

15. One another

April 25, 2013

Christianity is not for a prima donna. Yes, we individually have to make up one's own mind for salvation, but once we are in the family of God, we MUST work together. But there is a group of people who'd like to think that they are above everyone else, not because they are spiritually better and more mature than others, rather they appoint themselves as superior spiritual people over the rest of us. They are 'legalists'.

They come from all different backgrounds. But they do have two common things – they are always harder on other people than on themselves and they have all these rules for others to follow but they themselves are the exceptions.

In chapter 5, apostle Paul gave us a clear comparison between walking in flesh and walking in the Spirit. The fruit of walking in the Spirit is 'love'. He is carrying the same theme into chapter 6 for the practical applications. Let's learn to love one another as the Lord teaches us.

A. RESTORE ONE ANOTHER

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

How are we to respond to believers who backslid from the Lord and are living in a sinful lifestyle? Legalists would have a heyday and condemn them, but those who follow the Spirit's gracious lead seek to restore them.

One group of believers think that it is none of their business to get involved with others even if the fellow believer is drowning in one's own sin. The other group think they have been appointed by God to tell everyone how to live. They delight in playing the role of the Gospel Gestapo, spying on the body of Christ and itching to interrogate the first backslider they see slipping up.

Neither of these extremes is biblical. It is the body of Christ's responsibility to help its members break free from sin's grip. Embracing that obligation is a sign of our love for one another. We're to undertake this responsibility with a spirit of humility and self-evaluation, not haughtiness and self-righteousness.

The phrase, "overtaken in any trespass," implies it was not habitual, nor rejecting the Savior Jesus intentionally. It is speaking of someone who went out and stumbled because of one's weakness. They slipped. They fell. They do have a responsibility, however. They did get trapped in the consequences of their sins by their own choices. We should take no delight in this, but should want to help and restore them.

Here are a couple of steps we must carefully take:

1) We need to help them come to their senses, because we can't restore someone who hasn't even repented from one's sins.

We have to first help them see that they have a sin, and then we want to help them set it straight. We do that very gently, lest we do more harm.

2) Restoration must include helping them see the truth of one's sin through the eyes of God, but in love.

Sometimes we speak the truth, but not in love. Our information is right, but we do it in a heavy-handed, mean way. Then sometimes we will love, but we don't speak the truth.

Who should be doing the restoring?

Our apostle Paul makes it clear that restoration is to be accomplished by "you who are spiritual." Who are these? Spiritual giants who have completely subdued the sin nature and are living the perfected heavenly life on earth? We are not going to find anyone on earth, though some think that they are. These are Christians led by the Spirit, who aren't caught in the grip of fleshly living themselves.

Restorers must be mature believers who are producing the fruit of the Spirit in their lives – the love that is joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that come from growing in Christ.

Please note that this command isn't limited to pastors, elders, or other officers of the church. Helping Christians through their struggle with sin is the responsibility of the church body as a whole. That means we should all be striving to walk in the Spirit, because we never know when we might be used by God to encourage and help a struggling brother or sister in Christ.

How do we restore?

The Greek word for 'restore,' "katartizo," is used to describe the setting of a fractured bone or the mending of fishing nets – not breaking or destroying. Remember, even those caught in sin are human beings with dignity and worth.

How we approach restoration can communicate a lot about what we want it to accomplish. The Scripture tells us to restore "in a spirit of gentleness." Gentleness, remember, is part of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit in 5:23. So a mature believer who is walking in the Spirit should have this quality.

True restorers don't come down on other Christians as though they were enemies. They come with compassion in their hearts and concern in their voices. Their words, though firm when they need to be, are laced with kindness and care. And love is never set aside, not even when the hardest truth must be delivered.

A caution for the restorers

Restorers must have a sense of one's own weakness and proneness to sin. If we have this, we'll have the humility and the dependence on God necessary to help Christian brothers and sisters find their way out of sin.

Some of you know that I have the Friday Prayer List. Each day I pray for different groups of people. A portion of my Friday Prayer List is designated for those who have backslidden for various reasons in different locations in the U.S. I pray for their restoration. I ask the Lord to bring them back to their senses like the Prodigal Son who came to his senses while he was feeding pigs in a foreign land.

I ask the Lord to do whatever it takes including their health, wealth, jobs and anything. At the same time, I pray this with utmost humility, because I know that I myself can do the exact same things these once-godly people did.

B. BEAR ONE ANOTHER

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

"TLC" which stands for "Tender Loving Care" is not anything new. Actually it is from the Lord – tender love and care for one another. That is the Law of Christ.

None of us is meant to bear our burdens alone. Life heaps all kinds of unwanted baggage on our shoulders – family conflict, job stress, deep personal loss, relentless struggles with sin, discouragement, loneliness, physical pain, divorce, abuse, addiction, and more.

There's no place for a Lone Ranger attitude in the family of God. Even Lone Ranger had Tonto who once said, "What you mean 'we', white man?" Because we can't. We all need someone to listen to us, talk to us, touch us, encourage us, even confront us.

Part of God's plan for lightening our load is to use the hands and shoulders of His people to help us carry the baggage or show us where we can unload it.

When we bear one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ. That is, we obey Christ's command to love one another.

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

Quite a different message from the one the Galatians had been hearing from the Judaizers. They heard that righteousness came through keeping the ceremonial Law. But Paul says the opposite. Righteousness comes through faith in Christ and then demonstrates itself through our keeping Christ's law of love. We keep the Law when we walk in the Spirit.

Romans 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

C. EXAMINE ONE'S OWN

Galatians 6:3-5 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

When we are in the position to see another believer who is struggling with sins or backslidden, it is easy for us to start to think that we would not be in that situation. If we believe that lie, we are taking the first step to fall like the others. None of us is too good, too spiritual, too "together" to avoid walking into Satan's traps of pride which leads to all the other sins. Rather, we should be grateful to the Lord that we are not in that horrible situation by His grace and mercy.

I know that I am preaching to the choir when it comes to serving others in our church. Everyone of you are doing more than your share of work in our church. I thank God for you. But there is a large group of people who choose not to do anything for others in our church. I am asking you to pray with me that they may mature in the Lord and learn to serve others rather than being served.

What causes them to think that they are too good or too busy to serve and bear another's burdens? In three words? Pride and selfishness. They think that they are better than others and they don't care for others' needs and burdens.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

What the apostle stresses here is personal responsibility. It is not for one Christian to assess or judge the ministry of another; each one is answerable to God for his own. If we're going to "boast," let us boast in what God is doing through us, not in how much we think we're surpassing other people in spiritual living .

When you read v5, you would say, "Wait a minute. Aren't we supposed to bear one another's burdens? Is Paul contradicting what he said in v2?" No, NKJV, NIV, NASB, and KJV do not give a good translation. NLT gives us an insight of this passage:

Galatians 6:5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct. NLT

Actually, there is no contradiction here with v2, which calls for Christians to carry each other's burdens. In fact, Paul uses two different Greek words to make a clear distinction between the burden – "baros" – and the load – "phortion".

While the 'burden' in v2 refers to the need to come to the aid of others who cannot carry the crushing burden of the consequences of their sin, the 'load' of v5 refers to work given to us by our Master Jesus, before whom we will have to give an account of how we used the opportunities and talents he gave us to serve him.

It is because we desire to fulfill our God-given mission in life that we learn how to carry the burdens of others. In other words, as Christians examine their actions to see if they reflect the love of Christ, they are at the same time led by that self-evaluation to consider how to serve others in love.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) **Speak the truth in love. Restore a person in gentleness. Our objective is to restore, not to condemn.**

2) **What the apostle stresses here is personal responsibility. It is not for one Christian to assess or judge the ministry of another; each one is answerable to God for his own.**