Message #21

In Galatians 5:16 we are admonished to walk by the Spirit and not carry out the desire of the flesh. That is the goal. However, the truth is we do not always walk by the Spirit and there are times when we do carry out the desire of the flesh. Even the best people of God have their slip up moments.

Now one question this raises is how do we function in a church in view of the fact that there are times when the flesh gets the better of people? What do we do when the flesh gets the better of one of our brothers or sisters? How should we respond? What should our attitude be?

When someone is flesh-controlled should we just turn our head? Should we just tell the person we love them anyway and don’t care if they change? A legalistic person harbors much veiled pride, envy and jealousy. A legalistic person is one who has too much pride and envy and jealousy to properly relate to anyone. They are so out of step with the Holy Spirit that producing fruit or doing what God would have them do is not an option.

Paul knew there would be times when flesh issues would need to be addressed. So what he says here is this:

**IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT ALL BELIEVERS HAVE A FLESH AND MAY BE DOMINATED BY THE FLESH, GOD EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO RESPONSIBLY DEAL WITH THINGS IN A SPIRIT-LED WAY IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT WE WILL ALL FACE GOD.**

When we stop to consider that we will face God, it behooves each of us to make certain that the Spirit is dominating our lives and not our flesh. We must stay on top of our own spirituality and also at times help the spirituality of others.

Now there are two specific cases that are discussed in these verses.

**CASE #1 – The case of the sinning brother. 6:1**

Now because we all have a flesh, sin will be in our lives at times and it also probably will come into the church. Sin should not be a great surprise to us or to the church and it should not be viewed as fatal to our life or the life of the church, if it is addressed properly.

Now here is probably one of the most misunderstood verses in the book of Galatians. **It is from this very verse that many churches conclude that the primary purpose of church discipline is “restoration.”**

There are many churches that build their policy of church discipline on this very verse. But as you will see, this verse has nothing to do with church discipline. In fact, this verse is just the opposite of what church discipline demands.
Church discipline is to be carried out at times. There are certain situations that demand that fellowship be severed from certain people. There are people we are not to try to restore (I Cor. 5:5, 9-11; II Thess. 3:6, 14; I Tim. 5:19-20). The purpose of church discipline is not the restoration of the individual; it is the purity of the church.

Now what is stated in Galatians 6:1 is that if a person is caught in any trespass, the responsibility of a Spirit-filled church is to restore the one who is caught in that sin. We need to carefully and accurately understand what is said here. The issue here is that an individual is caught in sin and that individual is not to be neglected or rejected, but is to be restored.

The verb “caught” is aorist passive. The actual Greek word means to be caught in the sense of being overtaken or surprised. The idea is to be caught off guard.

The aorist tense of the verb indicates it is a moment in time as opposed to a continual and habitual pattern or habit.

The passive voice indicates the sin overtook the person; he was not out actively and aggressively pursuing the sin or trespass.

There is a big difference between one who willfully and deliberately sets out with the purpose of sinning with a hardened conscience, and a momentary, sudden, unexpected yielding to the flesh because of an overwhelming temptation.

There is a big difference in the mind of God and there will be a big difference in the mind of the believer who is in touch with the Spirit of God.

Now the word “trespass” is one that means to step off the righteous path and to blunder and do something that misses the mark of what God would want one to do (G. Abbott-Smith, Greek Lexicon, p. 342).

Now the specific challenge is if a believer in the church is overtaken by sin and not blatantly choosing to pursue sin, then “you” (plural), who are the spiritual ones in the church, have a responsibility to “restore” that brother or sister.

Now God only authorizes “spiritual ones” to pursue this restoration. Some are not Spirit-led in the church. Some would “bite and devour” (5:15) and some are “jealous and envious” (5:26). So the mandate is given to the spiritual ones. Their responsibility is to restore one overtaken.

Now the word “restore” means to mend, repair something to a complete and perfect condition (Ibid., p. 238). This is kind of like setting a broken bone or mending a fish net (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19). The idea here is to mend or repair a torn relationship.

The challenge is for spiritual people to mend one overtaken by a sin and see that he gets healed to the point of complete healing and use.
What we see here is that we are to do something about someone who is in sin. Often times the tendency is to do nothing. What we are supposed to do is to meekly confront and address the sin problem. Paul certainly is an example of this to the entire Galatian churches. He is trying to repair their faulty doctrine.

When someone is overtaken in a sin, the matter is not to be ignored. It is not to be publicly exposed. Spiritually-minded people are to work toward a restoration. Move toward a positive, rather than a negative.

Now here is where most churches totally miss the point. This is not discussing church discipline that is needed against a so-called brother or sister who is blatantly doing what is sinful. This is not talking about restoring a person who is under church discipline. This has nothing to do with discipline. This is about restoring someone and not disciplining them, because this was a momentary slip up. This is about a moment of time when the flesh got the better of a brother or sister.

It has been observed that if you put one black dot on a white sheet of paper, it will show up from a long distance. But if you put a black dot on a black sheet of paper, it will not show up at all. What we are discussing here is a black dot on a white sheet of paper case.

J. Vernon McGee gave a great illustration on this point. He said a number of years ago there was a very famous preacher in the south who, prior to his salvation, had a serious drinking problem. Since being in ministry, he had been greatly used by God and was a very disciplined man of God and a powerful preacher. There were incredible demands on his time. One night the pressure got to him and in a moment of fleshly weakness, he got drunk. The next morning he was so overwhelmed with his sin that he called his board to a meeting and turned in his resignation. His board saw the open, honest conviction and realizing this was a total slip out of his character, absolutely refused to accept his resignation. He went on to become one of the most amazing preachers of all time.

Those were spiritually-minded men who restored a brother to full service, who had stepped off the path of righteousness. That is exactly what Paul is describing here. This text is not about carrying out discipline; this is just the opposite. It is not carrying out discipline. The purpose of discipline is not restoration; the purpose of discipline is the purity of the church.

Now when this act of restoration is being conducted, it is to be done in a spirit of meekness (II Tim. 2:24-26). Those involved in the process are to first look at themselves and their own attitudes. Those attitudes should be attitudes of meekness.

The attitude is not some “lording” or “condescending” harshness that makes one feel like a dog. The word “meek” has to do with a gentle spirit. Gentleness is not weakness or cowardice; it is strength under control. Gentleness is an attitude that God can use to convert a sin-overtaken brother or sister. If one does not take this attitude upon themselves when addressing things, one may discover that they themselves may be tempted and fall.
A rigid, law-keeping legalist loves to learn about some brother or sister who fell so he can gloat about his own piety and spirituality.

There was a teacher at a Bible School who told one of our sons that he loved to hear about some man’s ministry that fails. He was a legalist who rejoiced over someone’s failure.

But when a person thinks he stands, he better take heed, lest he falls (I Cor. 10:12). It is just a matter of time until a harsh, rigid legalist will take a big fall. **Whenever we must face the sin or failure in someone else, we need to have a healthy sense of our own vulnerability. At best, we are all sinners saved by grace.**

When a man is overtaken in a fault, harsh judgment is not the proof of spirituality; merciful and gentle compassion is evidence of it. Now a legalist is not interested in this kind of ministry. He is given to harsh, legalistic judgments.

A great illustration of this is the woman who was overtaken in adultery. The Pharisees dragged her out publicly before Jesus and demanded she be stoned (John 8:3-7). The woman was not a believer and Jesus said “go and sin no more.”

When Peter failed Jesus, Jesus gently restored him (Matt. 26:69-74/John 21:15-17). He was overtaken in the moment and Jesus demonstrated great forgiveness.

**CASE #2 – The case of the burdened brother. 6:2-5**

Billy Sunday wrote a letter to a mayor of a major city and asked the mayor for a list of people who had spiritual problems and needed help and prayer. Sunday was planning to have a crusade in this city. The mayor sent him a city directory and phone book. Everybody needed some help.

There are some times in our Christian life when you need some help with carrying various loads in life. Certain pains, sorrows and heartaches cannot be borne alone. Paul pictures life as a walk and race in which you carry a certain load or pack.

Now the main challenge comes from **verse 2** and it is to “bear one another’s burdens.” The **pronoun “another” means another of the same kind.** Believers are to bear the burdens of other believers in the church. When it comes to the Christian life, there are some burdens we are to be able to share and there are other burdens that we must bear and cannot share.

Our first reaction when someone is burdened should not be to crush them; but to help them.

Now the word “bear” is one that describes lifting the weight off of something with your hands and carrying it (*Ibid.*, p. 78). This word is used over 25 times in the New Testament and describes things like carrying a water jug (Mark 14:13); carrying a coffin (Luke 7:14); carrying away a corpse (John 20:15); carrying a yoke (Acts 15:10). So the idea of bearing is the idea of taking the weight off something.
Now what we are to specifically bear is the weight of burdens. That word “burdens” in Greek is one that means weights and faults (Ibid., p. 76). These are things that weigh people down. These are things that one cannot carry alone.

There are many different kinds of burdens that weigh people down. There are physical burdens, emotional burdens, mental burdens, moral burdens, financial burdens, spiritual burdens, legal burdens, personality burdens; plus there are flesh failure burdens.

God wants us to help each other carry each other’s weights and faults. Specifically in this context the weights and faults of flesh failures. There are times in all of our lives when we are not lovely, but fleshly. When we help someone carry their burdens or loads we “fulfill the law of Christ.”

The law of Christ is one of freeing deliverance. The law of Christ of course is one that delivers people from incredible burdens and weights. The law of Christ delivers from sin, guilt and condemnation. The law of Christ does not heap legalism, or dietary restrictions or circumcision or O.T. law on people; it lifts those burdens.

Jesus Christ bears our sin, our guilt, our condemnation and our breaking the Law. He takes all of it on Him and when we try to lift another’s burdens, we fulfill Christ’s law.

No believer in the church should ever think he must bear life alone. There are times when we all need help. There are also times when we are in a position to do the helping. When we see another struggling and we humbly and gently do what we can to lift another’s load, we fulfill the law of Christ.

Now the “for” of verse 3 gives us a further explanation of the bearing responsibility. If someone thinks he is spiritual and is not willing to function this way, then he is nothing and is deceiving himself. When a person makes himself the self-appointed judge and jury over people in the church, the person is deceiving himself into thinking something he is not.

One reason why some don’t bear others burdens is because they think they are at some spiritual level above people so they don’t need to help. They feel superior to one overtaken or who has a burden. That is not real spirituality. This person deceives himself.

When it comes to one’s real spirituality, one can be very deceptive. What a person thinks about himself may be in sharp contrast to the way it truly is.

Verse 4 says that each person should examine his own work to determine whether or not he has a load-bearing ministry.

Every believer is responsible to work on and in his own life. There needs to be honest evaluation and open, honest criticism.
Now verse 5 uses a different word for “bear” than that of verse 2. This word has to do with carrying the cargo or load of a ship. There are things each of us must carry ourselves.

1) We must carry our own true spirituality.
2) We must carry our own suffering.
3) We must carry our own pain.
4) We must carry our own flesh.
5) We must carry our own death.
6) We must carry our own judgment.

No one can bail us out of these things. We must bear these things ourselves. The person who is wise will seriously be working on his or her own life.

Responsibility and accountability in judgment are non-transferrable. We will all face judgment. Every believer will be judged to determine reward or loss of reward.

There are things we can help others bear, but not these things.

If you are here without Christ and you think you are going to heaven, you are living in self-delusion.

What if you don’t feel the weight of sin? Then there is a good chance you are dead in it. Dead people don’t feel the weight of anything. You can put 10 pounds, 80 pounds, 400 pounds of weight on a dead person and they won’t feel a thing.

This book of Galatians says that whoever believes on Jesus Christ will be justified from all things.