

BE RESPONSIBLE

Galatians 6:1-18

Objective: Identify steps we need to take in order to align our behavior with the Biblical expectations for a child of God.

Several years ago there was a popular song that had a line in it that asked the question "Do you really care?" As we view our society today with people coming and going, moving every few years, and not really getting to know their "friends and neighbors," we might wonder how we can build really caring relationships with people. We tend to live in isolated little worlds of our own and have much difficulty in delivering "care" to other people. Even in church, our relationships tend to be shallow and our ability to meaningfully intervene in the life of another person is difficult for most of us. If I know parents who are undergoing problems with their children, I am reluctant to say anything because I fear they will think I am interfering. The same reluctance is there if a couple are having marital problems. A person whom I have known for almost 30 years is having (what I think is) a horrific identity crisis -- he thinks he is gay. He has moved away from his wife of more than 25 years and moved in with another person who practices a gay lifestyle. This friend had been active in church most of his life. He probably thinks the church has abandoned him. He may not care. What is our responsibility as Christians? I can hear the words of the song, "Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying, Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save," and I struggle with what I can do. I pray for him, I even called him to let him know that I was concerned and would be available to talk, if he would like to talk about it. How much can we do? How much intervention is too much? I will not engage him in debate and argue for what I know to be right (he already knows all the argument points) because arguing does not change a person's mind.

Paul's advice to the Galatian church which we find in Chapter six is helpful. His thoughts on our responsibility to love as Christ did can be grouped in the following areas:

1. Restore Others and Examine Self (6:1-5)
2. Don't Be Deceived or Get Tired (6:6-10)
3. Ignore Agitators; Know What Matters (6:11-15)
4. Offer Others Peace, Not Trouble (6:16-18)

Restore Others and Examine Self

¹ 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. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For each one will bear his own load. Galatians 6:1-5 (NASB95)

If we read the first part of verse one in several translations, we can see a slight difference in the wording. Most translations will have simply "Brethren, if a man" or "Brethren, if anyone" or "Brethren, if someone." The New American Standard has "Brethren, **even** if anyone . . ." Being curious, I checked Strong's and there **is** a word left out in most translations. So, why would the word "even" be needed unless it is there in reference to something that had been written immediately before this. Just to check this out, let's look at the previous two verses to see if there is a connection. (Remember that the chapter and verse divisions are not part of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.)

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:25-26 (NASB95)

If we then will start in 5:25 and read through 6:1 we get a better sense of the context of the message that Paul was telling these Galatian Christians and also telling us. We could put this in more contemporary language that would say

Since our new life is energized by the Holy Spirit, then our action will give evidence that He is leading us. We will not be proud, contentious or envious of other even to the point of pitching in and doing our part in gently helping a fellow Christian to get back on the right path when he or she has gotten caught up in something that is sinful. (Gal 5:25-6:1)

We see here the reality of Christians falling into sin. The word translated “caught” or “overtaken” literally means to become known. The NIV and NAS translate this word as *caught*. What Paul is saying then, is when we know about a sin in a Christian's life, we are to do something to help that person be "restored."

Such action would be in stark contrast to what a “legalist” would do. Consider, for example, what the Pharisees did with the woman who was caught in adultery that is recorded in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John. Warren Weirsbe points out that “The spiritual man would seek to restore the brother in love, while the legalist would exploit the brother. The word *restore* means “to mend, as a net, or to restore a broken bone.” If you have ever had a broken bone, you know how painful it is to have it set. The sinning believer is like a broken bone in the body, and he needs to be restored.” In years past, often the help churches gave their members who have been “overtaken in a fault” was the "right foot of fellowship." In other words, they kicked them out and condemned them as they left. Such action does not do anything toward restoring a person and it is certain not what the Holy Spirit would lead us to do. Condemnation just drives them farther away from God. Restoration must be done with gentleness. The KJV uses the term meekness which implies gentleness that operates from a position of strength and authority. To operate otherwise would be judgmental and Jesus warned us that we will be judged with the same measure of judgment we use on others. We may not fall into the same sin as someone else, but we will find occasion to have our “faults” discovered.

Before Jesus was arrested and crucified, He gave His disciples instructions about how to treat each other. He said, "Love one another, even as I have loved you." Not only did Jesus give the command *to love*, He also defined the *quality* of that love. Jesus invited people to come to Him. He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Being heavy laden implies burdens. If Jesus shows His love by bearing our burdens, then we can also show His love by bearing another's burden. Helping to restore a fellow Christian who has been “overtaken” in a fault is a good example of bearing another's burden.

Not getting involved in burden bearing may be a problem with pride or ego. I used two different words (pride and ego) because there may be two different problems. *Pride* is a possibility when we think we are "above all that and don't want to get our hands dirty." *Ego* is a possibility when we think more of our self and the hurt we may experience when others rebuff us in our efforts to help. The other side of the coin is that some people go out and get involved in "helping others" for the bragging points they rack up by such actions. Paul calls for us to examine our motives and what is behind our action or inaction.

In verse two, Paul encouraged us to bear one another's burden and in verse five he tells us that each must bear his own burden. First of all, the Greek text uses two different words that the KJV translates as “burden.” In the first case the word is “baros” which implies a heavy or crushing load that causes a person or vessel to go down. In verse five the Greek word is “phortion” (which is pronounced for-tee-on) and implies the normal load a ship might carry or the backpack that soldiers would have. When I first looked at the English spelling of the Greek word, I saw “portion” which was due probably to poor eyesight. However, this idea may be

pretty close to what Paul was telling us. Each of us is apportioned some “load” or work to do (see also Ephesians 2:10) when we become part of the body of Christ and we should do that. Another possibility is that we should help each other with their “heavy or crushing burden” and not expect other to help and we just sit around and watch. We have a responsibility in this area that we cannot delegate or ignore.

Don't Be Deceived or Get Tired

⁶The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. ⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. Galatians 6:6-10 (NASB95)

It might seem that Paul has changed the subject in verse six. He had been writing about bearing one another's burdens or sharing the load when undesirable things occur. In the same way we are to “share” the good things with each other. The word translated “share” in most newer translations is “koinonea” which we typically assume means “fellowship.” The admonition he gives is to provide support for those in positions of teaching leadership. Just as the “teacher” shares from his spiritual treasure, those being taught can share whatever they have to assist the teacher.

With two examples Paul had given them ways to “walk in the Spirit” rather than in legalism or in a fleshly or carnal way. If we choose a legalistic or carnal approach in dealing with life issues (such as dealing with someone overtaken in a fault or sharing of your blessing to help others), then we will get one set of results that could be characterized as corruption. On the other hand, if we choose to act in the way God would lead us by His Holy Spirit, then we will a different outcome that has eternal or lasting qualities. In verses seven and eight we see a reminder of a universal truth that should influence the choices we make in life as we deal with various things that come up. (This universal truth could also (perhaps) be a caution to the person "overtaken in a fault.") Life is full of “cause and effect.” Just as putting seed in the ground produces plants, the things we do in life have consequences. The point is that although we may repent and change, the consequences of our actions still bear fruit.

Since the law of "sowing and reaping" always works, we could say the best thing to do is to always sow good seed and look for every opportunity to do so. Don't plant anything you don't want in your life's garden. Do good to all and it will bear fruit of "goodness" that will return to you. This is especially true in the Church. We need reminders of this truth more in our biological and spiritual families than in dealing with stranger. We tend to be nicer to strangers than to our own family members.

Ignore Agitators; Know What Matters

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Galatians 6:11-15 (NASB95)

These verses are the concluding remarks Paul wrote in his own handwriting to the church at Galatia. He had returned to the major theme of his letter and that is *salvation that results from faith in God rather than from keeping the law*. Paul had accused the Judaizers of wanting converts to their way of salvation so that could boast of their numbers. Paul reminds all of us

that the only thing of which we should boast is what Jesus did for us on the cross. It was by this means that God delivered from the penalty and power of sin and slavery to a system of laws. It is by His death that we have new life and have become a new creation.

Offer Others Peace, Not Trouble

¹⁶And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen. Galatians 6:16-18 (NASB95)

Some Judaizers had raised questions about Paul's motives in his teaching. Paul's answer to such charges was in the physical scars he carried with him because of his commitment to the cause of Christ. It was the grace and mercy of God that had sustained him throughout his trials. Paul wished that all Christian would experience that grace in their lives.

As we do experience God's grace and mercy as expressed in His forgiveness of us, then we too should bear witness of that in the way we express genuine love and care for others.