

## **Restoring the Sinning Brother**

Scripture: Galatians 5:26–6:6

Code: 48-40

If you will, open your Bible to Galatians chapters 5 and 6. Now remember, Galatia is a region, and Paul is writing to a number of churches and cities in the region of Galatia. He has been defending his apostleship, he has been defending the gospel, and he has been defining what it is to live a Christian life – freedom in Christ rather than legalism. We want to pick up Paul's account in chapter 5, verse 16, backtracking it just a little bit so we can set a context.

In the last two chapters he deals with issues of the Christian life. The first two chapters defends his apostleship, the second two chapters he defends the gospel. Now he writes about spiritual life and how to walk in the Holy Spirit, how to live a life of freedom in Christ that is still obedient. And we'll pick it up in chapter 5, verse 16.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus, they have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. Brethren, even if anyone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he's something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load. The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.”

Now we have gone all the way down to verse 26 in our study, but we are reminded here that the church has to face an inevitable reality. As much as we want unity and as much as we want purity and virtue and holiness for the sake of our joy, usefulness, fruitfulness, and witness, the church will always be divided at any time between those who are walking in the Spirit and those who are walking in the flesh. Each is not a fixed and permanent condition, because all of us who are true believers are as a norm walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, because we have been made new creations, and we are now empowered by the Spirit to worship and love and obey the Lord. So that is the norm for believers.

But it is also true that we still have our remaining flesh. We are still bound to a body of death until our glorification comes. So though walking in the Spirit is our norm, walking in the flesh also is a reality. Again, not a fixed reality for a true believer, but a point in time or a season in life where we operate in fleshly pride and disobedience and self-will, and sin becomes more typical of our lives. On the other hand, when a Christian walks in the Spirit, that Christian has Spirit-led worship, Spirit-induced love, and Spirit-empowered obedience.

At any given time, again, in the life of the church we have both of these side by side. We are struggling in ourselves as individuals with this conflict. Turn to Romans chapter 7, if you will. I want to read this familiar portion of Scripture, Romans 7, because it sets this down so clearly. Paul is defining his own spiritual experience as a believer, and in that spiritual experience he sees a conflict.

Starting in verse 14, “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I’m not practicing what I would like to do, but I’m doing the thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the law, confessing that the law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I’m doing the very thing I do not want, I’m no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”

So he really sees himself as a new creation, longing to do what honors God, but held back by something that is still in him, namely his unredeemed and fallen humanness. He says in verse 21, “I find the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law or a different principle in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” It’s as if he has a corpse attached to himself.

He knows the answer: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” It will happen someday, but in the meantime, “So then on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.” So that is even true in the life of every believer. There is a battle going on between the power of the Spirit energizing the new creation and the power of the flesh in remaining humanness. Since that is every Christian’s struggle, it is also the struggle of every church. There are some who at any point in time are walking in the Spirit, and others who are walking in the flesh.

Now how are we to understand sanctification, just as a footnote in regard to this? I would simply say it this way: sanctification, or progressive holiness, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, sanctification is the decreasing frequency of sin. It is the decreasing frequency of those episodes where we walk in the flesh. It is not only the decreasing frequency of those episodes, it is the decreasing intensity of those episodes. What happens is, as you are sanctified and more and more conformed to the person of Jesus Christ, you have fewer times when you walk in the flesh, and they are not as intense or powerful as they once were. As you are sanctified, you have a greater love for Christ, a greater love for worship, a greater joy in obedience, and a stronger power over your flesh. That’s sanctification.

Still, even those who have been at it a long time are not perfect, and so we all, as James 3:2 says, stumble in many ways. In fact, if you deny that, that is a serious act, because you are, in effect,

calling God a liar. Listen to 1 John 1, verse 8: “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

It is unbiblical, and it is, in some measure, blasphemous to deny that you are sinful. So we all understand that we have connected to us a body of death, our unredeemed, natural humanness. We are then ourselves in a battle, and therefore the battle is in the church as well as we walk in the Spirit and walk in the flesh, and our lives are pressed against each other in the life of the church.

Walking in the flesh does damage to the believer on an individual level. Walking in the flesh creates a loss of joy, a loss of peace, a loss of all of the fruit of the Spirit, a loss of confidence, a loss of assurance, a loss of hope, a loss of usefulness, a loss of fruitfulness, and even a loss of effective witness. But it does not only do damage to the individual, it obviously does damage to the church. It wounds the church. And so our Lord, the head of the church, is concerned that we deal with those walking in the flesh in the church for the sake of His glory and the purity and testimony of the church.

Now the New Testament has a lot to say about this, I just want to give you an overview, so turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, if you will, 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Paul obviously writing to a church that was like any other church struggling with sin. There were those walking in the Spirit, there were those walking in the flesh for sure, and those walking in the Spirit apparently were not doing anything about those walking in the flesh.

And so, chapter 5 says, “It’s reported actually that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as doesn’t exist even among the nations, that someone has his father’s wife,” a kind of incest. “And you, rather than dealing with it, have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who has done this deed would be removed from your midst.

“For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul tells them, “You’ve got to deal with this immoral person, and you’ve got to deal with him openly, and you’ve got to deliver him, if necessary, over to Satan. There may be some fleshly destruction, but his soul will be saved,” which indicates that this is a believer walking in the flesh.

They hadn’t done that. They’re boasting that they were exercising over maybe the purity and greatness of their church was not good. “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? You’ve got sin there, you’ve got yeast, and it’s going to affect the whole church. Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Christ offered a sacrifice to put away sins, and you need then to confront sin and deal with it.”

Verse 8, “Let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I didn’t at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the

covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler – not even to eat with such a one. For what I have to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those that are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” Again, this is a call to the church to deal with sin in the church, because it creates impurity, and it produces all kinds of corruption.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul talks about an occasion where sin was confronted, and apparently there was a response, a positive response to the confrontation of sin in the life of an individual. So in 2 Corinthians 2:6 he says, “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.” Apparently it went all the way to the church. The church dealt with it, the majority. Now he says, “You should” – verse 7 – “forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him, reaffirm your love for him.” “You want to do this, you want to forgive,” – verse 11 says – “so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we’re not ignorant of his schemes.”

Satan wants to use division in the church. This is a person who has repented, he’s come back for restoration. You need to forgive this person, you need to love this person, you need to comfort this person, you need to fully embrace this person so that Satan doesn’t use this situation to perpetuate division in the church.

Also in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, just to show you some of how the New Testament addresses this, chapter 11, 2 Corinthians, verses 1 to 3, “I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.” Paul’s being a little bit facetious there. “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds are being led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

Paul is concerned that the people there are being led away from purity and devotion to Christ. He addresses it even further in chapter 12 to the same people, verse 19, “All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved. For I’m afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there’ll be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.” Those are the very things listed in Galatians as the works of the flesh. “I’m afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.”

Then he warns them, “This is the third time I’m coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses,” of course, established in Deuteronomy 19. “I have previously said present the second time, and now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone.” Again, Paul says, “I’m going to come; I’m going to deal with sin in the church.”

So now going back to our thoughts about Galatians, what is the church to do in dealing with this kind of sin? What are we to do? Where there is sin in the church, what is our objective? Chapter 6, verse 1 says, “Restore such a one.” Now that’s the heart of this passage, “Restore such a son.” The

objective of spiritual discipline and church discipline is not to put people out; that's a last resort for people who won't repent. The point of all of this confrontation of sin is restoration, restoration.

Now what is the pattern that we are to use in approaching sin, dealing with it, and coming to a point of restoration? Turn to Matthew 18. In Matthew 18 we have the first instruction ever given to the church by our Lord in the New Testament. The church is first mentioned in 16, and here's the first instruction to the church. Chapter 18, verse 15, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you've won your brother." Someone walking in the flesh, you go to the person; if he listens, you've won your brother.

"If he doesn't listen, you take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed." Again, back to Deuteronomy. "If he refuses to listen to the two or three witnesses who are there, tell it to the church;" – you tell the whole church to go after the person – "and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." In other words, you put him out of the church. Put him out of the church if they will not repent. You've gone to the person, you've taken two or three witnesses, the whole church has gone and he still don't repent, treat him like an outsider, because, as we've read in 1 Corinthians 5, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." You can't just leave them there in a constant perpetual state of sin.

And now if they repent, of course, go down to verse 21, "Peter came and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'" Peter knows the pattern. "Well, if you do this, people are going to sin again, and they're going to sin again. How often do you keep doing this? Do you do it seven times?" The rabbis said three times. Peter thought he'd double it and add one because he was noble.

And Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven times." You just keep forgiving and forgiving, and forgiving, and forgiving, and forgiving. At the end of everything, forgiveness is what sustains and restores all relationships. In the end, forgiveness is what restores all relationships.

So the church then, the first instruction to the church is if somebody's sinning, somebody's walking in the flesh, go to the person' if they listen, you've gained your brother, you've restored your brother. If they don't, you take two or three. If they don't listen, you tell the church. If the church goes and they don't listen, you put them out, you disfellowship them. As we saw again 1 Corinthians, turn them over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. That fleshly part of them is going to be devastated, but their soul will be saved in the end. So we are always working toward the restoration in all acts of discipline.

So where there is sin and where there is, let's assume, repentance, how do we deal with the restoration process; because what it says in chapter 6, verse 1 is, "Restore such a one." So we're talking about how to restore a believer who's wandered off the path and started walking in the flesh. What does the church do? Well, we read that, starting in 5:26 down through 6:6. But let me kind of set the scene for you.

Look at verse 26: "Let us not become boastful," – that's how the verse begins, and the verse ends – "envying one another," – and in the middle – "challenging one another." The word "challenging" literally means "to create a conflict," "to go into combat." Very strong word.

So there's a potential here for severe conflict between the boastful and the envious. "Let us not become boastful." The boastful would tend to be the spiritual ones, *kenodoxos*. It means "thinking you have a rightful claim to honor," that's what the word means, or one who talks big, who seeks, I guess you could say, underserved tribute. Conceit, empty vanity.

On the one hand, you could have the spiritual ones who are walking in the flesh feeling superior and boasting about their spirituality, and therefore tainting that spirituality with that very sin. And on the other hand, you would have those who are the weaker ones, who tend to walk in the flesh, as the ones who are envying the more spiritual ones. And so, you have one group of people feeling superior and one group of people feeling inferior, and conflict results in the life of the church – sort of the haves and the have nots, the ones that are spiritual and the ones that are not spiritual. This can create terrible conflict, terrible combat. This can be a great challenge in the church. The last thing the apostle Paul wanted to see in his church was this kind of conflict.

Back in chapter 5, if you go back to verse 13, he had already said, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you're not consumed by one another." And then he says, "Walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. If you don't do that, if you don't walk in the Spirit, if you don't come together, you're going to bite and devour one another, you're going to have the spiritual and the fleshly, you're going to have conflict and war in the church." This conflict is a reality.

The Bible calls us to unity in the church, constantly telling us we need to be united together in the church. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 14, "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people." So you're always working on unifying believers around the love that the Spirit of God has poured into our hearts.

Now this passage then, verse 26, kind of introduces the potential conflict. Then in chapter 6, verse 1 we see the remedy for this, okay. What do we do about this kind of faction or fracturing of the church? "Brethren," – so we know we're talking about – this is believers' work. "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Now we're going to introduced to three steps. This is what you do when you find someone walking in the flesh. Number One: Pick them up. Pick them up. "Brethren, if anyone is caught in a trespass," – here is a Christian caught in a trespass, tripped up, a carnal deed or a carnal pattern. This is something that happens to the believer. It's not so much the idea of a premeditated, willful, concocted sin as it is being caught. It's a passive verb, *lambanō*. It's the idea that you got caught, you got trapped if you stumbled into this particular trespass. And when you find a believer who otherwise is walking in the Spirit but stumbles into a trespass, *paraptōma*, meaning "a stepping aside," "a stepping out of the path." That's essentially what it means. It means "to walk off in another direction."

So they've stopped walking in the Spirit and they're walking in the flesh. If you come across somebody like that who has gotten off the path of walking in the Spirit, you have a responsibility as believers. You have a responsibility to restore such a one." This is where the responsibility lies; it lies with those that are spiritual, those that are spiritual, "You who are spiritual."

Now who are those who are spiritual? Turn to 1 Corinthians 2:14 and I'll show you how Paul defines this for us, 1 Corinthians 2:14, "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they're spiritually appraised." A natural man, a nonbeliever, is not able to solve spiritual problems, not able to answer spiritual questions or to deal with spiritual issues. "But" – verse 15 says, "he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one." What that means is you who are spiritual have the capability to rightly assess everything. You see truth and error. You see righteousness and sinfulness. You see obedience and disobedience. You see love and the lack of it. You have the discernment that spiritually produces.

Why? Verse 16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that we will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." Here's the issue. The spiritual person knows the mind of Christ. How do we know the mind of Christ? Because we know the Scripture where His mind is revealed, okay? So the spiritual person is the one who knows the Word of God and can make an accurate assessment of what is happening. He has insight, he has discernment – he has or she has insight, she has discernment. That is the spiritual one.

Paul says to the Corinthians in chapter 3 right there, "I couldn't speak to you as spiritual, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you're not able to receive it. Indeed, even now you're not yet able, for you're still fleshly." How do we know? "There's jealousy and strife. Are you not fleshly, are you not walking like mere men?"

This is the difference: people who walk in the flesh are not spiritual. Paul says, "I can't talk to you as spiritual. Spiritual people are those, who by having the mind of Christ, understanding the revelation of God, can apply that to every situation and make an accurate appraisal. So you in the congregation who are spiritual, you have the responsibility to go to this person who has fallen, who has stumbled, and pick them up, pick them up. Restore such a one. Restore such a one." It's a command, *katartizō*. It means "to repair or to restore to its original condition." This verb is used of reconciling factions, it's used of resetting bones, it's used of putting a dislocated limb into place, and it's used of mending nets.

"Fix them. Pick them up. Pick them up from the fall, from the stumbling." This is a call to be engaged in the initial restoration. Help that person appraise his sin or her sin. Help that person see the way God sees. Show them the mind of Christ over their life. The idea is not punishment, the idea is restoration. You go and you pick that person up, and you bring discernment based on your understanding and obedience to the Word of God. So the unfallen, you might say, are to lift up those who have stumbled. The sooner we get into spiritual restoration of our brothers and sisters, the sooner we obey the Lord of the church, and restore blessing to the church and power to the church and a clear testimony.

What should be your attitude when you do this? It says in verse 1, "in a spirit of gentleness." Same word up in verse 23, one of the fruits of the Spirit. It could be translated "meekness." It's humility. It's the kind of humble, gentle, sweet-spirited, loving care over someone who has stumbled; and you're

there to pick that person up. Second Corinthians 10:1 says it's the meekness and gentleness of Christ. So you basically follow the pattern of the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Now I know in Matthew 7:1 it says, "Judge not, lest you be judged." And I know in James 4 it tells us not to judge. But those are referring to rendering a final verdict. In fact, in James 4 it means "to speak against someone in a slanderous way, in a derogatory way, in a way of accusation and defamation." And that's what our Lord is referring to also in Matthew chapter 7, judging in that way. But we don't judge that way. We're not the final judge of anybody's life. So though we don't judge them, we do come into their lives, reckoned with reality the condition of their sinfulness, and pick them up.

Now sometimes they don't want that, sometimes they don't respond. And if people don't respond, the Scripture's pretty clear about how we deal with that. Second Thessalonians 3:6, "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you stay away from every brother who leads an unruly life." So if this is more than just a brief deviation from the pathway, but this is an unruly life, you don't want to stay around that individual, you want to stay away, because a little leaven is very corrupting.

And then in 1 Timothy 5, verse 20, we read regarding elders, "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning." There may be those who continue to sin, even those in leadership. They are to be openly and publicly rebuked. And of course, there's no restoration at that point because they haven't repented and sought it.

Another one of those illustrations, Titus 3:10, "A factious man" – divisive person – "is to be rejected after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted, sinning, and being self-condemned." So when we talk about restoration we're talking about those people who are responsive; we go to them and pick them up. Where they want to persist in their sin, we put them out of the church.

For those who have stumbled into this sin that we pick up, that's our responsibility; and we do it with gentleness, we do it with meekness, and the end of verse 1 says, "each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." In other words, that's simply to recognize the fact that you're no better than they are, you're no different than they are.

So you're going in and you're helping them. You're getting the splinter out of their eye, but you've already made sure you've gotten the one out of your own eye. So you don't go in an arrogant, self-righteous way, you go in a humble way, understanding your own propensity to the same kind of sin and the same kind of stumbling. That is the essence of humility. That's why 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall." So you also go into that consultation, picking up the sinning believer, realizing that you may find yourself in an environment where what tempted him will tempt you, and you have to be very careful. So it starts with the command to pick them up.

Secondly, hold them up, hold them up. Now that you've picked up this believer, you've got the responsibility, verse 2 says, to bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. You now get under their burden, you carry it. *Bastazō* in the Greek means "to carry something in kind of an enduring way." You shoulder the load as they try to come out from under the sin that has beset them; you get under the burden with them. Bear one another's burdens, *baros*. It's a word that



means “a heavy weight.” Whatever oppresses that believer, whatever has defeated that believer, whatever has taken that believer’s joy, whatever has stripped that believer of power and of purpose, you get under the affliction, you get under the burden. Don’t let them carry their burden alone.

You know, the Bible is pretty clear. Psalm 55:22 says, “Cast all your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you.” And 1 Peter tells us in chapter 5, verse 7, “casting all your care on Him,” – the Lord Jesus Christ – “because He cares for you.” That’s fine. But God uses human agents to help us to be able to do that. So you step in as kind of an intermediary between Christ and that struggling believer, and you pick up the burden and you carry it. And when you do that, you fulfill the law of Christ.

What is the law of Christ? Not the law of Moses. What is the law of Christ? The law of Christ is the law of love. That is the law of Christ. Back in verse 14 of chapter 5, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That is the law of Christ, it is the law of love.

James makes this crystal clear for us, James chapter 1, verse 25, “One who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it.” That’s the perfect law and the law of liberty. What is the perfect law, and what is the law of liberty? Well, James 2:8 says it’s the royal law. What is the perfect law, the law of liberty, and the royal law? “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It’s the law of love. So that’s how you fulfill the law of love by holding up a believer who has stumbled. You come alongside with them, you walk with them, you care for them, you pray with them, you wash their feet – as we saw in John 13. This is what you do. This is how you care for them.

Verse 3 adds a very important caveat: “If anyone thinks he’s something when he’s nothing, he deceives himself.” If you think you’re too good to do this, you don’t know the truth about yourself. If you think this is beneath you, if you think you’re above this, if you think this is below the level of your dignity, you are self-deceived. Conceit is vain glory. You are nothing when you think you’re something. You have to realize you’re no better, you’re no better than that individual. You might well have succumb to that very same temptation. If you think you’re something when you’re nothing, you’re self-deceived. And then how do you get self-deceived? By comparing yourselves with others, comparing yourselves with others.

You can always find somebody you’re better than, always. That’s what most people do, compare themselves with others. That’s not acceptable for believers. Verse 4 makes it clear. Rather than compare yourselves with others, “Each one must examine his own work,” in an absolute way, not a relative way, not compared to somebody else. But in an absolute way, “You examine your own work, then you’ll have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.”

You look at your own life. Don’t say, “Well, I’m better than that guy.” You can always find somebody’s who’s in worse shape than you are. Look at your own life in an absolute look, not a relative look, and say, “Am I what I should be? Am I what Christ wants me to be?” You need to do that, because, verse 5 says, “Each one will bear his own load.”

Well, what does that mean? I thought we were supposed to bear somebody else’s load. That’s true. We are to bear each other’s *baros*, heavy weight. “But we each bear our own *phortion*,” is the Greek word; and it’s baggage, it’s baggage. And what he’s saying is, in life you are to be bearing one another’s burdens and not comparing yourself with someone else in thinking you’re too good to do that. But you are to examine your own life, not in a relative sense, but in an absolute sense,

comparing it to the Word of God and Christ Himself, because one day when you show up at the bema judgment, you're going to be judged based on your own baggage. If you're too indifferent to carry somebody else's load, you're going to find a forfeiture of reward when the Lord checks your baggage. You carry your own baggage to the judgment seat.

Second Corinthians 5, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," – verse 10 – "so that each may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he's done, good or bad." So good or useless. Whether it's gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble; you're going to show up at the bema judgment, the judgment of believers in the presence of the Lord. You're going to be judged on your own baggage, what you've sent ahead and what you've brought with you. And your reward will be greater if you've humbled yourself, and you've picked up sinning brothers and sisters and you've held them up with love, and prayer, and encouragement, and support, and friendship.

Then, lastly, there's a final duty in this. Pick them up, hold them up, and build them up. Build them up is really important, because you want to get them to the point where they're not so easily led astray.

Verse 6 has been controversial as to its meaning. There may be a number of possibilities here. But it seems that just in the flow here it makes perfect sense to say what the verse says, "The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him." What this implies is you now have a teaching relationship with this believer who will respond to your instruction by sharing good things back with you, so that this kind of restoration is not a short-term enterprise. You have picked this believer up; you have held this believer up by helping to share the heavy load, the burden. Now you have become the instructor, building them up: "The one who taught the word."

"The one who taught the word is to share." That's *koinōneō*, the word "fellowship," To fellowship with the teacher in all good things. Now you've got a friendship, you're giving instruction. You're the *katēcheō*, you're the catechumen, and the catechist is going to share back with you his response. And what will happen is as you build the believer up in the word, he will share back with you all good things. What does that mean? *Agathois*; just means goodies, spiritual goodies, all spiritual blessings. Paul is saying, "Now as you build that believer up and you begin to see the work of the word and Spirit in that believer's life, you'll be, by virtue of that proximity, an intimacy and friendship. You'll be there receiving all the spiritual benefits that flow out of your investment in that person's life.

So when you see a brother or a sister who is walking off the path, you go to them, you run to them, you reach out a hand, you lift that believer up, draw that believer back to the path of the Holy Spirit with sweet words and embracing love and affection; and then you hold that believer up by coming alongside to be strength to them in your prayers and in your personal care. And then you build that believer up by teaching that believer, so that that believer will not fall again into the same trap. You walk together in *koinōneō*, in fellowship.

This is our task, and this is how the church sustains and maintains its unity, and its unity is a unity of love; and as our Lord said, if you have love for one another, all men will know that you are My disciples. Let's bow together in prayer.

Lord, I know we live in a day when people are obsessed with privacy. People don't want the truth known about their lives. But it's so very important that in the life of the church we show our affection

for You, our love for You and for each other, by restoring one another, so we have a view not of condemnation, but of restoration, not a rendering a final judgment on someone because of certain behaviors or thinking they're less than we are. Anything might be offered to them would be beneath our dignity; but rather that we, when seeing one walking off the path we run to that individual.

We run because we love, and we're fulfilling the perfect law, the law of freedom, the royal law, the law of Christ, which is to love one another. May it be, Lord, that we continue to manifest that love to each other, not only in those wonderful, refreshing times when we're all walking in the Spirit, but may we manifest that love in those times when those we care about are walking in the flesh. And would You use us, Lord, to draw them back, to restore them, that they may walk in the Spirit and experience love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, that they may enjoy the full richness and blessing of a Spirit-filled life.

We thank You, O God, that You have granted us Your Holy Spirit. We were convicted by Him; the Spirit convicted us of sin and righteousness and judgment. We were regenerated by Him. We're begotten again by the Word of Truth through the Spirit. We are being sanctified by the Spirit. We love because the Spirit has shed abroad love in our hearts. We are Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered and Spirit-filled. And, Lord, because of that, we can fulfill the law of Christ, the royal law, the law of love. May we not be known merely because our theology is sound and accurate, but may we be known because our love is evident, manifest. May it be overflowing in our fellowship to the rescuing and restoring of one another, for Your glory and the honor of Your name we pray. Amen.

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