

Christ Reformation Church

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Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Life in the New Covenant”

April 13, 2014

Sermon Text: Galatians 6:1-5

Scripture Reading: Joshua 7

Introduction-

Galatians 3:10-12 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." (11) Now it is evident that no one is justified

before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." (12) But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

Have you ever felt sorry for Achan? I have. You see in that story the unbending nature of the Law. We see it in Hebrews-

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

To meet God without an interest in Christ and thus apart from Christ's righteousness is to be in the position Achan was. The Law is unrelenting, unbreakable, without exception. Achan

met the same sad end that every person will meet without Christ. The Law only condemns. There are only two ways for a human being to relate to God: 1) On his own merits, or 2) On the merits of Christ. Christ has fulfilled the demands of God's holy and unbending Law, but no fallen human being ever has or ever will. So right at this moment this morning, every person in this room, every person listening to this message, every person in the entire world – is relating to God in one of these two ways. One leads to certain and eternal death. The other is life in God's new creation.

Now, listen as Paul instructs us about how we are to live and relate to one another in Christ – in this New Covenant that is based upon His atoning blood given for us.

Galatians 6:1-5 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (2) Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (3) For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (4) But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his

neighbor. (5) For each will have to bear his own load.

Notice the great contrast to Achan. Let's see if we can understand why.

Fulfilling the Law: Love Your Neighbor

Paul's words here in chapter 6 are not divorced from the context of the flow of his reasoning in this epistle. That is important for us to remember when we are reading Scripture and trying to understand it rightly. In addition, the New Testament authors are almost always speaking in the context of the Old Testament. That is to say, it is important for us to be familiar with the Old Testament if we are going to understand the New Testament. In this case, knowing how sin was dealt with under the Old Covenant (as in Achan's case) jolts us a bit when we hear Paul instructing us in the New Covenant to "restore a brother caught in any transgression." What's up with that, we ask? Achan wasn't restored! He ended up along with his entire family under a pile of rocks.

Alright then, the immediate context here in Galatians: the legalists had come in working their evil. Paul pronounced them and their so-called gospel "anathema." He has had harsh words for them and he will have some more before this 6th chapter ends.

Christians are to walk in freedom in Christ. We are sons, not slaves. We are not to go back to the law which can only condemn. His central theme is:

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

Now, in connection with this error of reverting back to relying upon our own so-called good works and law-keeping to set us right with God, Paul notes what will happen in any local church or in the relationship between believers if we forget that *Christ is our righteousness*. Listen:

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:15)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal 5:25-26)

Walking by the Spirit necessarily means loving one another. If we revert to the law we will find ourselves back in the realm of the flesh where sin is incited and empowered by the law. In that kind of climate, people are not

loving one another. See it in Paul's words:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Gal 5:6)
For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:13-14)

Where legalism reigns, the result then will be a climate of conceit, provoking one another, envy, pride – in other words, the deeds of the flesh. There will not be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and so on because in such a place people are not walking by the Spirit.

What is to happen, what will happen, in a family, a marriage, a church, among friends who love Christ, where the Spirit is followed? How do we handle it when one of us sins in other words? That each of us will sin is a given. Paul has just been showing us how we must walk by the Spirit because of the remaining sinful flesh in us trying to work its desires and cause us to yield to them. We walk by the Spirit, but not perfectly. We still

sin. How are we to respond to one another when this happens?

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Gal 6:1)

First, let's make careful note that Paul cannot be speaking of all people and all sins here. He is addressing the normal, everyday scenario among Christ's people wherein a Christian sins. We know that he cannot mean we are to "restore in a spirit of gentleness" for example, the wolves who had invaded the Galatian churches. Paul had already pronounced them anathema. And in other places Paul deals with unrepentant, ongoing, willful and defiant sin:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (1Co 5:1-2)

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty

of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." (1Co 5:11-13)

Caught in any Transgression

No, the situation Paul is addressing here is one in which a genuine brother or sister in Christ sins. And I think that the assumption is that the person is repentant. To "restore" an unrepentant, hardened sinner who is walking in sin would be completely foreign to Paul's theology.

The language Paul uses here is also instructive – "caught." Does this mean "ensnared/tripped up" or does it mean "found out/discovered to be in sin"? Listen to that in other translations:

(KJV) Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Gal 6:1)

^{NET} **Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a

person in a spirit of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. (Gal 6:1 NET)

^{CEB} **Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual should restore someone like this with a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourselves so you won't be tempted too. (Gal 6:1 CEB)

According to some Greek lexicons, the verb in its passive voice form (which it is here)

προλαμβάνω 2aor. **προέλαβον**; 1aor. pass. **προελήμφθην**; *take beforehand*; (1) with the **προ-** prefix relating to time *anticipate, do something beforehand* (MK 14.8); **(2) surprise, overtake, detect; passive be overtaken, be caught (unawares) (GA 6.1)**

Another:

Louw & Nida 27.33 **προλαμβάνω**: to learn something by surprise - 'to detect, to surprise, to catch, to be discovered.' **ἐὰν καὶ προλημφθῇ ἄνθρωπος ἐν τινι παραπτώματι** 'if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing' Ga 6.1. It is possible that **προλαμβάνω** in Ga 6.1 refers to actual seizing or arresting, but it

seems more likely to refer to the fact that someone becomes aware of wrongdoing, and therefore the wrongdoer is surprised by being detected or discovered.

So "caught" here does seem to mean "discovered in sin." Do we bring the law's penalty down upon them? Let me read some comments for you that I think will help us understand Paul's instruction here more clearly, and I think will also greatly encourage us. Here is F.F. Bruce:

The general teaching of 5:13-26 is now applied to some more specific situations. If mutual envy and provocation are to be renounced, mutual aid is to be fostered. One form of aid is that given to a member of one of the churches who may fall into some 'transgression'. The precise force of [the Greek verb] is uncertain: it may mean that he finds himself inadvertently involved in some wrongdoing, or that he is detected in it by someone else. The wrongdoing may fall under the heading of one of the 'works of the flesh' (5:19-21); it will certainly be inconsistent with the fruit of the Spirit.

Whatever form it takes, the offender must be rehabilitated, and not made to feel like a pariah. It is likely that Paul is not thinking of behaviour which so

flagrantly flouts accepted standards that it brings the community into public disrepute (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5) or which can best be dealt with by a temporary withholding of social fellowship (1 Cor. 5:11; Rom. 16:17). A [transgression, the Greek word Paul uses here] is not a settled course of action but an isolated action which may make the person who does it feel guilty. The rehabilitation must be undertaken by those who are truly “spiritual” (, whose life and conduct alike are controlled by the Spirit of Christ.

Since gentleness is included in the fruit of the Spirit (5:23), it follows that spiritual people will take this or any other kind of action ‘in a spirit of gentleness’. It is easy for certain types of religious people to sit in judgment on one who has suddenly yielded to some moral temptation, to make their disapproval manifest, but this is not the way of Christ. If there were in the Galatian churches, as in the church of Corinth, some who regarded themselves as “spiritual” (in a superior sense (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15; 3:1; 14:37), Paul impresses on them that one test of true spirituality is a readiness to set those who stumble by the wayside on the right road again in a sympathetic and uncensorious spirit.

F. F. Bruce. The Epistle to the Galatians (New International Greek Testament Com (Eerdmans)) (Kindle Locations 4665-4679). Kindle Edition.

Now listen to John Calvin on this:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault... Ambition is a serious and alarming evil. But hardly less injury is frequently done by unseasonable and excessive severity, which, under the plausible name of zeal, springs in many instances from pride, and from dislike and contempt of the brethren. Most men seize on the faults of brethren as an occasion of insulting them, and of using reproachful and cruel language. Were the pleasure they take in upbraiding equalled by their desire to produce amendment, they would act in a different manner. Reproof, and often sharp and severe reproof, must be administered to offenders. But while we must not shrink from a faithful testimony against sin, neither must we omit to mix oil with the vinegar. We are here taught to correct the faults of brethren in a mild manner, and to consider no rebukes as partaking a religious and Christian character which do not breathe the spirit of meekness.

To gain this object, he explains the design of pious reproofs, which is, to restore him who is fallen, to place

him in his former condition. That design will never be accomplished by violence, or by a disposition to accuse, or by fierceness of manner or language; and consequently, we must display a gentle and meek spirit, if we intend to heal our brother. And lest any man should satisfy himself with assuming the outward form, he demands the spirit of meekness; for no man is prepared for chastising a brother till he has succeeded in acquiring a gentle spirit.

Another argument for gentleness in correcting brethren is contained in the expression, "if a man be overtaken." If he has been carried away through want of consideration, or through the cunning arts of a deceiver, it would be cruel to treat such a man with harshness. Now, we know that the devil is always lying in wait, and has a thousand ways of leading us astray. When we perceive a brother to have transgressed, let us consider that he has fallen into the snares of Satan; let us be moved with compassion, and prepare our minds to exercise forgiveness.

But offenses and falls of this description must undoubtedly be distinguished from deep seated crimes, accompanied by deliberate and obstinate disregard of the authority of God. Such a display of

wicked and perverse disobedience to God must be visited with greater severity, for what advantage would be gained by gentle treatment?

The particle "if also", (ea`n kai,) implies that not only the weak who have been tempted, but those who have yielded to temptation, shall receive forbearance.

Ye who are spiritual... This is not spoken in irony; for, however spiritual they might be, still they were not wholly filled with the Spirit. It belongs to such persons to raise up the fallen. To what better purpose can their superior attainments be applied than to promote the salvation of the brethren? The more eminently any man is endowed with Divine grace, the more strongly is he bound to consult the edification of those who have been less favored. But such is our folly, that in our best duties we are apt to fail, and therefore need the exhortation which the apostle gives to guard against the influence of carnal views.

Calvin, John (2012-08-26). The Complete Biblical Commentary Collection of John Calvin (Kindle Locations 478870-478899). . Kindle Edition.

Do we begin to see the thing? Do you find this? When we are dealing with a person who is found to be in sin, we must take care to assess accurately what kind of person they are. Here, as Paul is instructing us in regard to the occurrence of a real Christian who yields to his sinful flesh – not as in a hardened and unrepentant or habitual way of walking – but in the weakness of his flesh he sins, as we all do. This is the course and instruction we are to follow.

Keep Watch on Yourself, lest....

“Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

As Calvin mentioned already, the “spiritual” here are not some class of “super saint.” Paul means, by “spiritual” what he has just previously discussed: *those believers who are walking in the Spirit.*

The legalist is filled with pride. Think of the Pharisees. They loved to catch people in sin. It made them feel good about themselves as they ignored their own sin and hypocrisy. But here, Paul calls us to be humble and to acknowledge that there is sin in us as well, and that if we grow prideful and are motivated by a desire to exalt ourselves as we point out the sin of

another, then we should not be surprised if we are the next to fall.

The legalist loves to accuse. It is his specialty. And it is the legalist who is under the most temptation and who is most likely involved in the most sin!

Let’s look at a very practical application of this principle that we have faced before and which we will probably have to face again. One of the most common sins we face is sexual sin. Pornography. Sex outside of marriage, and so on. Christians are subject to these temptations and sometimes we sin.

I want everyone here, in some ways especially the young people, to know that they must keep watch and flee from temptation. We must immerse ourselves in God’s Word and pray for the Lord to deliver us from evil – daily. It is always best *not to sin.*

And yet, I also want us to realize that if we sin, if we have been overtaken in some fault, if we are fighting it and we need help or if the results of our sin are known – we have been found out – then no person who is grieved about their sin and who is humble and desires to repent of it is going to be condemned here. Think of it – this is what the Holy Spirit does in every Christian! Does He condemn us when

we fall? No. Oh, His conviction can be very painful, but His object is to restore us back onto the right way.

Once more, let's be certain we understand here that Paul is addressing Christians who yield to sin sometimes. He is not speaking of how we deal with someone who shows an ongoing, unrepentant, habitual walk in sin or someone like these Galatian legalists who come into the flock and try to enslave Christ's people in their bondage.

This means then that if you are a Christian and you are hooked by some sin and you hate it as you battle it, you are not going to be condemned or expelled from this church if you come and ask for help! Or even if you are discovered/caught. Some sins have temporal consequences that will still play themselves out. A treasurer who has embezzled funds is not going to be the treasurer!

We must cultivate a climate in our homes and marriages and families and in this church that is consistent with Galatians 6:1. To do so is to evidence that we are being led by and walking in the Spirit.

Bear One Another's Burdens

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. (Gal 6:2-5)

Now these verses at first glance seem disconnected with verse 1, as if Paul is moving on to a new subject. And yet this phrase "for if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing" connects back to verse 1's – "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." In other words, this matter of "bearing one another's burdens" has some kind of direct connection with verse 1.

The law of Christ is the law of love. You see this back in 5:14-

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:14)

And of course we have it in Jesus' own words:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will

know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Here, loving one another means acknowledging that all of us battle with this sinful flesh. That is the "burden" Paul is speaking of. We are like travelers on a journey and we have this load. I have it just like you do. I am foolish and arrogant if I think that I don't need anyone's help – I am deceiving myself as verse 3 says. So we are to help one another along this path.

Furthermore, as we go, we are not to have a censorious attitude that is all the time watching others, just waiting for them to trip up so we can condemn them and feel arrogant about ourselves! No, we need to keep our eyes on ourselves, on our own sinful flesh – minding our own business in that sense. Because in the end when we stand before Christ, each one of us will give an account of our own selves, not of our neighbor.

I have known people – legalists – who seem to spend all their time watching others and not themselves. They think themselves to be quite perfect and spiritual. They are the classic log in the eye types always spotting a speck in someone else's eye. That kind of person is not to be permitted to set the climate and tone of a church. He thinks

he is really something, but in fact the Lord regards him as nothing.

Listen to John Calvin once more on this:

Considering thyself.... It is not without reason that the apostle passes from the plural to the singular number [ie, "you who are spiritual" is plural, but "keep watch on yourself" is singular]. He gives weight to his admonition, when he addresses each person individually, and bids him look carefully into himself. "Whoever thou art that takest upon thee the office of reproofing others, look to thyself."

Nothing is more difficult than to bring us to acknowledge or examine our own weakness. Whatever may be our acuteness in detecting the faults of others, we do not see, as the saying is, "the wallet that hangs behind our own back;" and therefore, to arouse us to greater activity, he employs the singular number.

These words may admit of two senses. As we acknowledge that we are liable to sin, we more willingly grant that forgiveness to others which, in our turn, we expect will be extended to us. Some interpret them in this manner: "Thou who art a sinner, and needest the compassion of thy brethren, oughtest not to show thyself fierce and

implacable to others." But I would rather choose to expound them as a warning given by Paul, that, in correcting others, we should not ourselves commit sin. There is a danger here which deserves our most careful attention, and against which it is difficult to guard; for nothing is more easy than to exceed the proper limits. The word tempt, however, may very properly be taken in this passage as extended to the whole life. Whenever we have occasion to pronounce censure, let us begin with ourselves, and, remembering our own weakness, let us be indulgent to others.

2. Bear ye one another's burdens... The weaknesses or sins, under which we groan, are called burdens. This phrase is singularly appropriate in an exhortation to kind behavior, for nature dictates to us that those who bend under a burden ought to be relieved. He enjoins us to bear the burdens. We must not indulge or overlook the sins by which our brethren are pressed down, but relieve them, -- which can only be done by mild and friendly correction.

And so fulfill the law of Christ. The word law, when applied here to Christ, serves the place of an argument. There is an implied contrast between the law of Christ

and the law of Moses. "If you are very desirous to keep a law, Christ enjoins on you a law which you are bound to prefer to all others, and that is, to cherish kindness towards each other. He who has not this has nothing. On the other hand, he tells us, that, when every one compassionately assists his neighbor, the law of Christ is fulfilled;

3. For if a man think himself. There is an ambiguity in the construction, but Paul's meaning is clear. The phrase, When he is nothing, appears at first view to mean, "if any person, who is in reality nothing, claims to be something;" as there are many men of no real worth who are elated by a foolish admiration of themselves. But the meaning is more general, and may be thus expressed: "Since all men are nothing, he who wishes to appear something, and persuades himself that he is somebody, deceives himself."

First, then, he declares that we are nothing, by which he means, that we have nothing of our own of which we have a right to boast, but are destitute of every thing good: so that all our glorying is mere vanity. Secondly, he infers that they who claim something as their own deceive themselves. Whence proceeds fierce insult or haughty sternness, but from this, that

every one exalts himself in his own estimation, and proudly despises others? Let arrogance be removed, and we shall all discover the greatest modesty in our conduct towards each other.

4. But let every man prove his own work.... By a powerful blow, Paul has already struck down the pride of man. But it frequently happens that, by comparing ourselves with others, the low opinion which we form of them leads us to entertain a high opinion of ourselves. Paul declares that no such comparison ought to be allowed. Let no man, he says, measure himself by the standard of another, or please himself with the thought, that others appear to him less worthy of approbation. Let him lay aside all regard to other men, examine his own conscience, and inquire what is his own work. It is not what we gain by detracting from others, but what we have without any comparison, that can be regarded as true praise.

Calvin, John (2012-08-26). The Complete Biblical Commentary Collection of John Calvin (Kindle Locations 478900-478949). . Kindle Edition.

restore one another when someone falls in sin, that among the people of Christ there is to be this helping of one another along the way and a rejection of a condemning spirit that delights in discovering another persons' fault, removes great pressure from us. We in now way excuse sin. We do not discover a wolf or a hardened, unrepentant person who is a false professor of Christ and apply the instruction of Galatians 6:1. No. But when it comes to one another, when it concerns our real brothers and sisters in Christ who sometimes sin, then this is the Lord's instruction to us and it is His good remedy to restore one of His sheep who has stumbled.

I trust this is humbling to us, and also very encouraging. To know that when we love one another, when we strive to