

Galatians 6:1-2

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Mature, spiritual believers should lead sinful believers away from sin in a gentle manner. Everyone should stay away from temptation. Jesus wants us to take care of one another.

Paul has thoroughly shown the Galatians how competing Jewish “authorities” were leading them into foolishness and sin. The competing Jewish “authorities” promoted following the law as the way to have right standing before God. In this letter, Paul has shown the Galatians how seeking to be justified in God’s sight by following the law makes Jesus’s death pointless. The real result of law-following is that the law produces disobedience in humans, because we can’t obey it.

Instead, believers can be confident in their faith in Christ, which has already justified them before God. Because we are justified in God’s sight, we can live in the freedom of following the Holy Spirit inside of us. We are free from rules and laws to make us justified in God’s sight. It is true that we still have our old sin nature. And yet, as believers, we have the amazing power of the Holy Spirit to overcome this sinful nature.

Because of this power, believers are able to live by faith every day. It’s not through religious rituals, strict rules, or anything we do by our own human effort that gives us this ability. The Holy Spirit gives us this power. God considers us righteous because of our faith in Jesus. There is no need to seek what we already have. We are already justified in God’s sight because of Jesus. Now we are enabled to mature in our relationship with Him by living by the Spirit.

But life is a team sport. While we don’t want to impose rules on one another, we do want to encourage one another to mature, to set aside the flesh and all its toxic outcomes. We want to encourage one another to walk in the Spirit. Why? Because the flesh brings about destruction. Destruction of self, relationships and others. Love is a fruit of the Spirit, as we learned in the previous chapter. Love is seeking the best for others. Walking in the flesh and in sin is the worst for others.

Now, going forward, Paul explains to the Galatian believers how to have a healthy church body. Sin will always be a struggle for us in this life, as the flesh wars against the Spirit. If and when members of the church sin, or are *caught in any trespass*, the believers who are *spiritual* should *restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness*. The New Testament writers constantly use family words when explaining church life and relationships. Here Paul calls the Galatians his *Brethren*, his family. That is because all believers in Jesus are in God’s family. This is something God grants unconditionally to those who believe.

If someone in the family is sinning, they are hurting themselves and everyone else. Mature believers who walk with the Spirit should be the ones to help the sinner see their way back to living rightly. Where Paul writes *you who are spiritual*, the “you” is plural. Rarely does the person caught in a trespass respond to one individual. Ideally, several mature believers should go to him. This should be done with a spirit of gentleness, rather than in a harsh or condemning

way. God is the judge, not us. For the Galatians, it was not the Jewish “authorities.” And for us, it is not any human authorities either. God is the Judge of All. Our correction should not look like condemning others, because Jesus has taken our condemnation. Our correction should be about seeking the best interest of sinning believers. A *spirit of gentleness* includes having understanding. When we believe the truth about what Paul tells us about the flesh that still resides in each believer (Galatians 5, Romans 6-7), we recognize that the flesh has nothing good dwelling in it, but it is at war with the Spirit. We recognize the flesh is our dominant first-actor (Romans 7:18, Galatians 5:17). There is, therefore, no place for arrogance. We all struggle with our flesh/sin nature.

Any sin should be confessed and repented of, but with the goal of restoring the believer, not to shame or harass them. Paul continues explaining how to walk in the Spirit, how a body of believers should behave. The Galatians should be *looking to* themselves as individuals, so that they *too will not be tempted*. Each believer still has the flesh. Not only should believers lead sinful brothers back to faithful living, but we should be careful to avoid temptation while doing so. There isn’t anything we can correct in others that our flesh is not fully capable of doing ourselves.

In the prior chapter, Paul gave a list of actions that were clearly works of our sin nature (Galatians 5:19-21). By that list, the Galatian believers know how to examine themselves and others. But examination should begin with ourselves.

Paul instructs the Galatians to *Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ*. The entire letter to the Galatians has firmly opposed living under the Old Testament law as a way to seek to be justified. Following the law is bondage and actually leads to more sin. Seeking to be justified by following rules is self-reliance, rather than Spirit-reliance. And as we learned in the last chapter, that means walking in the flesh.

When we see the fruits of the flesh in others, or other problems, our job is not to condemn, but to help bear burdens. The Jewish religious laws, as practiced by the competing Jewish “authorities,” was about excluding, condemning, and controlling. Perhaps with some ironic humor, Paul explains that the *law of Christ* is to take care of each other. Whatever temptations or hardships any believer is going through, the body of believers should lift that person up. Part of taking care of one another is to realize we all have the same Lord that placed us into His family. We all have the same Spirit. And the Spirit is warring with the flesh in each one of us. And in each one of us, nothing good dwells in our flesh. That ought to lead to some genuine understanding.

The *law of Christ* is the law we should follow, though we follow it by faith. What bearing *one another’s burdens* looks like in one situation might be completely different in another. There isn’t a list to follow. We know what to do by following the Spirit as He leads us into truth. The *law of Christ* focuses on seeking the best for others.

The *law of Christ* is the message of love that Jesus preached. This leads to living harmoniously with one another. It’s taken from Christ’s famous summary of the law and the prophets: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39b). Paul also reminded his readers of this principle in

Galatians 5:14. Living by the Spirit, living our faith in Jesus every day, looks like loving the other believers around us as much as we love ourselves.

Biblical Text

¹ Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.