

The Liberty Of Love

Galatians 6:1-10

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load. ⁶ Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

The story has often been told about the message the founder of the Salvation Army sent to their international convention. General William Booth was unable to attend personally because of ill health, so he cabled the delegates a message containing one word: "OTHERS!"

"One another" is one of the key phrases in the Christian's vocabulary. "Love one another" is found at least a dozen times in the New Testament, along with "pray one for another" (James 5:16), "edify one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11), "prefer one another" (Romans 12:10), "use hospitality one to another" (1 Peter 4:9), and many other like admonitions.

In this passage of scripture, Paul adds another phrase in the Christian's vocabulary. He says this in verse 2, "Bear ye one another's burdens." The Spirited Christian thinks of others and how he can minister to them. In this section, Paul describes two important ministries that we ought to share with one another.

First of all, he talks about sharing burdens. Look at verses 15, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load."

The legalist is not interested in bearing burdens. Instead, according to Acts 15:10, he adds to the burdens of others. This was one of the sins of the Pharisees in Jesus' day, as seen in Matthew 23:4, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." The Legalist is always harder on other people than he is on himself, but the Spiritled Christian demands more of himself than he does of that that he might be able to help others.

Paul presents a hypothetical case of a believer who is suddenly tripped up and falls into sin. The word "overtaken" carries the idea of being *surprised*, or *caught in a trap*, so it is not a case of *deliberate disobedience*. Why does Paul use this illustration? **Because nothing reveals the wickedness of legalism better than the way the legalists treat those who have sinned.** Call to mind the Pharisees who dragged a woman taken in adultery before Jesus in John 8. Or that Jewish mob that almost killed Paul because they thought he had defiled the temple by bringing in Gentiles (Acts 21:27 ff). **In fact, legalist does not need facts and proof; they need only suspicions and rumors.** Their selfrighteous imaginations will do the rest. Paul is really contrasting the way the legalist would deal with the fallen brother, and the way the spiritual man would deal with him.

First of all, Paul sees a contrast in aim. The *spiritual man* would seek to restore the brother out of a heart of love, while the *legalist* would exploit the brother. The word "restore" means "to mend, as a net, or to restore a broken bone." **If you have ever had a broken bone, painful it is to have it set.** The sinning believer is like a broken bone in the Body, and he needs to be "restored."

The believer who is led by the Spirit and living in the liberty of grace will seek to help the fallen brother, for “the fruit of the Spirit is love” (Galatians 5:22). And in verse 13 he says, "By love serve, one another." When Jesus sought to be a physician to the sinful, Mark 2:13-17 tells us He was severely criticized by the Pharisees, and so the spiritual believer today will be severely criticized by the legalists. The Spirit-filled man will accept people like they are, with a desire to help them be restored.

Instead of trying to restore the fallen brother, the legalist will condemn him and then use the brother to make himself look good. This is what the Pharisee did in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14). We are reminded in 1 Peter 4:8 that "(Love) shall cover the multitude of sins."

The legalist rejoices when a brother falls, and often gives the matter wide publicity, because then he can boast about his own goodness and how much better his group is than the group to which the fallen brother belongs. This is why Paul admonishes us in Galatians 5:26, "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." The word "provoke" means "to challenge to a contest, to compete with." The believer who walks in the Spirit is *not* competing with other Christians or challenging them to become "as good, or as spiritual, as he is." **However, the legalist lives by competition and comparison, and tries to make himself look good by making the other fellow look bad!** In other words, he compares his success with another's failure.

Secondly Paul sees a contrast in attitude. The Spirit-led believer approaches the matter in a spirit *meekness* and *love*, while the legalist has an attitude of *pride* and *condemnation*. The legalist does not need to "consider himself" because he pretends he could never commit such a sin. **But the believer living by grace realizes that no man is immune from falling.** In fact, Corinthians 10:12 tells us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The Spiritled believer has an attitude of humility because he realizes his own weakness.

Our attitude toward Christ will determine our attitude towards a fallen brother. In fact, John 13:34 and 15:12 tells us, “The law of Christ” is “love one another.” Paul has already discussed the "law of love" in Galatians 5:13-15, and now he is applying it.

We are not only to share one another's burdens; we are to share one another's blessings. He says this in verses 6-10, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Just as "one another" is a key phrase in the Christian vocabulary, so is the word "fellowship," which is translated "communicate" or "share with" in verse 6.

From the very beginning of the church, "sharing" was one of the marks of Christian experience (Acts 2:41-47). That Greek word has now worked its way into our English vocabulary, and we see the word "**koinonia**" here and there in religious publications. It simply means, "to have in common," and refers to our common fellowship in Christ (Galatians 2:9), our common faith (Jude 3), and even our sharing in the suffering of Christ (Philippians 3:10). **But often in the New Testament, "koinonia" refers to the sharing of material blessings with one another (Acts 2:42, 2 Corinthians 8:4).** It is this that Paul has in mind in these verses.

Notice that Paul begins with a precept urging us to share with one another. The teacher of the Word shares *spiritual* treasures, and those who are taught ought to share *material* treasures. We must remember that what we do with *material* things is an evidence of how we value *spiritual things*, as seen in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Because the Apostle Paul did not want money to become a stumbling block to the unsaved, therefore, he tells us in 1

Corinthians 9 that he earned his own living. But he repeatedly taught that the spiritual leader in the church was to be supported by the gifts of the people. Jesus said in Luke 10:7 that "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

But we must also realize the spiritual principle that lies behind this precept. God does not command believers to give simply that pastors might have their needs met, but tells us in Galatians 6:7-8 that the givers might get a greater blessing. The basic principle of "sowing and reaping" is found throughout the entire Bible. God has ordained that we reap what we sow. Were it not for this law, he whole principle of "cause and effect" would fail. The farmer who sows wheat can expect to reap more wheat. If it were otherwise, there would be chaos in our world.

But God has also told us to be careful where we sow, and it is this principle that Paul deals with here. He looks on our material possessions as "seed," and he sees two possible kinds of soil: the *flesh* and the *spirit*. We can use our material goods promote the *flesh*, or to promote the things of the *Spirit*. But once we have finished sowing, we cannot change the harvest!

Not only will we reap what we have sown, we shall reap in proportion as we have sown, as seen in 2 Corinthians 9:6, "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." The believer who walks in the Spirit and sows in the Spirit is going to reap a spiritual harvest. If his sowing has been generous, the harvest will bountiful! That is a promise in the Word of God!

Having given us the precept and the principle, Paul now gives us a promise. Look at verse 9, "In due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Have you ever thought about the cause of spiritual fainting? The answer is given for us in Isaiah 40:31, "...they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." The words "wait on the Lord" indicate trusting, the idea is

that of faith! We become "worn out" when we spend out time worrying instead of waiting!

But the promise Paul gives us will help to keep us going: "In due season we shall reap." The seed planted does not bear fruit immediately. There are seasons to the *soul* just as there are seasons to *nature*, and we must give the seed time to take root and bear fruit. But we must also remember that the Lord of the harvest is in charge, not the laborers.

The Christian in the household of faith is a receiver that he might become a transmitter. 1 Thessalonians 3:12 tells us that as we abound in love for one another, we overflow in love for all men. Child of God, it is unbiblical to "pick and choose" whom you will love.