

GALATIANS
Lesson 21**Restoring the Sinning Christian**
Galatians 5:26—6:5**INTRODUCTION**

One of the reasons Christians are so weak spiritually is because they fail to keep the simple, obvious commands of scripture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of personal relationships, especially with fellow Christians. There are some doctrinal things in the Bible that are very difficult to grasp theologically, but the plain commands on practical dealings with brothers in Christ are easy to understand. Yet, they are difficult to practice. What do you do when you see another Christian in doctrinal or moral error? How do you act towards a brother who has hurt you? How do you react towards another Christian who “bugs” you? The scriptures are quite clear on these matters, but Christians shy away from restoring an erring brother because they do not want to hurt their brother or sister in Christ or they are afraid they themselves will be hurt or disliked.

It is so very easy for Christians to speak the word “love” and not genuinely practice it. It is quite simple to talk about love in some general, generic, abstract way, but it is much harder to get down to concrete, particular situations in which we actually demonstrate our love for one another. This gets down to the “nitty gritty” of Christian living.

THE SIN OF THE SINNING CHRISTIAN 5:26**“Let us not become conceited.”**

True Christians were being affected by the false teaching of the Judaizers who said that a person had to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved or at least be spiritual. This legalistic spirit produced pride in the believers.

The word “conceited” means to harbor illusions about oneself which are empty and vain. The spirit of legalism always makes people pompous, self-righteous, critical and negative—signs of pride and conceit.

Christian legalists have a “holier than thou” attitude about life, proving they have never been broken by the grace of God. When Christians are proud and conceited, this will definitely affect their relationships with other Christians.

“Provoking and envying each other.”

“To provoke” means “to challenge someone to a contest.” Arrogant, pompous, conceited Christians are so sure of their superiority that they are constantly challenging other Christians to dispute with them. Conceit and legalism always produce fighters with a negative spirit.

“To envy” is to be jealous of another’s gifts or attainments. Men want what they cannot have. Apparently these legalists, while being so outwardly righteous, were inwardly and secretly jealous of Christians who had real Christian liberty. This is the reason legalists are so negative, for they are covering up for hidden desires and wants. A legalist understands little or nothing about the grace of God in Christian living.

THE RESTORATION OF THE SINNING CHRISTIAN 6:1

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin.”

Those brothers (and sisters) who understand grace in Christian living were to restore those who did not understand grace and Christian liberty.

The term “someone” refers to true believers who have fallen into the sin of conceit, arrogance and pride. They were unlovely brethren with a negative, critical spirit about anyone or anything. The text says, “caught in a sin” but a better translation might be, “overtaken by sin,” which indicates a weakness of the flesh, not just plain rebellion to moral law.

While the context is about the sin of conceit, pride, arrogance, this may apply to any sin the Christian might be guilty of doing. A Christian falls into sin when he is not depending on the Holy Spirit to overcome the sin nature.

“You who are spiritual”

If an erring brother is to be restored to fellowship with Christ and other believers, Christians who are spiritual must approach him. This means that those who seek to reprimand the erring brother should themselves be filled (controlled) by the Spirit of God and in fellowship with Christ. Only a pure hypocrite would seek to restore a person when he has obvious sin in his own life.

However, I believe this refers to someone who is a mature Christian as well as a Spirit-filled Christian. It is those Christians who are spiritually mature who are to handle the discipline of a wayward brother. In 1 Cor. 3:1, Paul could not address the Corinthians as spiritual and says they were worldly (fleshly, carnal), equating this term with infants or babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1 **“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly (carnal)—mere infants in Christ.”**). The term “spiritual” must refer to mature Christians who are filled with the Spirit.

Many heartaches would be avoided if men and women who were spiritually mature would seek to rebuke a Christian who has fallen into sin. Immature Christians simply do not have enough spiritual insight and sensitivity to make objective judgments.

“Should restore him gently.”

The word “restore” means “to restore to its former condition.” Christians are commanded to restore the sinning brother to his former position of fellowship before God and before the local church. The sinning brother could be guilty of some moral error or breaking the unity of a body of believers in a local church.

Notice that the sinning brother is to be restored in the spirit of gentleness. Gentleness and tenderness are essential when dealing with a wayward believer, for a man’s whole future walk with Christ is at stake.

A Christian’s rebuke of an erring brother is not designed to drive that brother from Christ but to Christ. What we say to the brother and how we approach him is very important and the whole situation should be bathed in prayer.

Let the ministers of the Gospel learn from Paul how to deal with those who have sinned. “Brethren,” he says, “if any man be overtaken with a fault, do not aggravate his grief, do not scold him, do not condemn him, but lift him up and gently restore his faith. If you see a brother despondent over a sin he has committed, run up to him, reach out your hand to him, comfort him with the Gospel and embrace him like a mother. When you meet a willful sinner who does not care, go after him and rebuke him sharply.” But this is not the treatment for one who has been overtaken by a sin and is sorry. He must be dealt with in the spirit of meekness and not in the spirit of severity. A repentant sinner is not to be given all and vinegar to drink. (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*).

The Bible teaches that the one who has seen the sin, heard of the sin or has been offended by the sin should approach the erring brother. The concerned Christian should go directly to the person involved and confront him with the issue. One should never go to non-Christians because family problems should be kept at home. Nor should they go to other Christians for this would be gossip. Nor to the elders or even to the pastor. The sinning brother should be approached directly and if that does not work, then the elders and pastor should be informed (Matt. 18:15-17 **"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."**).

"But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

The Christian who seeks to restore an erring brother could become very judgmental and self-righteous himself, and glory in feeling superior to the one who sinned.

Also he who seeks to restore the sinning brother might be tempted to fall into the same sin. Augustine said, "There is no sin which one person has committed, that another person may not commit it also." We all stand in slippery places.

THE CONTINUAL LOVE FOR THE SINNING CHRISTIAN 6:2-3

"Carry each other's burdens."

Each Christian is indirectly responsible for the spiritual welfare of another Christian, especially to the erring brother who has been restored. The restored brother is going to need help, encouragement, understanding and love as he deals with his problems.

This verse implies there is a heavy load of burdens that Christians have, and each Christian is responsible to help the other Christian out when he is under these burdens. All Christians have burdens and God does not mean for us to carry them alone. We can take our problems to God, for He alone has the final answer to them (Psa. 55:22 **"Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall."** Matt. 11:28 **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** 1 Pet. 5:7 **"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."**).

Yet we must remember that one of the means God uses to help Christians bear their burdens is through deep, genuine Christian friendships. Next to a Christian's spiritual ties with Christ, the closest ties in this world are spiritual friends we can unburden our hearts to. All Christians need spiritual friends in Christ, for we are to bear one another's burdens.

Christians are to help one another. It does not say this is the responsibility of the pastor alone, although in some cases a minister should be contacted. Every Christian is to have the ministry of burden-bearing.

"And in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

The Law of Christ is the law of love, and when Christians are bearing one another's burdens they are exercising love and fulfilling the Law of Christ (John 13:34-35 **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**).

Real love is genuine concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

The implication seems to be here that if the Christian does not or will not bear another's burdens, it is because he thinks it is above him to do so. He would lower himself to do such a thing. It would be beneath his dignity. The Christian who refuses to bear another's burden is guilty of self-righteousness as much as a legalist (Phil. 2:3 "**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.**" Rom. 12:3 "**For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.**").

Conceit and self-righteousness can only be corrected as men get a grasp of the grace of God. When we see our sinfulness before God, we soon learn that all we have is by the grace of God. We are not something; we are nothing! All that the Christian has is by grace and this leaves no room for conceit or personal glory (1 Cor. 4:7 "**For you make you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?**").

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL CHRISTIANS 6:4-5

"Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else."

Every man is responsible for his own spiritual works before God. A Christian should never compare himself with another Christian.

Each Christian should push on for Christ with the personality, brains and spiritual capacity God has given him. It is a dangerous thing to make comparisons, for this only leads to frustration. Christian, you are accountable before God and responsible for your own spiritual works.

"For each one should carry his own load."

Instead of scrutinizing your brothers and sisters in Christ and comparing yourself with them, you must test your own work, for you will give an account before God at the Judgment Seat in eternity (2 Cor. 5:10 "**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive that is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**").

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ, you too someday will give an account to God, but you will be judged for your sin and then cast into eternal separation from God (Heb. 9:27). You are accountable to God to believe in Christ, for God has commanded men everywhere to trust Christ (Acts 17:30-31). Unless you change your mind about Christ, you will go into eternity and face a wrathful God. You will plead your good works for salvation and God will say, "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you." You will weep and cry for God to accept you but He will say, "Cast him into outer darkness, for he is not one of my own."

You say, "How can I become one of God's own spiritual children?" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12). You wonder, "How can I, a sinner, be forgiven?" Accept the death of Christ for your sins (Rom. 5:8). You may also ask yourself, "How can I escape the certain judgment and wrath of God to come?" Trust in Christ as your Savior and Lord (John 3:36).