its import for this particular subject. In Matthew 18 our Lord is speaking about life in the church. He uses the word "church" in verse 17 so we know what He's talking about, He uses it twice there. But back in verse 15 we find this very important statement, "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private." Now that is exactly what Galatians 6 said. Paul no doubt learned that principle from this passage of Scripture and the life of His Lord. "If your brother sins," what kind of sin? Any kind of sin. Some versions say "against you," that does not appear in the better manuscripts. It's any sin, "Go and reprove him in private."

Now how do you do that? What's the process? You go, first of all, and you help him to see sin as sin. Many times a person will react by saying, "Well, I don't think that's so wrong. Well, I mean, a lot of people do things wrong. Well, you do things wrong yourself." Did you ever try to reprove your husband, girls, ladies? Ever try to do that? "Well, I'm not so bad, look what you're doing...." Very self-justifying, aren't we? So that's a battle in itself. But you want them to recognize sin as sin. Then you want them to confess it to God and seek His cleansing and His forgiveness. You cultivate that matter of prayer and confession and the plea for spiritual strength and a petition for the power of the Holy Spirit. That's that process. So you reprove him in private. If he listens to you, you've won your brother. You've gotten your brother back on the spiritual plain. You've gotten him back walking in the

Spirit, moving in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, perfected by the Spirit. And now he's on track in the process of maturity. All the carnal times are lost to that process.

But verse 16 says, "If he doesn't listen to you, take one or two more with you." Now you go back and there's this time two or three total. Why? Well you want by the mouth of two or three witnesses to confirm his commitment. You want to make sure that you can have an accurate report of his attitude, whether it's one of rejection or one of repentance. And the same process. What do you do? You point out sin and you say you must recognize this as sin, you must confess it, you must repent of it, you must ask God to cleanse and wash you and that He would fill you again with His Spirit out of that cleansing, that you would begin to walk in the Spirit. You must recommit yourself to the faithful study of the Word that will dwell in you richly. And you encourage him through all of that, verse 17 says, if he refuses to listen to them, tell the whole church.

What do you tell the church? You tell the whole church to go to him and do the same thing. We do that at communion services all the time. We say So-and-so has committed a sin, now you go and confront him. What you want to do is confront him with this...it is sin, you must see it as sin, you must repent of it, you must confess to the Lord, ask for His cleansing and forgiveness and empowering by the Spirit, commit yourself to the Word in prayer that you might begin to walk by the Spirit again. That's the initial process of picking him up...picking him up. If he still refuses, it says treat him like a pagan and a tax collector. In other words, put him out of the church. Why? Because a little leaven...what?...leavens a whole lump. And the church will not well tolerate or benefit from that kind of influence.

I really believe, beloved, that one of the major problems in the church today is the church preaches against sin but doesn't do anything about it. And consequently it has a somewhat pure message and an impure population. There's leaven maybe not in the preaching but there's leaven in the living. And that takes the very life from the church.

Now let's go back to Galatians chapter 6 and follow a little bit further through this process that the Apostle Paul has outlined for us. In picking them up there's a very important note here. He says, "Restore such a one," remember now that all discipline in the church is for the purpose of what? Restoration. You don't discipline in the church to put people out, you discipline in the church to lift them up. That's the purpose. Putting them out is a last resort for the sake of the purity and safety of the body. So you restore such a one, here it comes "In a spirit of gentleness." Oh, this is so important. In a spirit of gentleness. Now that shouldn't be too hard. Why? Look at verse 23 of chapter 5, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience," and so forth. And then verse 23 says, what's the first one? "Gentleness...gentleness." So if you are walking by the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit, you will be gentle. So if you who are spiritual are restoring, you will be doing it in a spirit of gentleness. It's almost as if this is a statement rather than a command. You who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness characteristic of your spirituality.

Do it with gentleness, you are not to be overbearing. You're not to be ungracious. You're not to be unkind. Second Corinthians 2:7 says you do it with an attitude of forgiveness and comfort so that the person is not overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. And then verse 8 says you are to reaffirm your love for him. So you are to come with a forgiving heart. You are to come with a comforting attitude. You are to come with a reaffirming of love. This is not abusive, this is gentle, this is tender, this is kind, this is patient. Second Thessalonians 3:15 says when you admonish this person in sin, you admonish him not as an enemy but as a brother. You come as one who loves. You come as one who cares. That's very very important.

How so? The end of verse 1, "Each one looking to yourself lest you too be tempted." Let me ask you a question. Have you ever known anyone to sin a sin that you couldn't be tempted to sin? You could be tempted, couldn't you? Whenever I think about that there are few sins that I think I could never be tempted to commit because they're so bizarre. But certainly in the main we are temptable, right? And so whenever you go to someone, shouldn't it be with a sense that, "Hey, I really do understand what you have gone through," right? I understand that. I understand that. If Jesus could be in all points tempted like as we are thus to be a faithful high priest and He comes to us to discipline, chasten, reprove and restore us with an understanding heart, certainly we who have actually fallen to sin which He never did should be able to understand those around us who have fallen, too, right? So you come with understanding. You don't come lording it over them. By the way, the word "looking to yourselves" is a very strong verb, it means to carefully observe, carefully observe your own self lest you too be tempted. Don't you get to thinking that you're invulnerable to that. Take a good look at your own temptability and then go in gentleness.

You remember in Matthew 12:20, one of my favorite statements about Christ taken from the prophets where it says a bruised reed He will not break and smoking flax He will not extinguish? When the reed that was played by the shepherd that he made himself and punched the little holes in and played like a reed flute, when it got old it began to bend. And once it was bent, the tone wouldn't go through, the air wouldn't go through and it wouldn't make music and so they would snap it and throw it away. And when the flax was only smoldering on the little oil lamp, a piece of flax would be floating in it, and when it got way down to the very bottom it would just smolder and make smoke and not light, they would throw it away. The prophet said of the Messiah, when He comes He will not break the bruised reed and He will not extinguish the smoking flax. The point is that when a person is bruised and when their candle is low, Jesus doesn't throw them away. That's the point.

And that's the way we have to approach this process. We go to the believer struggling and we knowing our own temptability in a spirit of gentleness, we who are spiritual considering our own weakness in gentleness, reaffirming our love with an attitude of forgiveness, with a comforting spirit lift that person up. That's our first responsibility...pick them up. It starts with confronting sin. And you never really worry about the spiritual people doing this because the spiritual people will be full of love,

joy, peace, gentleness, goodness and all that so they'll do it right. What you worry about is the fleshly people trying to straighten out the fleshly people. That makes more trouble. Then you have a war. Or to put it more practically, what you have to worry about is you trying to straighten out someone else who's fleshy when you're fleshy yourself. So make sure you take care of a little spiritual business before you approach that.

Second principle, first one...lift them up, second...hold them up...hold them up. You don't finish the work with the initial contact. Look at verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens." That word barosis is a very interesting word, it means an excessive heavy heavy heavy load, unbearable. One person can't carry it. "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ." What is the law of Christ? That you love one another even as I have loved you, John 13:34, it's the royal law James called it, it's the law of liberty. It is quoted in verse 14 of Galatians 5, "This is the law wholly fulfilled, love your neighbor as yourself." The law of love. So the law of love says you lift them up and then it says you hold them up...you bear one another's burdens. The verb "bear" means to carry with endurance, to get under the load.

You see, falling to the flesh is a result of an unbearable burden of temptation. The temptation load gets so heavy you just fall. You've got to help them carry it or else they may fall again and again and again. And we all have certain categories of temptability, don't we? We get hit with the same kind of thing so often. And persistent, oppressive, heavy temptation is a burden that individual believers, all of us, don't bear alone very well.

Have I any need to remind you that sin likes to have you alone? And the more alone you are the more tempted you are? And the more isolated you are the more tempted you are? And have you noticed that when you are among other believers and when you're in a strong Christian family or in a strong Christian relationship, how you feel the strength of that relationship? How you feel the strength of that accountability in your life? We need to bear one another's burdens. We don't do well alone at all. We get away from the church, we get away from our Christian family. I know many men in the business world fight this, Christian men having to travel all the time alone, in meetings and all by themselves for days on end, have great battles with temptation that do not even exist when they are in the fellowship of God's people. So we need to bear burdens. Step one is to lift them up. Step two is to hold them up.

How can you do this? Sometimes it means a relationship. I know in my own case there are people that I've tried to help carry their burdens and we do that by meeting regularly or by having a regular phone conversation. And usually I structure it around the idea that I want you to report to me every time that you fell to that temptation. Keep a list, write it down and read me the list when we meet. Well they don't like to do that. They don't want to read that list. So they don't do that sin. They can actually help them carry the load by simply making them accountable. One other element of that is to pray for them faithfully. Another element of that is to encourage them by writing to them or by giving

them material or by teaching them, even as I'm able to do the pulpit, to teach many of you who have a certain accountability to me. And here I can infuse in you the Word of God.

So you carry the load, you don't just confront and then walk away. There is an ongoing responsibility that God gives to us to help that burden of sin. In 2 Corinthians 7, listen to this, "But God who comforts the depressed comforted us by the coming of Titus." Did you hear that? You say, "What right do you have to be depressed, you know too much?" That's right. But he was human. He fell to the flesh and he says, "I was comforted by Titus." Wow. And not only by his coming but by the comfort with which he was comforted in you. He could be comforted by someone who came alongside and just the fellowship and the presence bears the burden that depresses.

I was talking to a young man, he said to me, "I'm very depressed, I'm so depressed." We were down in Texas last week. And I could look into his eyes and tears were on the edge of his eyelids and I looked him right in the eye and I said, "Are you lonely?" He said yes. I said, "You really need a friend, don't you?" And he just began to weep openly. He just didn't have any way to deal with temptation alone, without somebody there to bear the burden, to be strength to his weakness. Now you're talking about real Christian fellowship, the real stuff. That fulfills the law of Christ. Not the suggestion of Christ, the law of Christ, it's an obligation.

Look at verse 3, and here he further talks about the one who is helping with the burden, the spiritual one. He says if...he says, "If anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing he deceives himself." And, boy, does he hit on the issue there. One of the chief reasons that we don't bother to follow up and hold up some person is because we feel superior. A lot of people like to look down on those in sin. Would you agree with that? Oh yeah. You see somebody in sin and they love to look down on them, feel self-righteous, smug. One writer said, giving a personal testimony, "I've often thought that if I ever fall into a trespass I will pray that I don't land in the hands of those sensorious critical self-righteous judges in the church. Let me fall into the hands of bar keepers, street walkers or dope peddlers because such church people would tear me apart with their long wagging gossipy tongues, cutting me to shreds." I thank God that isn't true in our church but it is in a lot of places.

You don't want to be judgmental. You don't want to be sensorious. You don't want to be somebody who thinks you're holier than anyone else. If you think you're something when you're nothing, you deceive yourself. You might as well realize what he's saying is you're nothing. The only thing that makes you anything at all is that you're spiritual. You happen to be in the Spirit so you're useful. As soon as you're in the flesh, you're useless. So it isn't you, it's the Spirit. Understood? You alone in the flesh, useless. You in the Spirit, powerful. The issue must be the Spirit. That's syllogism anyone could understand.

So he's saying if you think you're something when you're nothing...in other words, if you don't want to bother to get involved at a proper level because you're too good for that, you are very deceived. And

you better go back, verse 4 says, and you better examine your own work and then you may have a just cause for boasting in regard to himself alone, he says, and not in regard to another. You better not assume anything that isn't really true. Your first responsibility is to examine your own life, be sure your own attitudes are right and be sure you have a humble meek spirit and that you have a reason to boast in the good sense because of what God has done in your life. And then you're going to go humbly and you're not going to think you're something when you're nothing. You're going to know you're nothing but God can use you to do some things and you're going to follow through in the power of the Spirit.

And then in verse 5 he says, "For each one shall bear his own load." That doesn't contradict verse 2. The word "load" and the word "burdens" are two different words. Burdens is baros, heavy, heavy burden; load...really it means anything carved originally, it had to do with a little piece of art. It's simply used of sort of the general obligations of life. It doesn't mean heavy, difficult, just the general matters of life. And what he is saying is everybody has to take care of his own life. You take care of your life, make sure your life is right, examine your own work, in verse 4, and then make sure you have a reason to boast about anything before you set yourself up as too superior to bend to the need of a sinner.

Spiritual responsibility is what this is all about. And we have responsibility to pick them up and hold them up...and hold them up. And in order to do that we've got to be willing to look not on our own things but on the things of others and consider others better than ourselves. Then lastly, build them up...build them up. Just a brief comment on verse 6, "And let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches."

Some people think this verse means you should pay the preacher. I don't think that's what it means at all. Why would he drop that obtuse thought in the middle of this context? What he is saying is the one who bears the burden and holds this guy up, or this lady up, is obviously teaching the Word to that person. That's part of it. And they mutually share, koinoneo, in all good things, all the noble, moral, spiritual excellencies that he is learning.

The implication here is simply this. You're involved in a building process. You pick them up by confronting sin, calling for a confession, repentance, prayer, back to the Word. You hold them up by an accountability relationship in which you get under the burden and help them carry the burden. And you build them up by sharing back and forth all the good, excellent, moral truths that flow out of the process of teaching. That's an essential part of it. You might give someone a book. You might give them a tape. You might bring them to church with you. You might be in a Bible study with them. It's been a joy for me, I guess this is one of the...one of the privileges of being the preacher...I would never be able to personally teach all the people that I would like to be able to teach, to follow them up, but I have the privilege of preaching publicly every week so that they can come and sit under that teaching and I can cover a lot more ground that way. But there must be that personal sharing in the

edifying process of the Word of God.

For you that means that if you're going to confront someone and you're going to lift them up and then you're to pray for them and hold them accountable and have a sort of relationship with them that maintains that stimulation of holiness and then you're going to have to build them up that somehow you're going to have to get involved in their life.

Am I my brother's keeper? What's the answer? Yes. And nothing is more frustrating than the realization that we're not following through on this responsibility. It's too bad for the fleshly because they don't get any help. And so if you're going to be spiritual, you're going to have to have this sensitivity. And if you are spiritual, I think you'll do this. I think as the Spirit directs and as you walk in the Spirit this will happen. And it will never be a burden, it will always be a joy because the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. You see, with all that the Holy Spirit does, with all that He does in our lives individually, we still fail. We still fall to the level of the flesh. And God has set in motion the church as an accountability body closely knit together for the purpose of the spiritual coming alongside the fleshly to lift them up, to hold them up, to build them up. Let's bow together in prayer.

Lord, we thank You for this good reminder of our responsibility as Your children, within the body of Christ to be useful in the task of bringing those who have fallen to the level of the flesh up to the level of the Spirit. Lord, we can't do that on our own, we need You to do that. That's why this is the ministry of those that are spiritual. So, Lord, we would just ask in the simplicity of these marvelous truths that we might walk by the Spirit. And if we are walking by the Spirit, we will, one, not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, we will, two, produce love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control and we will, three, be in a ministry of restoration as we confront sin for the purity of Your body and the joy of Your people and are used by Your Spirit to help one another live on the spiritual level, which is the only level on which we can be perfected, matured, made like Christ. Call us afresh to that ministry that in any case where a brother is caught in any trespass we eagerly accept the joy of stepping in to restore. Give to us opportunities and keep us faithful to walk by the Spirit in Jesus' name. Amen.

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