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

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

INTRODUCTION

We have seen in Matthew 18 how the Lord instructs His disciples in regard to disciplining and forgiving those who sin, having discussed the whole matter of reproving and rebuking sin in being ministers of holiness, and seeking those sinning Christians in order to bring them back to the place of obedience. We also have discovered how utterly important it is to forgive on two levels: first, to forgive with the heart immediately without bearing a grudge; and second, to forgive relationally when the person turns from the sin and is brought back to the fellowship.

Though the areas of discipline and forgiveness were thoroughly dealt with in Matthew 18, there is one one other related area that we haven't really discussed in detail...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, taking them all the way back to the place where they were before they fell. The ministry of restoration seems to me to be a vital and final link in the process of dealing with sin in the church.

A. The Concern of God

Dealing with sin in the church is of great consequence. The Lord has so designed His church that its purity is of great concern. The Apostle Paul talks about wanting to espouse to Christ "a chaste virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2) and he writes to the Ephesians about the importance of having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). To the Corinthians, he says that when somebody in the assembly is found to be in sin, they are to put him out, because it is a very high priority to deal with sin within the family of God, for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6b). And so, a pure church is the great concern of God.

Now, we have been seeing how essential it is that we deal with sin by disciplining, by forgiving, and also by restoring. I believe that is the intent of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:11 when he says that if you don't forgive and restore the one whom you have disciplined, you give Satan an advantage...an open invitation 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 do to restore them to that place of spiritual strength they had before they fell in the first place? The answer comes in this passage, which deals with the ministry of restoration. In order to better understand its teaching, let us first set...

B. The Context of Galatians

1. The Potential for Conflict

By the time we come to chapter 6, these "foolish Galatians" (3:1), who were embroiled in a legalism/freedom or law/grace battle, have pretty well heard Paul. They've been told in very strong terms in chapters 1 and 2 that he was in fact the Apostle of God. In chapters 3 and 4, they have been told that salvation is solely by grace through faith. And they've also been told in chapter 5 that the Christian life is one of liberty, not legalism. So it may be, after having read that much, that some of the light is starting to dawn and the fog is clearing a little bit in their thinking. Inspite of this possibility, Paul, as a very astute instrument for the Spirit of God, is very much aware of the fact that division in the Galatian assemblies was a result of his ministry conflicting with that of the Judaizers. The battle lines were drawn between the spiritually mature ones, who were walking in the Spirit, and the legalists, who were trying by the energy of the flesh to crank out all the requirements of the Mosaic economy. He sees in this conflict a potential for the shattering of the assemblies in Galatia and therefore knows he has to deal with it.

2. The Principle for Caring

In effect, Paul says, "You that are spiritual who have got it together and are walking in the power of the Spirit have the responsibility to pick up the ones that are not." He establishes a principle of life for the church of God until Jesus comes: The strong are to take care of the weak...the spiritual are to take care of the fleshly. In other words, the ones who are standing, should lift up the ones that are fallen. The church was never designed to be a place where you go and spectate or merely stare at the back of someone's head, saying, "God, aren't You thrilled that I came? I did my religious duty." The church is a place where you mutually minister together.

3. The Problem of Condescension

a. The Tendency

It would be very easy for the spiritual Galatians, who had accepted Paul's doctrine of grace and now received the affirmation in this letter that they were free in grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do right, to look at these others in a condescending way. And such can be the tendency among the

more spiritually mature people, who maybe have had the benefit of good teaching and examples to follow, and who have been obedient and in the past have walked with the Lord. Sometimes they can get to the point where they look down on all those who don't live at their level spiritually. Instead of seeing that as an opportunity for ministry, it becomes an opportunity for spiritual pride and an occasion of self-conceit where you congratulate yourself for your spirituality. There's also the potential for those who are weak to look at the spiritual ones and envy them to the degree that envy turns to bitterness and jealousy and thereby causes a rift running right down the middle of the church.

b. The Text

Knowing that there must be a coming together of those two groups, Paul does not want the spiritual ones lording it over the fleshly ones. He wants to prevent the strong from taking advantage of the weak and disdaining them. Conversely, he doesn't want the weak resenting the strong. Hoping to avoid a spiritual/fleshly split, he addresses the issue in this section of Galatians.

At the end of chapter 5, Paul says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (v. 25). In other words, because the Spirit indwells us as Christians, we ought to daily live a Spirit-controlled and empowered life. Paul continues, "Let us not be desirous of vainglory [Gk. kenodoxos]..." (v. 26a). Don't feel you have a right to claim glory for yourself and be conceited. This is a problem that you can always fall temptation to as you gain spiritual maturity. You can begin to perceive yourself as somebody worthy of special honor, who looks down on those who aren't quite at the same level of maturity. As a result, a fracture takes place between the spiritual and the nonspiritual, the strong and the weak. And instead of the one helping the other, the stronger gloats over the weaker. I think that's what Paul has in mind when he says, "...provoking one another..." (v. 26b). The converse of this is that the weaker is going to envy the one who appears to be more spiritual (v. 26c). This kind of break between those who are strong and weak is not what Paul wants in any church. There is no place for that.

4. The Parallel of Concern

This desire for unity is on Paul's heart not only here in Galatians, but is also expressed in...

a. Romans 15

After exhorting his readers that the strong are not to offend the weak and cause them to stumble, but rather build them up, Paul sums up his point in chapter 15: "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 [building up]. For even Christ pleased not Himself..." (vv. 1-3a). He establishes the incomparable model of Jesus Christ Himself, who didn't lord it over us, though He had every reason to do so. Rather, He stooped to bear the infirmities of the weak. Believe me, if ever there was

a dichotomy, it was between Jesus Christ's strength and our weakness. And so, with Christ as the model, we should bear the infirmities of the weak, desiring to find those believers who are weaker and who struggle greatly with the flesh. We should not look down on them in vainglory and provoke them, but minister to them, thus preventing them from looking up at us and becoming jealous and bitter.

b. 1 Thessalonians 5

In verse 14, Paul gives a similar 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 men." This verse outlines the key to unity in the church. Instead of the more mature and spiritually minded believers standing in pride over the sinning ones who have fallen, they should seek to help them.

I remember receiving a long letter from a lady about her spiritual pilgrimage. She was a mother of several children, and was very active in her church. She confessed that she had taken out a razor blade and prepared to slice her face up, because the people in her church had, in effect, convinced her that she was an unworthy and useless Christian with a meaningless life. Because the church felt that she didn't live up to the standard that they had set, the pastor told everyone in the whole church to shun her. Thereupon, she decided, "If I wasn't even worthy enough to be cared for by the people of God, then I wasn't worth anything and I would slice up my face and 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 them." Then one day in the midst of this crisis, she turned her radio dial and found our radio program, which was airing a series on law and grace. Suddenly, after having tried and failed to live according to the legalistic code of her church, she realized that Christ had set her free from the law. What a horrible thing for a church to do, thinking that it was doing the will of God, but in reality, shunning a person who didn't come up to their standard! That is the very antithesis of the ministry of the church to its own, isn't it? We must support the weak and bear their burden.

So, though we must carry out discipline and be quick to forgive, we must not forget that we must complete the process and seek a repentant believer's restoration. But what do we do to restore? Let's go back to Galatians and discover the three steps Paul delineates in this text.

I. PICK THEM UP (v. 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."

A. The Conditions of the Situation

1. The Family

"Brethren..."

Now the term "brethren" indicates that Paul's words are applicable to the church family with regard to how it is to take care of itself when a Christian is "overtaken in a fault."

2. The Fault

"...in a fault..."

The word "fault" is the Greek term paraptoma, which means "a stumbling, blunder, or fall." Whereas some people think it refers to something less than a sin, I believe that it actually refers to a sin. People say, "Well, why didn't he use the word hamartia [a sin], or the word anomia [a trespass]? Why did he use a word which means `a fall'?" Well, I don't think his choice had anything to do with theology, I think it had to do with his literary approach. Paul is talking about walking in the Spirit (5:16, 25). The use of the idea of falling is not so much to provide a theological definition of sin as it is to be consistent with his metaphor of walking in the spiritual life.

3. The Finding

"...overtaken..."

The word "overtaken" has also been misunderstood as well. I don't think it's refering to 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. Rather than being sin, I think it is a believer who overtakes someone who has fallen into a sin. The Greek term for "overtaken" (prolambano) is a very interesting word, which means "to take unawares." I really don't think sin can take us unawares, because if we're walking in the Spirit, I think we have the faculties to discern its presence. Consequently, there is no such thing as unwilling sin. Therefore, though I can't be dogmatic, I believe that the text refers to the act of detecting another Christian in the process of sin. When you come across someone in sin, this verse becomes directly applicable to him and his needed restoration. You couldn't be involved in the restoration unless you had overtaken him in the sin, right?

The fact that you come across someone in sin is not implying, however, that you go through life sniffing around as a member of the spiritual SS. The verse is merely saying that as you walk in the Spirit, you may come across someone in sin who needs to be dealt with. To me, that is a preferred rendering, although it is not necessarily wrong to say that it refers to someone who is overtaken by

some sin.

B. The Call to the Spiritual

"...ye who are spiritual..."

Now this is very important. Who are the spiritual people? What does it mean to be spiritual?

1. Having the Mind of Christ

We find this brief definition in 1 Corinthians 2:15-16: "But he that is spiritual judgeth [discerns] all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." What does it mean to be spiritual? To be spiritual according to verse 15, is the same as having "the mind of Christ" in verse 16. The one who is spiritual is the one who has the mind of Christ.

2. Being Filled with the Spirit

To look at it another way, Ephesians 5:18 says, "...be filled with the Spirit." And Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...." You will notice that following both of those commands, the same results are listed. Therefore, we conclude that being filled with the Spirit is the same as letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Being spiritual, then, means to be filled with the Spirit, which is the same as having the mind of Christ.

So, the spiritual person is the person with the mind of Christ, who is under the control of the Holy Soirit. To have the mind of Christ means you know the Word of God revealed in the Bible, and you are walking in obedience to it. When you learn the Word of God, the Spirit energizes the obedient response. Therefore, the spiritual person is the one walking in obedience to God's will revealed to him through the Word of God and energized by the Spirit of God. And I might add that it isn't necessarily a process to be spiritual. It is an absolute. Either are or you aren't. In one sense, you are either walking in obedience to God's Word or you're not. But the one who is walking in obedience to God's Word needs to take over the responsibility of restoring the one who's just fallen out of obedience. This is not a profound principle--it's obvious: the spiritually strong take care of bearing the infirmities of the weak. Paul goes on to demonstrate this concept in 1 Corinthians 3 as he goes calls the Corinthians fleshly and does everything he can in that entire letter to pick them up again through his instruction in 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.

C. The Command to Strengthen

"...restore such an one..."

Returning to Galatians 6:1, we find that the one who is spiritual (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 common word in the New Testament (Gk. katartizo). It simply means "to repair something in the sense of bringing it back to its former condition." It is used of reconciling two arguing factions, of setting bones that are broken, of putting a dislocated limb back into its proper place, and of mending broken nets. That word is a very common one for knitting something together or restoring it to its original condition, and that's exactly what it's calling us to.

We not only reprove and rebuke a person who falls into sin; we forgive them with our hearts and relationally restore him when he repents. And then we begin the whole rebuilding process of restoration that puts them back on the walk with the Spirit he had before he sinned.

I am really committed to the fact that the church has got to be involved in carrying out this spiritual rebuilding process. It is not enough to just come and go and watch what happens. There is a spiritual rebuilding process that we should all be involved in-- the strong helping the weak.

In another sense, this is not just an absolute issue, because we are all weak in some places, right? At some point on that long line of spiritual growth, we all need somebody who is stronger than we are to strengthen us. Hence, we all are to be involved in those interpersonal relationships which offer strength to those that are weak. When you see a person who is in sin, the implication of verse 1 is that you've got to pick him up in discipline, confronting him about the sin. If he doesn't listen to you, then you take one or two witnesses to confirm the report that that person is sinning. If he still doesn't listen, you tell it to the whole church, which, in turn, goes pursuing with love. Only if the person doesn't listen to the church, is he put out and treated like an outsider until the time that he is repentant. However, if he repents, there is to be a full relational forgiveness followed by the completion of the rebuilding process to restore him to where he was before.

D. The Characteristic of Our Spirit

1. The Pattern of Meekness

"...in the spirit of meekness..."

The person who picks up a weaker brother ought to do so with an attitude of humility. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the model in this regard. In 2 Corinthians 10:1, Paul says, "Now I, Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...." Think of 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. He desires to restore us to the place that we knew before we ever fell. Though our meekness can't match the pattern of Christ, we are still expected to carry out...

2. The Practice of Meekness

"...considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

When we restore another person, we should do so understanding that we could be in the same position, right? While Christ could not because of His perfection, we can. So, before you stand up and consider yourself to be spiritual and relatively far along in terms of your pilgrimage toward perfection, realize that you never want to get to the point where you look down on someone else, but rather where you bend down in humility to help someone else. That is what meekness means: realizing that you could have been in the same situation because you're not exempt from the weakness of the flesh 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 among Christians who think that they are better than others. There must be the meekness that enables us to realize that we ourselves could also fall.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul has given a marvelous illustration of how the people of God, even when blessed by Him, can still sin. He records how Israel had been taken out of Egypt "under the cloud, and all passed through the sea" (v. 1b). Wandering in the wilderness, they were guided by the Shekinah of God, finally entering into the Promised Land. But in spite of all of the blessing and provision of God, twentypthree thousand of them committed fornication and fell in judgment. This nation with such great privilege still committed sin. Paul goes on to apply this principle to Christians: "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 fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man..." (vv. 11-13a). You never want to get to the point where you think you are invincible. There needs to be a meekness as part of our personality when seeing someone else sin, which says, "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, you need to be willing to stoop to pick someone up, knowing that you could just as well be the one who needed picking up. Sooner or later there will be sin in your life from which you, too, need restoration.

Second, after picking them up, you should be ready to...

II. HOLD THEM UP (vv. 2-5)

A. The Command to Protect (v. 2)

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

1. The Responsibility

The word "bear" means "to carry, to hold up." Whatever is really burdensome for them you are to hold. Now you say, "Well, what does he mean by "Bear ye one another's burdens..."? Maintaining the picture of walking, Paul says that when you are going along the road and see someone who has fallen under a crushing burden too heavy for him, you should get under the load and help him carry it.

Now, what are the "burden"? Well, I believe a burden is a spiritual weakness that threatens to induce a person to fall into sin...whatever bridgehead Satan can find in a weakness of personality or character. Whatever may be a person's Achilles' heel, that is where you've got to get under and carry the load because he can't carry the load himself. Many times a person might sin and repent, and then be forgiven and brought back into the fellowship. Unfortunately, nobody bothers to get under the load, and they continue carrying the same load of temptation in the same difficult circumstances they were carrying before...and they just fall again.

I had a young man come to see me, distraught and tearful, who said, "I've given my life to Christ, having been a homosexual before I was saved, but I still have terrible problems. I keep stumbling back into those wrong relationships even though I repent and turn from them, asking God to forgive me." In attempting to help him, I said, "Every time you have a homosexual relationship over the next two weeks and cultivate ungodly thinking in that regard, I want you to write it out in a full paragraph and explain it to me. Then, in two weeks when we meet again, you can go through the whole list with me." Though he was stunned at what I said, two weeks later he came back with this huge grin on his face. He reported, "I don't have anything to write. I didn't do anything...and that's the first time in two weeks." "Well, what was the difference?" I asked. He said, "Just that I didn't want to have 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. I can't tell you how many people I've told this to: "If you feel you have a problem in that area of temptation, I suggest that you pick up the telephone and get somebody to carry the load with you." You can bear somebody's burden by staying close to them and holding them accountable. Restoration is more than just saying to a guy, "...be ye warmed and filled..." (Js. 2:16b), and accepting him back when he has repented, because he may still be struggling under the same load without anybody underneath to help carry and eventually lighten it in the process of spiritual obedience. Nor should we merely quote to them, like so many do, Psalm

55:22, which says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee..." (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7). The Lord wants to sustain others through you and me. We have to be mutual burden bearers.

2. The Result

You will notice at the end of verse 2 that being a burden bearer fulfills "the law of Christ." Do you know what the law of Christ is? John 13:34 makes it very clear: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another...." The law of Christ is the law of love. Love picks up and love holds up. James calls it "the royal law" (Js. 2:8) and "the perfect law of liberty" (1:25).

To be a burden bearer is our ministry to each other for which we are responsible. But frankly, most Christians don't do this. Therefore, I ask you, "Who are you currently helping to carry the burden of temptation and weakness? Anybody? Are you involved in the process of nurturing anyone spiritually in full restoration?" It's so easy for us to be uninvolved, rationalizing, "Well, I don't like to deal with other people's sin, because I might get affected by it and taint my spirituality." Well, if you think that, then you need to take note of...

B. The Caution to Pride (v. 3)

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

That verse is a wonderful verse on anthropology. Simply stated, man is nothing. That's what it says when you take out all the modifying phrases--we are nothing, so what are you protecting anyway? If the best of us is the chief of sinners, then what are we? I'm not saying this, however, in terms of denying the image of God in us. I'm just saying that as a caution to thinking too highly of ourselves. All we are, we are by the grace of God. Therefore, who are we to be so self-deceived that we can't give ourselves to bearing the burdens of the weak? We can't shun people. When they are honestly desiring to do what is right and they repent and want help, we can't just take them back without getting under their load and carrying it with them. And if you think you're too good for that, you are so wrong.

Do 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 am comparing myself with someone else. I can always find people that are worse than me. For example, if I just wanted to feel better than other people, all I have to do is look for a drunk lying in the gutter so that I could say, "I feel terrific--I don't do that." You can always find somebody worse off than you. That is what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 10 when he said, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (v. 12). Who is our standard? Christ! That is precisely what 1 John 2:6 says: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He

walked." Because Christ is the standard, we are to compare ourselves to Him. But guess where we come out? We're on the low end of the comparison. Such a comparison is far from self- deceiving.

Then, Paul adds another encouragement to hold up a believer who has fallen:

C. The Call to Prove (vv. 4-5)

1. The Cause for Rejoicing (v. 4)

"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

You can claim you are working for the Lord and that you are spiritual, but you're going to have to prove it. Someday you are going to have to stand before Christ all by yourself with verification of your claim to spirituality. The bema judgment, which I believe these verses refer to, is the time when believers are going to be rewarded, as indicated in...

a. Revelation 22:12 -- "And, behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." We are all going to have to stand a test.

b. 2 Corinthians 5:10 -- "For we must all appear before the judment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according tothat he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

c. 1 Corinthians 3:12 -- Paul identifies our works as "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." The insignificant and worthless works, as represented by the wood, hay, and stubble, are going to be burned up (v. 13).

2. The Consequence of Relinquishing (v. 5)

"For every man shall bear his own burden."

You had better get under the burden of somebody else now, or at the day of testing, you are going to bear your own burden in the sense of the loss of reward. This is a different type of burden than the burden of verse 2, because the Greek terms are different. Baros in verse two is very strong word, which means "a heavy weight," whereas phortion in verse 5 means "a little backpack." Sin is a heavy burden, but losing a reward is just a little backpack.

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

Finally, after picking them up and holding them up, we are to...

III. BUILD THEM UP (v. 6)

"Let him that is taught in the word share with him that teacheth in all good things."

Picture yourself as the teacher and the person you are restoring as the student. Though some people have used this verse to indicate that a preacher who preaches or teaches should be paid, understanding the term "good things" (Gr. agathos) to refer to money, I would prefer to go to 1 Corinthians 9 to support that responsibility, because I don't think that's what this verse is talking about. Rather than "good things" arbitrarily refering to money, this particular Greek term refers to the essence of something that is good (cf. Gk. kalos, = "goodness in form"). Hence, it means spiritual excellence. For example, Romans 10:15 talks about the proclamation of "good things" using the same term found in Galatians 6:6, Hebrews 9:11 and 10:1. It refers to the good things of God's Kingdom...spiritual excellence. A good way to translate this would be: "Let him that is taught in the Word share with him that teaches in all the spiritual goodies."

What is this saying to us? In the process of restoring this person, you who teach, as well as the one being restored, are to mutually share in all the spiritual blessings. It is an ongoing, reciprocating kind of edification process, isn't it? It is the process of rebuilding, wherein a sinning brother submits to the teaching brother, and they both share together in all the spiritual benefits of growing strong in Christ. Rebuilding is a vital ministry that must desire to follow the confrontation of sin.

CONCLUSION

So, what is this passage teaching us? Simply that we are to pick up the weaker brothers who have fallen, hold them up, and then build them up. That's the process. Paul calls us to this ministry of restoration when someone sins. we are to begin with discipline, a painful task because it involves deep self-examination on our part before we can do that in somebody else's life. It is hard work, and even warfare, that is very often discouraging and distressing when those you are confronting don't respond.

Then second, we are to be involved in forgiveness. It, too, is very painful because the person you forgive may not respond. When you have really forgiven them in your heart, you will pay a high price, because you may have to absorb the loss yourself. You may never get restoration.

The third step is restoration itself where we bring the person all the way back to a place of spiritual stability. This can often be painful as well, because it involves carrying their load. In a position of such

vulnerability, we must accept hard work and the possibility of discouragement along the way. But let not the reality of these prevent us from carrying out that vital ministry to which the Lord has called us.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the final link in the process of dealing with sin in the church?

2. What is of great concern to God regarding the church?

3. When do you give Satan an advantage to come in and tear up the church?

4. Between whom were the battle lines drawn in the Galatian assemblies?

5. What type of a place was the church never designed to be? What should it be a place for?

6. How did Paul not want the strong Galatians to act toward the weaker ones, as well as the weak toward the strong?

7. What is the problem that we can fall temptation to as we gain spiritual maturity?

8. Why may Paul have used the equivalent of fault rather than "sin" in Galatians 6:1?

9. What is the man in verse 1 overtaken by? What is the implication of the verb "overtaken"?

10. What two phrases best describe what it means to be spiritual?

11. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

12. What does the Greek word for "restore" mean (Gal. 6:1)?

13. In relation to other people, when is spiritual growth not an absolute issue?

14. With what attitude should we pick up a weaker brother? Who should be our model in this regard?

15. What does a spirit of meekness enable us to realize when confronting another person's sin?

16. What did Paul give in 1 Corinthians 10 as an illustration that blessing does not necessarily preclude sinning?

17. Identify what the "burdens" are in verse 2.

18. What can happen if nobody bothers to get under the load of another and help him to carry it?

19. What is one way that you can help another carry his spiritual burdens?

20. What is the result of being a burden bearer, according to Galatians 6:2?

21. What is probably wrong with our standard of comparison if we think we are too good to help carry someone else's load? Identify our standard, according to 1 John 2:6.

22. Implied in verse 4, when will the verification of our service for the Lord be a cause for rejoicing?

23. What is the burden that all, to some degree, will bear at the day of testing?

Pondering the Principles

1. Be honest with yourself: When you go to church, do you feel you are fulfilling your "religious duty" by merely attending and staring at the back of someone's head? If you are presently not ministering to anyone else, list some ministries which are of interest to you and for which you feel gifted. Whether it be ushering, working in the nursery, cooking meals, teaching, participating on a committee, or some personal act of service, choose to make your interaction at church not only a time of receiving, but one of giving as well.

2. What is your attitude toward those who are not as spiritually mature as you? How do yo respond to their failures? On the other hand, do you envy those who are stronger in the Lord than you are? If either of these responses are present in you life, meditate upon Romans 15:1-3; and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, respectively.

3. To be a burden bearer is our ministry to each other for which we are all responsible. Who are you currently helping to carry the burden of temptation or weakness? Do you know a fellow believer at work, in your neighborhood, at your church, or in your family, who you sense is struggling and could benefit by your patient encouragement, warning, or support? (1 Thess. 5:14) Why don't you give him or her a call or write a note and plan to get together this week?

4. Galatians 6;6 says, "Let him that is taught in the word share with him that teacheth in all good things." In what ways could you return the spiritual blessings that you have received from your pastor, Sunday School teacher, or Bible study teacher to them? Maybe a note of appreciation or encouragement, a special service you provide, or a meal you share with them could, in a small way, be a return of the blessing you have received from their labors in the Word.

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