

08.29.10 / Galatians 6:1-5

Passage Insight

This beautiful passage continues Paul's discourse on our being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, explaining one of the ways this Spirit-empowered life plays out among the body, through bearing one another's burdens. The Lord is in the business of restoration, and so we who are indwelt by His Spirit are allowed to be engaged in this as well. *Marvelous!*

In verse 1, we see that when involved in restoration we are to do so in a spirit of gentleness. Among the Lord's many attributes is in fact gentleness, and so with His Spirit living inside of us, we are called to exhibit the same. Consider Matthew 11:29, where Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Paul also makes a distinction that some Christians will be "spiritual." So, what does it mean to be spiritual in this case. While anyone who believes in Jesus has received the gift of the Holy Spirit, not all Christians walk by the Spirit equally or bear Spirit fruit to the same extent. Paul is here making a distinction that the "spiritual" Christians should be the one to participate in the act of restoring a brother or sister in Christ who has been caught in a transgression, in other words, those Christians whose lives are bearing fruit created by the Holy Spirit as they walk by His power and leading.

Paul then warns that whoever attempts to restore a fellow believer caught in sin should in no way be self-righteous in their attitudes but should instead recognize their own capacity to exhibit those same moral failings that they are trying to correct in the other person. This is in part what is meant when we are called to keep a watch on ourselves, lest we too be tempted. Tempted to sin and tempted to self-righteousness. Additionally, sin often looks attractive to the human heart, even the saved Christian's heart, and so, because being in the business of restoration means coming into close proximity to someone's sin, we must be careful not to be lured into the wrong attraction to the same. We would be wise to pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:7-13) when helping others be restored, as it specifically requests from our Father that we not be led into temptation. Clearly it is important to Jesus that we not only avoid sin, but that we seek to be far from even the temptation to sin.

The call in verse 2 to bear one another's burdens implies that WE ALL have burdens. It is not a sign of strength and fortitude if we withhold our burdens from one another and attempt to meet all of our needs alone. Instead, it is a sign of self-reliance, which only breeds self-righteousness in time as we try to fix ourselves and our situations alone. In truth, nothing but Christ can fix what is broken in our lives, and Christ in His perfect wisdom has seen fit to work through His body of believers to bring us restoration and to lighten our load. We see this same sentiment when we read 1 Peter 4:10, where it says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace..."

"Love your neighbor as yourself" sums up the Law and the Prophets, according to Scripture, and "bear one another's burdens" fulfills the Law as well. While loving one another as Christ loved us may not mean we are heroes performing deeds that are spectacular in the eyes of the world, but our simple acts for one another, done in the name of the Christ, even in the mundane areas of life, quite literally fulfill the law of Christ. Think about this the next time you mow someone's yard because they are sick and can't do it on their own. For when you do this, you are literally Jesus at work serving His beloved children. To be a burden-bearer means that you are part of a tremendous ministry, and this is something to which every Christian is called, a natural consequence of walking by the Spirit of God. Praise God for His perfect provision through HIS body of believers!

We see in verses 4 and 5 that there is also a sense of personal responsibility, whereby we are called to be aware of ourselves and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep ourselves from sin. While the responsibility of restoring those believers who again fall into sin, each one of us has the responsibility to be vigilant in resisting sin ourselves, lest we too fall into the same. When we do fall, we are held responsible for the act, but we are not left alone, as we are then to be helped in the process of restoration by our brothers and sisters in Christ. In essence, when we follow Jesus, there is both personal responsibility for our own sin and corporate responsibility in the restoration process.

By way of contrast, let's consider the legalist for a moment. The legalist is not interested in bearing others' burdens, but rather is content to simply point them out for all to see. This was one of the sins that the scribes and Pharisees committed in Jesus' day, as we see in Matthew 23:4, where it reads, "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." The Christian is called to the opposite approach, demanding more of him/herself than they do of others . . . in order that they may be able to help those others.

The Holy Spirit transforms us more and more into the image and likeness of God. We read in 1 Peter 5:7 and Psalm 55:22 that we are to cast our burdens on the Lord. In other words, to carry one another's burdens is to manifest a God-like quality, which is only possible when it is the Lord Himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit, who is doing this magnificent work. Walk by the Spirit who has given you life, and again, let us praise God for His endless and perfect provision!

Application Questions

Restoration

- 1) Our Father is the God of Restoration. Where has the Lord restored you when you were once broken by sin?
- 2) Where do you currently see opportunities in the lives of others where you can bear someone else's burden and take part in the restoration of brokenness due to sin (please be sensitive to confidentiality here)?
- 3) The Spirit alone empowers you to take part in this work. Where are you tempted to take credit for this work when the Lord lets you play a part?
- 4) How can you pray against this temptation?

Exploiting Those Who Sin

- 1) Where do you exploit those who have fallen into sin by secretly feeling better about yourself as a result?
- 2) Where do you expect more from others than you do from yourself?
- 3) These are evidence of a heart that is bent toward self-reliance and self-righteousness. What does it look like for you to repent?

"...you who are spiritual..."

- 1) In order to be qualified to participate in the restoration process, we need to be walking by the Spirit who has given us life. Where are you currently walking by the flesh rather than by the Spirit (compare the fruit of your life to the flesh fruit and Spirit fruit we see in Chapter 5)?
 - 2) How would walking by the Spirit instead of the flesh change the fruit of your life in this case?
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- 3) You're not alone in this. The body of Christ is called to help you be restored! Who is willing to help you in this restoration in a spirit of gentleness?
- 4) Being restored and then walking by the Spirit (being "spiritual") positions you to be a burden-bearer, which is the calling of ALL Christians. Spend some time praising God for allowing us to live by His Spirit, walk in His Spirit, and love others by His Spirit.

Sources

- Prayer
 - Bible Speaks Today
 - Word Bible Commentary
 - New International Commentary on the New Testament
 - Biblical Expository Commentary
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