

Galatians 5:26- 6:5

Help, I've Fallen And I Can't Get Up (Without You!)

You'd think that outside of art thieves, a painting in a museum would be pretty safe. Not all are. Rembrandt's famous painting, "The Night Watch," hangs in the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam.

In September 1975 a deranged, unemployed teacher attacked the painting with a bread knife which left strips of the canvas on the floor.

Then in 1990, an escaped mental patient sprayed sulphuric acid on it.

Of course, the curators of the Rijks Museum said, "Oh well, enough is enough. Let's chuck the thing out. It's damaged, and besides it's not the only Rembrandt around."

They didn't say that at all. The painting was painstakingly restored. Using the best experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision, they made every effort to restore the treasure.

Today, amazingly, if you view the painting you can't even tell where the restoration work was done.

According to the museum officials the painting can't be valued in monetary terms. It's not even insured because it's value is beyond calculation. They're not making Rembrandts any more. "The Night Watch" is a one-of-a-kind.

Why does the painting have such value? It's unique, it's one-of-a-kind, and because of the artist.

That's exactly what makes human life so valuable. The artist is God Almighty and the product is so unique that no two people have the same exact genetic code.

Why is it that we spare no expense to rescue a damaged painting but we're so quick to toss aside a person who's damaged from sin?

Two weeks ago we talked about the significance of the church. We saw that God

calls the church The Body of Christ. He's the head and those who have trusted Him as Savior are the body.

We're knit together in what's supposed to be a love relationship. In fact the Bible says the marriage union between a husband and wife is patterned after the union of believers with Christ.

But just like a marriage can be disrupted by the sinful behavior of the marriage partners, so can the Body of Christ.

A great study to do sometime is to look up all the "one another" in the New Testament. Time after time we're told that we have a responsibility to each other.

We're told:

Bear with one another
Forgive one another
Confess to one another
Pray for one another
Encourage one another
Love one another
Be kind & tenderhearted to one another
Admonish & reprove one another
Be subject to one another
Assemble with one another

And the list goes on and on.

We don't live to ourselves and our responsibility is not just to our own little immediate world but to fellow members of the body.

Now it's certainly no coincidence that this subject should come up in the book of Galatians we've been studying.

Galatians is a New Testament letter written to help a church get out of the trap of legalism.

The people of Galatia were new Christians who had come out of paganism and

1st century idol worship. They were doing well until they were directed away from the truth by a group we call the Judaizers.

We call them the Judaizers because they taught that the way to God was a combination of faith in Christ and obedience to Jewish laws and ceremonies.

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this letter to show that it's walking in the Spirit that produces spirituality, not merely keeping an external set of rules.

In fact, not even keeping the Mosaic Law that God gave to His people Israel can make a person godly. God's law set down the standards but it doesn't give the power to live up to those standards.

Godliness comes from being Spirit controlled and Spirit motivated. It comes from a yieldedness to the Holy Spirit who lives in every believer.

The Bible says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Christians have been made partakers of the divine nature.

As we put on the new man we're able to live holy lives by God's grace.

If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to have control, the only other alternative is to walk in the flesh and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Paul's plea to the Galatian Christians was "See yourself as you really are." See yourselves as sinners who deserve hell and thank God that He's saved you and given you a new life."

"Thank God that you stand before Him justified by grace through faith and that not of yourselves it's the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast."

To see ourselves as objects of God's grace keeps us humble.

If we see ourselves as people who have earned God's forgiveness through our actions we end up being the opposite of humble. What happens is we quickly develop a wrong attitude towards those around us.

I. A Wrong View Of Self Leads To A Wrong Attitude Toward Others

Turn to Gal 5 pg 1037 Read vs 26

If my Christianity is based on what I do for Christ instead of what He's done for me I'm bound to become conceited. Especially if I think I'm doing a good a good job.

If you doubt that, just look at the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the most respected religious leaders in Judaism in Jesus' day.

They got their start about 100 years or so before Christ and developed as a group that was determined to fight the corrupting influence of pagan Gentile society.

First Alexander the Great had spread Greek culture throughout Palestine in his Hellenization scheme. Then Jewish nation suffered under occupation of Rome. Jews were adopting more and more of the pagan culture around them so the Pharisees fought back.

Understand these were holy men. They would probably put all of us to shame with their knowledge of the Bible. They were known as men of the Book.

They were committed to the teachings of the Bible but there was a big problem.

They became so caught up with the outward keeping of the laws of God that they became self-centered instead of God-centered.

It's like, "Hey, we don't do this and we don't do that like the rest of these people so we're better than they are."

And in the end, because of their selfish motives, the Pharisees were very adept at missing the heart of God's word.

They ducked the real issues by hiding behind the details.

Turn - Matthew 23:23 - 24 pg 873

That's quite a picture isn't it?

Jesus said, "God commanded a tithe for the Jews, so you'll even tithe the minutest part of your spices while you miss the whole point of the law in the first place. Your omitting justice, mercy and faithfulness!"

Who cares if you keep God's laws if you miss God's heart?

Jesus had to chastise them for externalism, majoring on the minors, selfish recognition, self-righteousness and legalistic oppression.

In Luke 11:52 he said, *"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."*

The Pharisees accused Jesus of hanging out with the low life of the day. The prostitutes, the extortioners and the drunkards. Because of that they associated him with the sin of the people.

What they didn't realize was that their multitude of rules and regulations that they worked so hard to keep actually isolated them from people who needed their help.

Jesus Christ ministered to sinners without participating in their sin. The Pharisees couldn't even see the needs of people because they had already tried and condemned them in their own minds.

They kept all the rules, the rules were the way to God, the sinners broke the rules, therefore there was no hope for them.

The Pharisees said there was no hope for them and the people felt there was no hope for themselves.

I think, in these clashes with the Pharisees the Lord set a pattern that applies to every generation. He showed us that its not only the raw pagan or the arrogant atheist who resists the truth.

It's also the person who becomes so preoccupied with his self-serving religion that without even knowing it, he ends up denying Christ just like the Pharisees did.

Legalism, the teaching that the most important matter is the outward keeping of rules, eventually leads to conceit.

And when we have a wrong opinion of ourselves, that somehow we're superior to others because we've kept the details, all that can come from that is problems. Notice Paul in Galatians 5:26 says "provoking one another" in other words, challenging one another and envying one another.

Letting the Holy Spirit control your life leads to love.

Letting self control your life leads to conflict. If I'm all wrapped up in myself then I'm going to want credit and praise. And I'm going to be willing to do battle to get it. In back of that lies envy.

But that's not at all what the Christian life is supposed to be all about.

In fact, rather than conflict,

II. A God Given View Of Self Leads To Serving Others.

Galatians 6:1 & 2

Now, first off, let me say, in principle what Paul teaches here applies to any kind of burden. We are to bear one another's burdens.

The Bible says we're to weep with those who weep. We're to support and strengthen and minister to brothers and sisters in Christ who are hurting as members of the same body.

If someone is dealing with sickness, death, loss of job, some great trial - we want to be there to do what we can.

But that's not what Galatians 6 is about.

The true test of spirituality is not if we'll help someone whose suffering some calamity. Even a legalist will do that. Even the Pharisees could have compassion on someone who was hurting.

The true test of spirituality is how do we deal with a brother or sister who has fallen in to sin.

If someone is sick or experiencing some tragedy we have a natural tendency toward empathy for that person. We don't always know how to help, but we feel compassion.

But just the opposite is true for the guy in sin. That's when the old Pharisaical attitude that rests in our flesh tends to rear its ugly head.

And we think, "He got just what he deserves." "I could see that one coming for a while now." "What do you expect from a guy like that?" "I told you he was headed for trouble."

And rather than empathy welling up within us, that judgmental, critical spirit develops that somehow sees ourselves as superior.

And yet, when you come down to it, if we see ourselves as God truly sees us there are no superior or inferior Christians.

We are all sinners. We all have the potential for sin. And we are what we are because the grace of God. That's not an excuse for sin, but is an honest realization of our own human weaknesses.

Therefore we need one another. I need you and you need me. To some degree I should be accountable to you and you should be accountable to me.

Our first obligation should be to hold one another up in prayer. We tend to only pray for each other when there's problems. We need to pray for one another before the problems get a chance to take hold.

If you want a great pattern to follow, just read Paul's prayers for the congregations in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. You get a whole list of requests. And if it happens that one of us falls - the others are to do what they can to bring about restoration.

Even if a man is caught up in a trespass he deserves help and encouragement. The English word "trespass" comes from two Latin words meaning "go beyond." Trespass sounds like you're in complete control. You choose to step over the line.

But the Greek word in the original, *paraptoma* means “to fall beside.” It’s more of a passive word. Combine that with the word “overtaken” and you get the idea of an ambush.

Not that we don’t choose to sin, we do. But sin is so deceptive that it actually bushwhacks us. We think we’re in control and sin is deceiving us and capturing us.

When we see someone overtaken our mandate from God is to restore.

The word translates “restore” means to mend or repair something. Its used in Greek for setting a broken bond or repairing a net.

The root of the word is where we get the word “artist.”

What it means is to restore to its former position of soundness. Usefulness. Beauty.

This whole passage isn’t saying, “Let’s just overlook sin and wrong in one another’s lives.” It’s saying, “Let’s restore one another back to that place of living for the Lord.”

Now, that can be a very difficult job. It takes a great deal of love and courage for us to approach an erring brother or sister to try to help them.

They may not want our help. They may tell us to mind our own business. They may entice us to get involved in the same sin. Which is why we are clearly told that only those who are spiritual are to be involved in this process. Only the people who truly have the Holy Spirit running their lives should attempt this restoration.

And even then, along with that spirit of gentleness, that’s so necessary, we have to keep on guard. *“Considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”*

This is hard work. This is bearing one another’s burdens. A legalist doesn’t want to bear anybody else’s burdens. Instead he adds to them.

In Matthew 23 Jesus said the Pharisees *“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."

In Matthew 18 the Lord Jesus gave instructions on dealing with sin in the church. He said, if your brother sins against you, go talk to him privately. Not to put him in his place or to win an argument, but to win your brother.

A legalist, a person who's proud of their own righteousness, has no time for this kind of thing.

When he hears that his brother has sinned, he gets the news out to others.

Why?

Read Verse 3

If you think a lot of yourself, when you're really nothing, then you are not going to grieve over your brother's sin, you are going to gloat.

Anyone who focuses on the idea that he is morally or spiritually superior to others tends to be unwilling to get down in the ditch and do the hard work of burden bearing.

Bearing burdens is tough, sometimes it's frustrating and discouraging. It's so much easier just to gossip about others and their problems than to actually get your hands dirty helping them with their load.

I think we'd be really amazed at just how many spiritual tragedies could have been avoided if Christians would have fulfilled their responsibilities to each other.

So Paul has told us:

- Restore your brother
- Bear one another's burdens
- Don't think yourself to be something when you are nothing.

And now he put out a challenge: let every man examine his own work.

Read Verse 4 - The words translated “examine” is the verb *dokimazo* which means “to approve.” It was used by the Greeks to describe the process of testing precious metals.

The stress of the word isn’t testing to find impurities, but testing to demonstrate purity. It’s a positive word, rather than a negative one.

In this case, Paul is telling us to look for things in our own service for Christ that we can rejoice in.

In other words, don’t rejoice in your brother who fell - rejoice in your work for Christ and have compassion on your fallen brother.

A person who thinks he’s better than others tends to build himself up by looking down on those who have fallen.

That’s the wrong thing to be bragging about. Minister to the fallen brother but at the same time remember your own responsibilities. If you want to rejoice in something, make sure it is your work, done for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and not someone else’s’ misfortunes.

“for” - vs. 5 - read

You can’t transfer your responsibilities to others. The words translated “burden” in verse 2 is *baros*. It means “an excessive burden, an overload.”

In this case it’s the weight - the burden - that comes with sin.

The word translated “load” in verse 5 is different. It’s the word *phortion* and it means a normal load. It was even used to describe a man’s backpack.

So we are to bear those burdens which are too heavy for a fallen Christian to bear alone. But there’s one burden which we can’t share; and that’s our responsibility to God on the day of judgment.

II Corinthians 5:9,10 *“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”*

We're all going to have the building material of our life evaluated by God. If we've lived our lives in service to Christ trusting the Holy Spirit for power we'll receive a reward. But if our lives are lived for self we'll have no reward.

Eternal life can never be earned. That comes thru faith in the finished work of Christ. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

But when it comes to living for Christ in this life we all have a load to bear. It's to serve and honor God. The yoke is easy and the burden is light. But it's our responsibility.

Well this is a very simple, but a very profound passage isn't it? Simple to talk about, but pretty difficult to carry out.

It takes commitment. It takes perseverance. It takes knowledge. And most of all, it takes a gentleness that only the Holy Spirit can produce in our lives.

But in the end it's this kind of concern for one another that's going to demonstrate to the world what biblical Christianity is all about.

Chuck Swindoll, dealing with this whole matter of encouraging Christians in the ministry of restoration writes:

"Do you know another Christian caught in the jaws of sin? Don't run from the scene our stand on the sidelines feeling smug. Realize that one day you may be in the same situation - bleeding from a temptation that got the better of you.

First examine yourself to see if you are a qualified physician. Does your bedside manner exhibit love, joy, peace, patience and kindness?

You may not have these traits in abundance, but they should be present. Are they? If so go to that person's aid and using the instruments of gentleness and humility, treat the injury and nurse your patient back to health."

"But, if your self examination shows that you are not qualified to administer aid, tactfully seek out someone who is. In this way you can still play a significant role in healing the wounded."

We don't throw out a damaged masterpiece. Even if the damage is extensive.

We painstakingly restore working with the utmost care and precision making every effort to restore the treasure.