

Lesson 23 – Galatians 5:26-6:5

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Review

The main point of Galatians is that salvation is NOT by good works, moral living, religious ritual or observance, heredity, or organizational membership, but by **grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!!!** Salvation results in freedom; freedom from sin and freedom to live in a way that glorifies God.

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He is correcting the heresy of the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel or Christ plus legalism, which is really not another gospel since there is only one gospel of Christ.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul defended the true gospel by showing that he had received the gospel (God) through revelation and demonstrated that the true gospel has the power to change lives (persecutor/murderer to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ). That same authentication is true for the follower of Christ today.

In chapters 3 and 4, Paul defended justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He showed the things that the Law cannot do compared to justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Now in Chapters 5 and 6, having nailed down his argument for freedom in Christ through justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, Paul looks to the practical application of that freedom.

Today we will talk about restoring someone who has chosen to sin or chosen to walk in a way that dishonors God

Practical Application of Justification – Body Responsibilities – Restoration (5:25-6:5)

1. The bridge (5:26)

²⁶Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (NASB95)

²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (ESV)

A result of legalism is competition in spirituality. “I’m a better believer than you.” “My walk is better than yours.” “I glorify God more than you.”

Paul just talked about the power to walk in a way that honors God, through Spirit filling. Yet we can be tempted by the sin of pride to view ourselves as better than others. Paul is clear that body relationships are not so. In fact, he will describe not boastfulness, strife, and resentment, but humility, love, and service.

❖ **Do you compare yourself to others to evaluate your walk?**

All believers (“us” in 5:26) are to not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. “Boastful” means glorying without reason or self-conceited; an exaggerated self-image; boasting where there is nothing to boast about; pride; and arrogance.

“Challenging” has to do with stirring up strife.

“Envy” as in 5:21 describes pain felt and resentment at another’s excellence or happiness; not just wanting what another person has, but also resenting that person for having it.

Paul is talking about the relationship between believers. The body of Christ, the church, has Christ in common. The Greek word translated “fellowship” can also be translated communion, partnership, or togetherness. This togetherness comes with responsibilities toward the members of Christ’s body.

Our motivation for striving to excel at body relationships in our life is the incredible mercy and grace we have been shown. We once walked in those things for which the wrath of God will come. We have been chosen by God, separated from sin, and beloved by Him. Therefore, we should put on those qualities that build unity in the body (Col 3:5-15).

Scripture gives us many commands called the “one-another’s” because they are commands directed at the relationship between believers. They describe how believers are to interact with and treat other believers based on their family relationship. Here is a partial list:

- Love one another (John 15:12; 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; Matt 18:21-22)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
- Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25)
- Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
- Edify one another (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:29)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
- Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
- Confess sins to and pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
- Live harmoniously with one another (Rom 15:15; 1 Thess 5:13)
- Show tolerance for one another (Eph 4:2)
- Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)

❖ **Is doing the one another something you are concerned about?**

So, what does humility, love, and service look like?

2. Restoring the brethren (6:1)

¹Brethren, 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. (NASB95)

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (ESV)

Humility, love, and service move us to be involved in the restoration of a sinning brother/sister. Believers are to be involved in the restoration of believers. This is a restoration of the fellowship the brother/sister has with God.

❖ Are you involved in the totality of disciple making?

There are a couple interpretive challenges here.

“Caught” means to overtake, surprise, caught in, discovered in, or overcome by. The text leaves open the possibility for either the sinner being discovered in his sin or the unaware or unprepared believer being overtaken by his own sin. Perhaps it is both. But either way it does not matter. The brethren are aware of the sin.

“Trespass” is literally a falling aside or beside, a crossing of the line, to stumble on something so as to lose footing. Some commentators make a distinction of this type of sin being committed because one fails to be on guard and/or flirts with a temptation as opposed to being willful. But the NT usages do not seem to support that idea.

²⁵*He* who was delivered over because of our **transgressions**, and was raised because of our justification. (Romans 4:25)

²⁰The Law came in so that the **transgression** would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (Romans 5:20)

¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their **trespasses** against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

¹And you were dead in your **trespasses** and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our **transgressions**, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Ephesians 2:1-5)

¹³When you were dead in your **transgressions** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our **transgressions**, (Colossians 2:13)

The Scriptures make a distinction on the type of struggles that individual believers can have with difficult life issues and sin. Not every issue/sin should be dealt with in the exact same way. That clear distinction is drawn in 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

The first group mentioned is the “unruly”. “Unruly” literally means “out of step” or “out of order”. It describes people who are defiant and in rebellion against God. These people are living in unrepentant sin in the evident deeds of the flesh.

These believers are to be “admonished” which describes alerting someone of the serious consequences of their actions; to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.

The second group is the “fainthearted”. “Fainthearted” literally means “little-spirited” or “small-souled”. It conveys the idea of despondent, weary, timid, discouraged, or worried. It describes people who feel their resources are too small for a given situation and therefore are despondent or discouraged. These people have been worn down by the circumstances of life. They are not availing themselves of the power of walking in the Spirit.

These believers are to be “encouraged” which means to relate near, encourage, console (to serve as a source of comfort in disappointment, loss, sadness, trouble), and comfort.

The third group is the “weak”. “Weak” describes one's state of limited capacity to do or be something. It is also translated sick. These people are somehow deficient. It describes people who may struggle with abandoning sin and obeying God's will. A particular application of this would be those are weak in Christian liberty.

These believers are to be “helped” which describes strongly laying hold of the weak with the idea of supporting them.

The weak are to be helped and the fainthearted are to be encouraged. But the unruly (or rebellious) are to be admonished. When an individual knows the truth of God's word and yet chooses to act in disobedience to it, there is no other recourse than discipline.

❖ **Do you love enough to admonish, encourage, or help?**

Regardless of if the believer is unruly, fainthearted, or weak, fellow “spiritual” believers are called to “restore” the caught-in-any-trespass believer.

“Spiritual” is an adjective meaning pertaining to the Spirit. In context, these are believers who are filled with the Spirit. They are walking in the spirit as a pattern of life. These are NOT sinless or super mature or some elite group of believers. These are simply those who walk in the Spirit. Reminder that the filling of the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God's moral will as set forth in His word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you

❖ **Are you walking in the Spirit consistently?**

The walking-in-the-Spirit brethren who know a believer who sins are commanded to do something. They are to “restore” the sinning family member.

“Restore” means to fit or join together and so to mend or repair. It is used as a surgical term of setting a bone or joint or of strengthening or sustaining of a worn-down person or fishermen mending nets. Its usage here is a present imperative commanding this to be the spiritual person’s habitual practice.

The sinning brother/sister’s intimate fellowship with God is broken due to sin and the spiritual brother/sister’s command is to strive to restore that fellowship. The purpose is to mend the sinning believer’s relationship with God.

The spiritual brethren is walking in the Spirit so they will be exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit including gentleness. It is important to not allow righteous indignation (i.e., anger over the sinning brother’s sin) be your motivation.

The spiritual brethren must be sure of their own walk before engaging the sinning brother. They must “look to yourself so that you too will not be tempted”. Temptation can take on many forms including judgmental attitude, anger, arguing, unkindness, impatience, etc.

²⁴The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

❖ **Are you putting off hypocrisy before having hard conversations?**

Restoration must be pursued with a prayerful, gentle, humble, and introspective attitude.

¹“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

A believer who loves enough to do the hard work to restore another sinning believer may see the fruit of a soul that is truly saved.

¹⁹My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

❖ **Do you love the brethren enough to be involved in restoration?**

3. Holding up restored brethren (6:2-5)

²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But 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. ⁵For each one will bear his own load. (NASB95)

²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load. (ESV)

There is no greater expression of love in the body than bearing the burdens of those struggling with difficult life issues and sin.

“Bear” means to take up and hold, to support. “Burdens” literally refers to a heavy weight but is used figurately in the NT to mean something pressing on one physically or emotionally.

⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were **burdened** excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; ⁹ indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

It is the spiritual believer's responsibility to support or hold up the struggling believer as they experience the burden of unruliness, faintheartedness, and weakness.

❖ **Are you bearing the burdens of the brethren?**

Bearing one another's burdens fulfills the “law of Christ”. The “law of Christ” is a common theme with Paul when looking at Christian liberty.

¹⁹For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the **law of Christ**, so that I might win those who are without law. (1 Corinthians 9:19-21)

The law of Christ is serving one another through love as the constraint on Christian freedom – an unconditional, sacrificial commitment to the total service of another as a lifestyle. This is the distinguishing characteristic of the church to the world.

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:24-35)

Bearing one another's burdens is an expression of love and thus fulfills the law of Christ.

❖ **Is there enough evidence of your love to convicted you of being a believer?**

Looking down on struggling brethren is pride and prevents believers from being “spiritual” and therefore bearing one another’s burdens and thereby fulfilling the law of Christ (sacrificial, love and service).

Thoughts and words like, “what’s wrong with you”, “snap out of it”, “get it together”, “real Christians don’t...” stem from pride. The one who walks in pride and doesn’t walk in the Spirit and therefore serve the brethren thinks “he is something when he is nothing” and therefore is deceived.

Instead, a spiritual believer (one walking in the Spirit) lives Philippians 2:3-4.

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Instead of being boastful and prideful in your thoughts about a struggling brother/sister, examine your own work, then you stand or fall before the Lord, but don’t compare yourself to the brethren.

❖ Do you walk in pride or humility?

Paul finished this section with a statement that seems to contradict v2. But “load” refers to anything that is carried. It was the word for a soldier’s backpack. Jesus used the word to describe His obligations that he placed on His disciples.

²⁸“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My **burden** is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Christ’s obligations are light because He provides the strength to fulfill that load. Those are things that no one else can bear for us. These are the things for which we will give an account of ourselves to God.

¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

Paul is reminding those that might be tempted to pride to fulfill their own obligations to the Lord and not to look with contempt or ungodly judgment on those who are struggling.

❖ Do you find Christ’s yoke easy and His load light?

Summary

The Galatians were in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Love moves believers to do the hard work of restoring struggling brethren.

Additional Study

1. Read Galatians through in one sitting.
2. What unbiblical limits do you put on your exercise of love?
3. Do some introspection and list out the “loads” that you are failing to carry.
4. How does pride manifest itself in your life?

Church Discipline (Restoration)

What sins require church discipline? Not every sin requires the body to move towards church discipline. The sin must be an action expressly forbidden in God's word (1 Cor 5:9-11).

Though sinful thoughts and attitudes are clearly outside of God's desire for His children, an individual cannot be admonished until those thoughts and attitudes are expressed in word or in deed. This is because we are limited in knowing what may be in a man's heart (1 Sam 16:17) and what is in a man's heart will be expressed (Matt 15:15-20).

Discipline would exclude areas of conscience where what might be sin for one would not be sin for another. But we cannot confront others based on conscience (Rom 14:1-12).

This would also exclude areas of righteousness that are relative. We could not discipline a man for not being loving. The reason is simple: we all lack in love and are at various stages of development. But though we would not discipline for being unloving, we could discipline a brother for performing an unloving act like being unfaithful to his wife.

The procedure is clearly spelled out in Matthew 18:15-20. There are four steps that are to be fulfilled as needed.

Step 1 – Personal Contact (Matthew 18:15)

¹⁵“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

The first step is an individual, private conversation that takes place when we are convinced that fellow believer has performed an unrepentant, willful act of sin, when they are caught in any trespass. This confrontation should be from the word of God (Heb 4:12) and done in private and involves clearly exposing the brother's sin so that he is aware of it and calling him to repentance.

If he/she does not listen (clearly meaning unrepentant), then go to step two.

Step 2 – Group Contact (Matthew 18:16)

¹⁶But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

The second step is to confront with two or three individuals who are witnesses. These individuals are there to confirm every fact. They are to confirm to themselves that the act has been committed, that it is indeed sinful, and that it has been committed willfully and without repentance. They are to confirm to the sinning person that his behavior is outside the clear teaching of God's word and that he needs to repent.

If he/she does not listen (clearly meaning unrepentant), then go to step three.

Step 3 – Church Contact (Matthew 18:17)

¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;...

The third step is to tell it to the church (Matt 18:17; 2 Thess 1:1 c.f. 2 Thess 3:14-15; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 1 Tim 5:19-20). The goal is to have every relationship in the church used by God to persuade the unrepentant brother toward repentance. Every body relationship should pursue the person aggressively and plead with the unrepentant believer to repent.

If he/she does not listen (clearly meaning unrepentant), then go to step four.

Step 4 – Non-Contact (Matthew 18:17)

¹⁷... and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

The fourth and final step is to treat the sinning believer as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. This is commonly referred to as “disfellowshipping”. The church at this point would have no further social contact with the individual. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 5:11 where we are instructed “not even to eat with such a one.”

This does not mean that if we see them that we cannot acknowledge them. We should not be rude, but every interaction should be brought back to their sin and unrepentance. It simply means that we are to keep our distance from them socially until they repent. We should never give the impression that the sin issue is not important.

This action on the part of the church, which severs the ties with the sinning brother and thrusts them into the world which is Satan’s domain, will hopefully would lead them to a point of repentance.