

Body Life – Gal 6:1-5

Gal 6:1-5; Paul is starting to wind down, and as he often does at the end of his letters, he raises some last minute issues; That doesn't mean they're any less important . . . Just some final instructions before we turn the page
In this case, instructions about body life – “what to do when”
What to do, when any one of these 3 issues present themselves in our church and life

[1] Brothers [a term of endearment that Paul commonly uses for brothers and sisters in Christ; reminding us that the church is a family, a body], 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.

The first issue of body life Paul addresses, is . . .

1. When someone sins . . . (v1)

Whether the result of a momentary lapse of *judgment*, or an ongoing addiction; *If anyone is caught in any transgression* he says; Any sin; That's the first issue he raises

And the first thing we should do, is . . .

• Show mercy and grace

That's the first “what to do when”; Straight from the word *gentleness*; V1

If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. A spirit of tenderness

Handling people with care so as not to break their spirit; Like Jesus – *a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench* (Mt 12:20)

Which, in a spiritual sense, means showing them mercy and grace

If a *spirit of gentleness* means anything at all, it's a disposition of mercy and an inclination toward grace

Where we withhold punishment when possible and wise, and extend favor without enabling; Gentleness equals mercy and grace

➤ And we should show it, even if someone's *caught*; Even if they're found out Which is important, b/c we tend to think that if a person is *caught*, we should lower the boom; But if they *confess*, we shouldn't; We should be lenient
But Paul implies that we should be gentle either way; Especially when they *own* their sin; And *repent* upon being exposed; Caught or not, we should show mercy and grace

➤ Now, does that mean withholding the truth? Failing to reprove? Silencing a rebuke? Not at all; Showing mercy and grace does not mean removing all the consequences, or ignoring some of the facts
It means *minimizing* the consequences, without ignoring the *lessons*
Like a teacher who marks 1/3 of the *math* problems wrong on a student's paper, but gives them a D instead of an F b/c they showed their work and worked hard
She minimized the consequences w/out glossing over the lessons

When someone sins, do unto them what you'd have them do to you, if the roles were reversed; 2nd . . .

• Connect them with someone who walks by the Spirit

V1 again – *If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.*

And having just listed the *fruit* of the Spirit, Paul's most likely thinking about someone who gives *evidence* of the Spirit

Someone who loves Jesus and thinks biblically; That's a *spiritual* person

It's not those who go around with their head in the clouds; Or wear an air of piety
Or those governed more by their *emotions* than their wisdom

It's those who live by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit

Those who pray in the Spirit, and listen to the Spirit

Those with the Spirit's discernment and wisdom

Those are the people with whom you should connect someone who sins

Those are the ones who should be Marriage Mentors, and Biblical Soul Care advocates, and Discipleship Group leaders

You don't need an expert, you need the Spirit; 3rd . . .

• Restore them to fellowship

Fellowship in the *church*, and fellowship with the *Lord*; Look at it again

If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him

Restore, as in return them to their former state of health

It was a medical term in Paul's day, to describe the setting of a broken bone or dislocated joint; Which led one commentator (**Quote**) to say it this way:

“When Christians are caught in sin, they do not need isolation or amputation; they need restoration. The proper thing to do is to help them confess their sins and find forgiveness in Christ, and then to welcome them back into the fellowship of the church.” (Ryken, *Galatians*, 246)

When someone sins, our first impulse should be to restore their relationship with the *Lord* by urging them to repent, and then with our *church* by urging them to come*****

Look to *rebuild* their life, not tear it down; Seek to *restore* their walk, not inhibit it; Strive to *renew* their hope, not destroy it

They may not respond, they may not *drink* the water you offer, but at least make it available

And then last . . .

• Guard your own heart

When someone sins, and *you're* the one showing mercy and grace, *you're* the one connecting with them, *you're* the one restoring them to fellowship . . .

Keep watch on yourself [v1b], *lest you too be tempted*. IOW guard your heart

Why? B/c exposure to sin can lead to temptation you never knew existed; It happens

And before you know it, you find yourself thinking, “Wow. I didn't *know* that. I didn't know that existed. I didn't even know that was *possible*. Or that easy.”

Which is one very short step away from trying it yourself; Indulging yourself; Acting that way yourself

Exposure to sin can lead to temptation, and exposure to mercy can lead to license
“If he can get away with it, why can’t I?”

- All of which means that vigilance, and discipline, and safeguards are *prerequisites* for the would-be restorer; They have to be firmly in place *before* you connect
Otherwise, you’ll fall to sin just like them

It’s like Paul said in 1 Cor 10:12 – *Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.* It happens; And will, if we don’t guard our heart
That’s the first “what to do when”

The 2nd, from v2-3, is this . . .

2. When someone’s burdened, help them (v2-3)

After focusing on helping someone with the weight of their *sin*, Paul *expands* the scope and says in v2 – *Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*
Burdens, referring to heavy loads or weights, that can’t or shouldn’t be carried alone; At least not for long
These bad boys are not intended to be carried around all day long
But if you can’t avoid it, like some of the burdens in our lives, you need a helper

We need help to bear the burden of heavy sorrows at the death of a loved one
Or constant worry over a prodigal; Incessant doubt about your situation; Significant failure in your job; Ongoing poverty in your finances
Persistent loneliness in your life; Chronic illness with your health; Heart-breaking divorce in your marriage; Difficult disabilities; Deep depression; Sudden loss
All burdens; So heavy at times they *have* to be shared; They have to

- And God has given us a family, a body, to do so; *More* than one person; Can I get somebody else to take the other end? (Another helper)
Some burdens are so big, they require a community; A church
To pick up the slack, shoulder the weight, or share the pain
- The key, is being near enough to do it; You can’t help if you’re not close; If you’re always sitting in the back row of life
If you’re always on the periphery; If you’re not connected
Rarely will we ease the burden of those we can’t see, can’t hear, can’t hug, or don’t know
You have to be near; You have to be involved
- On the other hand, you won’t *get* help, you won’t *ask* for it, if you’re not *known*
Which you’re not, if you just come and go each weekend
If this is the only part of our church that you’re a part of, you’re in trouble; Not b/c we don’t *want* to bear your burdens, but b/c we don’t *know* about them; Or know *you*
In order to bear one another’s burdens, we *have* to be near each other, and we have to be *known* (weights down)

When someone’s burdened, help them; And not just b/c they *need* it, but b/c . . .

• **It’s the way of Christ**

It’s what he *wants* us to do

Bear one another’s burdens [it says], *and so fulfill the law of Christ.* (2)

Referring to everything he conveyed with his teaching and example; The things he taught and the things he did
Including his mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves, and his example of bearing *our* burden on the cross
It’s the way of *Christ* when someone’s burdened, and should be ours as well

Which means . . .

• **None of us are exempt**

None of us are exempt from bearing one another’s burdens; It’s not only the implication of Christ’s teaching and Christ’s example, but the gist of v3
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.
If anyone thinks he’s *above* helping others with their burdens, if anyone thinks he’s too *good* to help – think again

That’s the idea here; B/c it was actually considered *demeaning* in the Roman culture of Paul’s day, to help somebody less fortunate than you
In their mind, it reflected poorly on the *helper*; So they kept their distance; Literally
The very thing that’s happening in *our* culture; B/c people don’t want to be inconvenienced; Or sidetracked from their goals; Or entangled in a mess

And Paul’s like – if that’s you, if you’re too good to help, if you’re above getting involved with someone’s burden, you’re only fooling yourself
[3] *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*
Don’t go there; When someone’s burdened, help them; B/c nobody’s exempt

And then last, the last “what to do when,” is . . .

3. When you need help . . . (v4-5)

When *you’re* the one in need; V4-5 – *Bear one another’s burdens . . . [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.*

Implying, that *previous* to self-testing, help was given and the credit was shared
That’s the context – when *we’re* the ones needing help

And Paul gives us 3 *more* admonitions for such a time; The first, is to . . .

• **Assess yourself**

Examine yourself; Measure yourself; Or as Paul says it – *let each one test his own work*
It’s a word originally used for testing gold in a fire, to determine its purity; To see how it measures up against a known standard
So God is telling us to assess and measure our lives, against the standard of his Word, his way; Especially when we need help

IOW introspection should always be our first step, when we find ourselves in need
Whether it’s financial need, spiritual need, emotional need, or physical need
Looking inward before we look outward, is a must
Otherwise, we’ll get help for the problem, but never address the cause

When you need help, take *stock* of your life, and examine the way you do things
And make sure your way is *God’s* way; And if it’s not, make some adjustments
Otherwise you’ll find yourself right back where you started

2nd . . .

- **Strive for independence**

When you need help, strive for independence

Now, that's not to say we shouldn't *receive* help when we need it; We should

To do otherwise is prideful often times, and deprives others of the *blessing* in helping

Nor is there anything wrong with occasional *dependence*

But don't be content to leave it that way; Strive for *in*-dependence; That's the implication of v4

Let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.

It's not so much a *call* to boast; Or a call to *brag* about your independence; That would violate other more *clear* Scriptures

Like Gal 6:14 where Paul says – *Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*

So it's not a call to boast, but a call to independence; Indicating that *in*-dependence is better than *de*-pendence

B/c the reason to boast, the reason to feel good, is no longer shared

That's the point – strive for *in*-dependence b/c that's better

Not rugged individualism; Don't strive for that; Where you *disconnect* from others

But humble self-sufficiency where you can *help* others, instead of *being* helped

That's the goal; Receive help when you need it, which we all do at times, but strive for independence so you can offer it as well

- *For each* [Paul says in v5] *will have to bear his own load*. That's the last part of this
- The reason we need to strive for independence when we need help, is to ensure that we do our *part*; That we do what we can
- That we accomplish what God has in mind for *us*

When you need help . . .

- **Do your part**

Fulfill *your* responsibility; Carry your *own* load; That's the idea; Share the burden, but carry the load; B/c while a burden is something so big and heavy . . .

It *can't* be carried by one person, a *load* is something that can; Something like a backpack as Paul uses it here; Something intended to be shouldered *alone*

Implying that God gives us certain responsibilities, to be carried alone

Not *apart* from other people, but in the *midst* of them

Like a bunch of students carrying their backpacks across campus

They're carrying their own load, in the midst of community; In the midst of mutual encouragement, and sharpening, and assessment; All while striving for independence

- And the same should be true of us, in the school of life
- God has given us certain responsibilities, certain *backpacks*, to be carried alone
- Like fatherhood, motherhood, leadership, servanthood
- Disease, sickness, disability; Discouragement, disappointment, demands
- Backpacks *uniquely* fitted, for each and every one of us

- I remember going into an REI store with a friend a few years ago, to get his backpack formed to his body; I was like, "What? That's a thing?"

And sure enough, they took him in a back room, and through a process of heat and bending, they conformed the supports of the backpack to *his* back

Why? So he could carry the load longer and better

Which is exactly what God does with the loads he ordains for us

We've been form-fitted, uniquely prepared, and specially designed to do our part

B/c God never leads, or loads, where he doesn't provide (**Summary**)

Share the burden and carry the load

- 3 issues, and 3 solutions; What to do when in the life of our body
- May we live accordingly
