

Unlocking Freedom: A Study in Galatians

Galatians 6:1-6

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

If you brought your Bibles go ahead and open them to **Galatians 6:1-6**. *Prayer.* Last week I ended the sermon with the thought that when one believer gets out of whack it impacts the entire body. The truth is, greatly impacts the Body of Christ, whether you are impacting it in a positive way or negative way – your attitude, your words, and your actions will impact this group who surround you every Sunday – and a little leaven can ferment the entire loaf. Paul has said just as much, and therefore he spends a bit of time talking about life together. How are we to act toward one another – specifically when it comes to loving each other. Now, you may not get the idea of love from the passages we just read, but I tell you that one of the most loving things you can do for your brother or sister in the Lord is to walk with them when they fall, bringing them back into fellowship with each other and with the Lord. **One of the greatest gifts we have as believers is each other.** Church was meant and intended to be a family. This means that we don't abandon each other in the difficult days, and we celebrate the good days together. We live life together, that is what God intended the Church to be – a loving family with Christ at the Head. And with our context in mind, when we are walking by the Spirit, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit and crucifying the flesh, the entire Body of Christ will benefit greatly. And when things are going great, *life together* is wonderful. But this morning I want to talk about the dreaded word '**confrontation**'. Many of us avoid conflict and confrontation as if it were the plague; yet, Paul just told us that confronting sin is a part of bearing one another's burdens. Interesting. So, with that in mind, how are we to keep in step with the Spirit when it concerns how we treat our own and one another's sinfulness according to this text? Are there any tips we can glean from this passage on how to treat a brother or sister who have fallen in sin?

We are to first...

1. **Offer a Helping Hand** (v. 1)

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass..." There are a few words that stand out to me in the first half of this sentence. First the word 'brethren', Paul is speaking specifically to the Church whenever he uses this term. So, Paul's target audience is you and me. What is he telling us this? Because dealing with sin is part of the relational side of the Church. You struggle with sin. I struggle with sin. And therefore, there will be a time when undoubtedly we are caught in that sin. The word '*caught*' means to be '*overtaken by your sin*'. You do not have to live long to realize that the sinfulness you try to hide comes to light more often than you desire. Example: You say something without thinking - that spiritual filter doesn't block your crude comments - and before you know it you have sinned very publicly. Paul is stating an unavoidable situation. When we do life together there will be times when you or your Christian brother/sister sin publicly. So how do we deal with the public sin of others? Do we turn the other way? Do we go along with it? Do we sweep it under the rug? What do we do? This is

where offering the helping hand comes in. "...**Even if anyone** is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness..." When Paul says, 'you who are spiritual', he is not speaking of the religious elite or the ultra-religious individual. He uses that term in the context of those who are *walking in the Spirit*. Remember, Paul just spent half a chapter commanding us, encouraging us to walk in the Spirit. As you read your Bible and pray to the Lord daily, aligning your heart, soul, mind and strength to the teachings of God, you will begin to live under the guidance of the Spirit in obedience to the Word, and He will lead you, He prompt you when you should confront the sinfulness of another. Now remember those 'who are spiritual' does not mean those who are perfect. We have this thought that it's not my place to confront another concerning their sinfulness, because I too am guilty of sinfulness. If that were the case than Paul would not have been able to write these words, for all have sinned, including Paul. But the sinner, saved by Grace, indwelt by the Holy Spirit can walk by the Spirit and in so doing may be prompted to confront another about their sinfulness. However, look at the way in which we are to confront another sinner. "**Restore** such a one in a spirit of gentleness." The goal of confronting another individual's sin is **restoration**. This word "restore" is a beautiful word. It means to 'adjust, to fit, to finish'. In the English language we use this word when we speak of restoring an antique, bringing life back into an old, beaten down by time, object. Nowhere does Paul say, cut them off, get rid of them, or leave them behind. Instead he uses the word restore, which means to bring back into the picture until fellowship is once again accomplished. It is the idea of not leaving a wounded soldier behind, but rather picking them up and carrying them to safety, where they can get the help they need. **Restoration is the goal of confrontation**. And we are to do this with a gentle spirit. This is not a self-righteous attitude that the spiritually mature person has, looking down their noses at some poor fool. When picking up a wounded soldier, when confronting the self-inflicted sinful wound of an individual we are to be gentle. The image of a mother or father gently supporting the neck of a newborn as they cradle him or her in loving embrace is the image I get when I think of this word 'gentle'. The greatest definition I have come across for "gentleness" is *strength under control*. When a brother or sister is caught up in the self-inflicted wound of sin, come along side of them with a compassionate gracious yet strong hand and lead them back to the Great Physician, who can fully restore such a wounded soul to fellowship with one another and with God as well. But while Paul is giving us wonderful instruction on family life within the Church, he also sounds the alarm for warning. "*Each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*" It is possible for an individual to get shot while assisting the wounded on the battle field, so make certain that you do not fall into the same sin that wounded this individual in the first place. Enter the battlefield cautiously. Follow the Spirit's leading to a brother or sister in trouble, ensnared by sin, and confront their sin gently, seeking to restore them into fellowship. This is the role that I expect you to have in my life, and I love you enough to take on this role in your life as well. When a brother or sister is wounded, ensnared by the trappings of sin, cautiously and gently confront them with the goal of restoration. Offer a helping hand.

Paul then continues on in verse 2, "*bear one another burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*"

This leads us to our next point...

2. **Share the Load** (vv. 2-5)

“Bear one another’s burdens...” To me this is a broad instruction. It involves helping each other out with difficult things in life, such as being there to carry the load of loss; or caring for those whose bodies are struck with infirmities and sickness – bring a meal, or offer a shoulder to cry on, give a hug and say a prayer. It involves sharing the load with those who have lost their jobs, or those who are going through other changes in life. To ‘bear one another’s burdens’ can be stripped down to ‘holding each other up’ or ‘being a stable friend in an unstable circumstance.’ And we often think about those who need physical, emotional, or financial help as the one’s we are supposed to help. And to that, I say yes! Are you sharing the load with your brothers and sisters? This requires a selfless attitude and activity on your part. When a need is shared by your brother or sister in the Lord, pray for them, and then drive to their house or pick up the phone and ask how you can help. To bear one another’s burdens means that you are realistically getting underneath the heavy circumstance that is crushing your sibling and helping them lift it. And when walking by the Spirit we are prompted to and encouraged to do just that, sharing the emotional, mental, physical, and financial load.

But in this context, Paul is still talking about those who have been burdened greatly by sin in their lives – so the burden goes beyond just the physical loads of life – but to the spiritual load. To me, I believe this need is greater than physical, financial, mental, or emotional help. Because sin carries with it a much greater reach into the destruction of people’s lives than losing a job does. You can be unemployed, sick, or poor and still rest in God’s provision – but when you are caught in sin you are not resting in God – on the contrary you are running from God. And when sin compounds upon sin, it can cause great destruction, often ruining multiple lives – therefore the need is far greater for you and for me to come alongside a brother or sister who have ruined their lives temporarily with sinful choices and share that load – this in fact goes hand in hand with our previous point. The greatest way you can assist a wounded soldier is to help them through the pain of rehabilitation step by step, until they are fully restored in health.

And when you take the focus off yourself and place it on the spiritual need of your sibling, you *“fulfill the law of Christ.”* Your faith in your Savior leads you to walking in obedience to the Scriptures in particular to the ‘law of Christ’ (which is Love God and Love Others). This is not a law-based salvation, but the fruits of a life changed by Christ. Paul then continues again with another warning in **verses 3-4**, *“For if anyone thinks he is 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.”* At first glance this statement seems somewhat out of place. What Paul is talking about here is humility – *don’t think you are something when you are actually nothing – examine your heart and make certain you are not arrogant.* Why would Paul be speaking about humility in light of the context of this passage? Well, my conclusion is that Paul is aware of our selfish motivations to both help and not help a brother or sister fallen in sin. On one hand, our self-righteous pride can lead us to judge and condemn a fallen sibling instead of offer that helping hand restoring them to fellowship. And on the other hand, our pride can lead us to boasting after we offer that

helping hand – a ‘look what I have done’ sense of entitlement. Pride can be so damaging in our lives and will ultimately lead to other sins if we let it. So, Paul is warning us about our own pride, and reminding us that we too are sinners, we must first examine our own motives and check our pride at the door. Our ‘bearing one another’s burden’ is to be done in humility, and when we do this, there is reason for rejoicing.

Let’s continue on, **verse 6**, “*The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.*” When we do life together there will be times in which we are called to offer a helping hand and to share the load, but let us also remember that life together calls for fellowship as well.

3. Fellowship Together (v. 6)

“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.”

At first glance this passage as well looks out of place. I have heard preachers teach a seemingly obvious message using this passage to give reason why pastors are to be paid fairly. But this does not seem to flow with the context of this letter. Paul has just been talking about restoring a sinning sibling, so what does this verse have to do with that? I think we find our clue in the word Paul uses for “*share*”. The Greek word we translate as ‘share’ is *koinoneo* – and it is the verb for “fellowship”. So in this verse, in line with the context of the previous verses, we see Paul encouraging fellowship together in all good things with the two parties – the one who has been restored to fellowship and the one who brought them in to that spiritual restoration. Therefore, I say to you, when you find a brother or sister caught in sin, humbly confront them with a gentle spirit, bring them to our Lord who can restore them fully, and then fellowship together in the goodness of our Savior, found in the Word of God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as per usual, I want to leave you with a few questions.

How are you doing in living life together with your brothers and sisters? Have you allowed them in to your life? Are there relationships that you could improve?

How do you treat a brother or sister who have fallen in sin? Do you judge them or condemn them? Are they someone else’s problem? Or do you allow God to use you to restore a fallen sibling?

When you walk by the Spirit, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, there will be times you have the humble opportunity to pick up a sibling who has fallen in sin, to hold them up as they walk through the difficult path of restoration, and then to build them up as you fellowship with them around the Word of God. How are you doing in living life together?

Close in Prayer