

You Who Are Spiritual

June 12, 2011

Text: Galatians 6:1-5

Calvin Coolidge was the 30th President of the U.S. (1923-29).

Early in his presidency, he awoke one morning in his hotel room to find a thief going through the pockets of his clothing.

He engaged the man in conversation and discovered he was a college student who had no money to pay his hotel bill, or buy a ticket back to campus.

Coolidge loaned him \$32 from his own wallet, and advised him to leave the same way he'd entered, in order to avoid the Secret Service!

The Bible might call that “bearing the burdens of the needy/afflicted,” which is the theme of our Scripture text today.

In last Sunday's text (Gal 5:24-26), Paul exhorted Xns to live true Xn lives, saying=> “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

Boasting is a proud/fleshly deed which stirs up other people’s pride, causing them to challenge the boaster’s right to boast.

That creates an atmosphere of strife and envy, the very opposite of what X wants for His church—the fruit of the Spirit=> love/joy/peace, patience/kindness/goodness, faithfulness/gentleness/self-control.

Fleshly Xns who are proud/boastful selfishly seek to promote themselves;

But Xns who are controlled by the H.S., selflessly seek to promote the wellbeing of the whole church.

In today's text, Paul will go back to that theme of proud boasting, as the opposite of walking by the Spirit.

But instead of using the phrase “walking by the Spirit,” he will address his audience as=> “you who are spiritual.”

The 2 phrases refer to the same Xn virtue.

To walk by the Spirit is to be a “spiritual Xn.”

Truly “spiritual” people walk by the H.S., meaning they are sensitive/obedient to H.S.’s leading.

- * They recognize God’s Word as being the truth (I Cor 14:37).
- * They properly appraise its spiritual value (I Cor 2:14).
- * They are not spiritually insensitive/ignorant (I Cor 3:1).
- * They don’t carry out the deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

In Gal 6:1-5, Paul says “spiritual” Xns edify the church by=>

- * Restoring the fallen
- * Bearing others’ burdens
- * Not boasting about themselves.

*** Spiritual Christians Restore the Fallen**

[Galatians 6:1]=> “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

The need for restoration in this case occurs when a Xn gets “caught in a trespass” [a serious/deliberate sin].

This person has not been habitually involved in such sinful situations before now:

But he is this time, and because he's been caught in the act, there is no doubt about his failure/guilt.

Someone needs to go to this person & restore him to a right relationship w/ God, a/w/a his previous place w/i the fellowship.

"*Restore*" means to return something to its original condition.

Among its other uses, it became a medical term for the resetting of a dislocated bone.

So here we have a true believer who has become spiritually dislocated/injured & needs someone to help bring him back to his former wholeness, which can only happen if he repents of his sin.

X gave us the pattern for restoring a sinning Xn in Mt 18:15-17.

- 1) He said it needs to begin with another believer talking to the sinning Xn in private, about his sin.

The restorer is to point out the inconsistency between his behavior & the biblical standards in such situations.

Quoting X, the purpose for such a meeting would be for the restorer "*to win your brother.*"

- 2) If the person doesn't repent, he is then to be confronted by 3 or 4 fellow Xns, approaching him together.
- 3) If he still doesn't repent of his sin, the elders are to announce the situation to the whole church, asking everyone to go to him, admonishing him to repent.
- 4) If he still doesn't repent after that, he is to be officially put out of the church.

The main point Paul is making in our own text pertains to who should restore this sinning brother/sister.

His answer=> "*You who are spiritual.*"

That's the connection between this text and the overall context of Gal 5.

- 1) "*You who are spiritual*" refers to Xns in whose lives the fruit of the Spirit is clearly seen—love/joy/peace/etc (Gal 5:22-23).

- 2) They are Xns in whose lives the deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21) are conspicuously absent.

This is further confirmed in I Cor 3:3, where "*spiritual Xns*" are said to not be fleshly Xns.

- 3) "*Spiritual*" Xns are Xns who, at this particular period of their lives, are regularly "walking by the Spirit"—sensitive to the Spirit's promptings in their hearts.

Why is it so important that those who undertake to restore a sinning Xn, be "*spiritual*"?

Because they are faithfully following the leading of the H.S. and gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, that's clearly being manifested in their lives.

God wants this confrontation to be done as gently/lovingly as possible, to avoid further fleshliness.

Spiritual Xns will seek to protect the one being admonished/restored, from unnecessary embarrassment/humiliation.

They will love him and reassure him of their love (another fruit of H.S.), making it clear that they want to help (not hurt) him.

That they sincerely care for him and are committed to him.

They'll approach him with humility—not w/ arrogance;brashness.

Paul himself didn't spare the Galatians, but his words were always laced w/ gentleness/love.

E.g. in Gal 4:19-20, Paul calls them=> “*My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— / but I could wish to be present with you now & to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*”

Martin Luther wrote this to those who would restore others=>

“Run to him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.”

The best example of a gentle/loving restorer was Jesus Himself.

After Peter had denied (3 times) that he even knew X, our Lord appeared to him on the shore of Lake Galilee to restore him.

After making breakfast for His errant apostle, Jesus asked him the same poignant question, 3 times over=> “*Do you love Me?*”

Peter finally answered=> “*Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.*”
(Jn 21:17).

With that, Peter was restored—lovingly/gently/mercifully.

By contrast, someone who is walking in the flesh might be prone to use this confrontation as an opportunity for displaying his own self-righteousness, or an air of spiritual superiority. Talking to someone else about his/her sinfulness puts the confronter in a

powerful/advantageous position, that can make him feel heady/cocky, if he’s walking in the flesh.

He might eagerly seek the gratification of making this sinner grovel, of rubbing his nose in his sin, or of bullying a confession out of him.

That’s guaranteed to make the whole situation worse.

In case anyone is saying to himself at this point,

“Thank goodness restoration is the job of the spiritual; that leaves me out,” please understand this=>

Every Xn bears some responsibility for the spiritual welfare of everyone else in the church, and for the purity of the church as a whole.

Our answer to Cane’s question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” must be “Yes! And not only are we keepers of our brothers, we’re keepers of the church.”

That’s why we see so many “one-another’s” in the NT.

This means every Xn should become a “spiritual Xn,” so that he’s qualified to restore his brothers/sisters in X.

The fruit of the H.S. needs to be manifest in each of our lives, so we can help restore fellow Xns as gently/lovingly as possible.

None of us has a right to say, “It’s none of my business, & as far as I’m concerned, the less about it said the better. So I’ll ignore my brother’s sin.”

X wants us all to be spiritual enough to confront sin in the same gracious attitude with which He would do it Himself.

Humility is the key to proper restoration of sinning Xns.

So Paul adds=> “... each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

In Mt 6:14, Jesus said that He will judge us by the same standard we use in judging others.

So we dare not view ourselves as spiritual giants looking disdainfully down on a vile wretch, who has become caught in a sin.

Our “spirituality” lasts only as long as we are following the Spirit’s leading & humbly manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

If pride takes over, we are disqualified to restore anyone.

In fact, we're now the one needing restoration.

To drive this point home, Paul switches from plural pronouns/verbs to singular forms, as he says=> "*looking to yourself.*"

He means, Check your own heart to make sure your motive in confronting others isn't pride.

Don't do it harshly/self-righteously, because you may be the sinning Xn who needs to be confronted next time.

In 1 Cor 10:12, Paul writes=> "*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*"

If we stand, it's only by God's grace/strength.

Gentleness is born of the humble recognition of our own weakness/vulnerability to sin/temptation.

So, Xns who are spiritual, Xns who walk by the Spirit, are humbly/lovingly gentle.

*** Spiritual Christians Bear Others' Burdens**

[**Galatians 6:2**]=> "*Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*"

Spiritual Xns, who are walking in the Spirit, bear the burdens of other Xns.

That's because the Spirit within them is a Burden-bearer.

Rom 8:26=> "*The Spirit also helps our weakness [helps us bear it]; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*"

Being a Burden-bearer Himself, the Spirit is always prompting Xns to bear one another's burdens as well.

They do so, as they sense/respond-to the H.S.'s promptings.

Burden-bearing is a great ministry which every Xn (especially those who are walking in the Spirit) can/should be involved in.

Psa 55:22=> "*Cast your burden upon the LORD, & He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.*"

Every Xn has burdens which he needs the Lord to bear, & that enables him to help bear the burdens of other Xns.

In 2 Cor 1:4, Paul teaches us that God=> "*comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*"

In verse 1 of our text, we saw a fallen Xn who was carrying a heavy burden of guilt/sin, having been caught in a trespass.

By seeking to restore/win him back to the joy/peace of an obedient life, a fellow Xn helps bear his burden.

If/When he repents of his sin, having been awakened to the tragedy of his backslidden condition, he will be an unhappy Xn.

He may need the assurance of a burden-bearer that X really can/does forgive renegades/defectors like him—and like Peter.

He may feel ashamed to come back to church, but spiritual Xns can gather around him and help bear that burden, by welcoming him with joy, just as the angels welcome redeemed sinners into heaven.

He may fear the face of a certain Xn, because of something he said/did to him, but a burden-bearer can help ease that tension, and reset this broken bone, by interceding/pleading his case for him, as a mediator.

The Good Shepherd went in search of his lost sheep, & brought it back on his shoulders, too weak to walk.

Spiritual Xns do essentially the same, for those who wander away.

A burden bearer may even help bear an unsaved person's burden.

A troubled soul who has begun to seek the Lord under the Spirit's conviction of sin, may well feel profound sorrow for his sin.

A spiritual Xn should come alongside him/her and say=> "My friend, I feel as burdened for you as if it were my own soul that is suffering under the weight of your sin."

If you're that burden-bearer, ask the Lord, when you go home to feel the grief of his lostness so keenly, that it keeps you awake at night, crying out to God in prayer for his soul.

It will do your own soul good.

Jesus spent whole nights praying for his disciples.

The H.S. uses people like that to love the unsaved so fervently, that they travail in spiritual birth for them, just as Paul travailed on behalf of the Galatians, "until Christ was formed in them."

One great secret of truly effective evangelism is that those who walk in the Spirit lead others to X, w/ their love.

Other burden-bearing roles may involve=>

1) Bearing with the shortcomings of other Xns.

If a believer is short-tempered/bitter, bear with him, giving the H.S. time to change his disposition/temperament.

We may exhort him from Scripture to deal with his attitude, but we'll need patience until the H.S. matures/sanctifies him.

2) Helping to bear the burden of sorrow, of Xns suffering hardship.

Those with tender hearts or a naturally joyous spirit can become a soothing balm that salves their troubled hearts and lifts them up.

Their strength of faith provides a strong spiritual shoulder to lean on.

3) Believers who are suffering spiritual burdens, or struggling w/ particular temptations need encouragement to trust/obey X.

4) Believers who are struggling with poverty may need a Barnabas to come along and help them financially (either with money, advice, or both).

5) Those who struggle with other practical/physical needs can be relieved by spiritual believers having the time/skills/strength to help.

In any/all of these ways, we can fulfill the law of X—His command to love others as we love ourselves.

I know personally that there are a number of people in this congregation who have born other people's burdens in these ways.

Love puts practical legs to obeying that command when we see a brother/sister struggling and almost overwhelmed under the oppressive pressures of life, and come alongside him/her to help bear the load.

Those who are walking in the flesh are likely to consider their time/energy/money too precious to waste on others.

[**Galatians 6:3]**=> "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

The person without love is the one who's really "nothing."

I Cor 13:2=> “*If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith [i.e., if I think I’m really something], so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*”

If we refuse to help bear other believers’ burdens, it’s because we don’t love them.

That fruit of the Spirit is not being manifested in our lives.

The one we love in such a case is ourself, and we have come to the conclusion we’re above helping others.

I.e., our conduct towards others is a direct reflection of how we view ourselves.

If we think we’re really something, we will always find some excuse for not bearing other people’s burdens.

We will prove that, spiritually, we are a nothing—0.

“*Deceives himself*” brings out the idea of a subjective fantasy.

So the self-absorbed Xn who is walking in the flesh has persuaded himself he’s all important, but he’s really a nothing.

Actually, he is the object of God’s loathing, because Prov 6:16 says=> “*There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: / [#1]=> Haughty eyes* (the guy who thinks he’s really something)” (Prov 6:16-17).

Folks like that despise those who have heavy burdens to bear.

They think to themselves, “So-and-so is always depressed/sad, & I hate being around him. He just drags me down with him.”

Those are the words of a career non-burden-bearer.

He views himself as the center of all creation, and goes through life thinking, “It’s every man for himself.”

He gets as much as he can, & then keeps as much as he can, believing that Jesus’ words “*It is more blessed to give than receive*” are a mere philosophical fantasy.

When it comes to salvation, the only soul he’s really interested in saving is his own.

God says through Paul, “*Bear one another’s burdens.*”

So either he is a very disobedient Xn, or he’s a non-Xn.

I Jn 4:8=> “*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*”

X commanded us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Paul got even more specific in Phil 2:3-4=> “*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; / do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*”

Friends, many Xns need to be schooled in burden-bearing.

God often teaches us how to comfort others by putting us in difficult situations where He can comfort us.

So maybe we should pray for more of those kinds of situations.

Maybe they would teach us what it means to carry His lambs in our bosom, with tender/affectionate care for them, as He cares for us.

Review—Spiritual Xns restore the fallen, & bear others’ burdens.

* **Spiritual Christians Don’t Boast** (which brings us back to where we began this morning, & where we left off last time).

[Galatians 6:4]=> “*But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.*”

Instead of comparing ourselves with others, and looking down on others as less important than we are, we should compare ourselves with God's Law, & with X's life.

If we can still boast after that, it will be on the basis of what God has accomplished in our own hearts—not on the basis of what we have accomplished, or a comparison between ourselves/others.

Paul pointed out the folly of such self-deluded thinking in 2 Cor 10:12=> “*We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.*”

What makes us humble/gentle is the keen awareness of how heavy the burden was that X bore for us on Calvary.

If we are to do any boasting, let it be in that alone.

Paul understood this, so he wrote in Gal 6:14=> “*May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”

When Paul says, “*Let each one examine his own work,*” the word “*work*” is the same word used for “*deeds*” in Gal 5:19=> “*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality.*”

So what Paul is saying here is this=> Before you start boasting that you're such a spiritual person, examine your deeds, & the fleshliness behind those deeds will be painfully evident to you.

That fleshliness was the cause of your boasting in the first place.

Now Paul adds, in essence=> Before you start boasting, remember that X will someday judge you w/ perfect accuracy, & there won't be any room for boasting then at all.

[Gal 6:5]=> “*For each one shall bear his own load.*”

There is one load we cannot bear for anyone else, & no one else can bear it for us=> the account we must give to X of how we have lived our lives.

Paul writes (Rom 14:12)=> “*Each one of us shall give account of himself to God.*”

No one will be boasting then, as he stands before his Savior.

As we examine our own deeds/works now, to determine just how spiritual we are, we should do so in light of the fact that X is going to judge us w/ perfect accuracy. And it's His evaluation that will count for all eternity.

Again using the same word for “*deeds*”/“*works*”, Paul writes in I Cor 3:13=> “*Each man's work will become evident;*”

Gal 5:19 says our deeds of the flesh are evident now, but at the Judgment Seat, everything about all our works will be evident, as never before=> “*...for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.*”

Every man/woman's faith must be his/her own.

You will not go to heaven because your family was Xn, or because you had a dear/devout grandmother who prayed.

Unless X has done a personal work of grace in your own heart, your religion will do you no good at all, before God.

Each of us must come to Jesus carrying his own sin on his own back, and by an act of his own faith, find relief from that terrible burden, in the saving blood of X.

“Load” (Gal 6:5) refers to an inescapable responsibility everyone must bear—like a soldier carrying his own backpack.

It’s his responsibility, & it can’t be shifted to anyone else.

No one else will be able to account to X on our behalf.

There is a point in bearing the burden of others beyond which you/I cannot go, because each man/woman must stand before X’s Judgment Seat alone.

If we have prayed for them, given them the truth from Scripture, and pled with them in heartfelt sincerity/sympathy, but they have resolutely continued in their sin, we can’t carry their load any further.

We may have been so diligent as burden-bearers that we’ve come feel our loved-one’s sin/shame, as if it had become our own.

But we must now come to grips with the fact that, it’s now our own, and sad as it is, there is nothing more we can do, but love.

At that point we must turn them over to the Lord, seeking His grace/comfort in dealing with that burden which we can no longer help them carry.

Because He is the God of all comfort, we trust that He will give us the grace/peace we need, to bear this burden too.

“You Who Are Spiritual”

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Text: Galatians 6:1-5

1. In last Sunday’s text Paul exhorted Christians to live true Christian lives saying, “*Let us not become [20 boastful].*”

Gal 5:24-26

2. In today’s text Paul will go back to that theme of proud boasting as the opposite of [16 walking] by the Spirit.

I Cor 14:37; 2:14; 3:1; Gal 5:16

In Gal 6:1-5 Paul says “spiritual” Christians edify the church...

*** Spiritual Christians Restore the Fallen**

[Galatians 6:1]

3. “*Restore*” means to return something to its [18 original] condition.

Mt 18:15-17

4. “*You who are spiritual*” refers to Christians in whose lives the [12 fruit] of the Spirit is clearly seen.

Gal 5:19-21; I Cor 3:3; 4:19-20; Jn 21:17

5. By contrast, someone who is walking in the flesh might use this confrontation as an opportunity for displaying [10 self]-righteousness.

6. Humility is the key to proper [24 restoration] of sinning Christians.

I Cor 10:12

* **Spiritual Christians Bear Others' Burdens**

[Galatians 6:2]

Rom 8:26

7. Being a burden-Bearer Himself, the Spirit is always prompting Christians to bear one [20 another's] burdens.

Psa 55:22; II Cor 1:4

8. A burden bearer may help bear an [16 unsaved] person's burden.

9. Believers who are suffering spiritual burdens or struggling with particular temptations need encouragement to [12 trust] and obey Christ.

[Galatians 6:3]

I Cor 13:2

10. If we refuse to help bear other believers' burdens, it's because we don't love them; the one we love in such a case is [20 ourself].

Prov 6:16-17; Phil 2:3-4

* **Spiritual Christians Don't Boast**

[Galatians 6:4]

11. Instead of comparing ourselves with others and looking down on them as less important than we are, we should compare ourselves with God's Law and with [18 Christ's] life.

II Cor 10:12; Gal 6:14; 5:19

[Galatians 6:5]

12. There is one load we cannot bear for anyone else, and no one else can bear it for us: the [16 account] we must give to Christ.

Rom 4:12; I Cor 3:13

13. There is a point in bearing the burden of others beyond which you and I [14 cannot] go.

14. At that point we must turn them over to the Lord, seeking His grace and comfort in dealing with that burden which we can [6 no] longer help them carry.