

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT UNDER LIBERTY PART I
Galatians 6:1-5
October 10, 2012

Now we come to the last chapter of Galatians in which Paul gives a brief sketch of certain conduct that is expected under the law of liberty. We are not under the Mosaic Law, but we are under liberty. We are not required to continue in all the rites and rituals of Judaism, but we are required to follow all the dictates of Christ.

Obviously, liberty is not a license to sin.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

Galatians 5:13

Example: If a parent removes a child's curfew, the parent doesn't intend that the child should stay out all night. The parent is giving the child the opportunity to make good decisions.

Likewise, liberty is not an excuse for licentiousness. Anyone who would suggest such a thing has no clue what liberty is and probably doesn't have liberty at all. Remember liberty is being set free from the law by the blood of Christ. Liberty is for the redeemed, not the condemned.

But it is equally obvious that liberty carries with it certain responsibilities. In fact the Scriptures speak of the law of liberty.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

James 2:12

Because God has set you free, because He has saved you by grace, because he has loved you first, there is a great deal that you owe Him in return. You have been purchased with a great price and you are now indebted to Him.

Furthermore, He has given you the Holy Spirit of God to lead you and empower you for service. He has not left you helpless, but he has given you help. And He has given you effective help. He is not just a source of help that you may or may not access. He is God in you. He is God that works in you. And He produces fruit in you. He produces love, joy and peace and all the other Christian qualities that the flesh could never produce. And anyone who has the Spirit is in that sense a “spiritual” man. Anyone who does not have the Spirit is obviously not a “spiritual” man.

Duties of the Spiritual Man

Now chapter six gives us certain duties of the spiritual man. And we begin with,

I. The Duty to Restore the Sinning Brother. (v.1)

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Galatians 6:1

A. The Example of Paul

It is interesting here that Paul addresses the Galatian churches as “brethren.” Though they have angered him, though they have left the truth, though they have sided with the Jewish teachers against Paul, yet Paul in the end is still kind to them and he calls them “brethren.”

Now if Paul had been led by the flesh, you might have expected him to cast them off altogether. You remember that the works of the flesh are hatred and variance (disagreement) and wrath and strife. And if Paul had been a fleshly man he would have continued to harbor ill will toward these Gentiles who had forsaken him in favor of the false teachers.

But Paul was not a man after the flesh. He was a man after the Spirit. And because he was a man after the Spirit, there was love, joy and peace in his heart. And there was gentleness and meekness. And after all the Galatians had done that might have injured him, still Paul calls them brethren.

This should demonstrate to us that one of our primary duties is to be reconciled to our brothers in Christ. We are not always going to agree with one another. Sometimes our Christian family is going to do us wrong. But it should take a very major breach to separate us.

And so, Paul was not willing to be permanently estranged from the Galatians, was he? And he puts his arms around them, so to speak, and he calls them brethren.

B. The Man Overtaken in a Fault

Paul refers to the man overtaken in a fault. And he undoubtedly has in mind various persons in the churches who have fallen into sins. As we saw last time, the principle sin in the churches was the sin of legalism. They were running out and getting circumcised in order to be saved. And this is in essence, leaving Christ. It is saying, "Christ is not enough." I must do something else to be saved.

And this spirit of legalism was threatening to consume the church. People were biting and devouring each other. Or, at least there was a danger of such.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.

Galatians 5:15

Legalism is a disease of the flesh. Our fleshly nature is eaten up with legalism. Legalism says, "I am pretty good." Legalism says, "I am better than you." And legalism says, "God accepts me the way I am." And the whole spirit of legalism is to show how wonderful we are. It is self, self and more self. It is the search for self-glory. And certainly, this was one of the faults of many in the Galatian churches.

And Paul says,

If a man be overtaken in a fault . . .

This is an interesting way to phrase this. Paul uses a Greek word here to suggest that when a Christian man sins he is taken by surprise. He is "overtaken" by some temptation. The

idea is that the temptation was sudden and unavoidable. The man was traveling down the road of life, minding his own business, when suddenly, some temptation or some stumbling block was thrown in his way. And he stumbled and fell.

In the case of the Galatians, perhaps they were strolling along in the freedom of the gospel, trusting in the grace of Christ, when suddenly, a Jewish teacher jumped out of the bushes and started teaching them that you had to be circumcised to be saved! And they were overtaken in a fault. They weren't planning to fall from the gospel, but they were ambushed by the forces of evil. And they were suddenly overtaken.

This is the great danger for Christians. As you walk down the Christian highway, it is littered with evil banana peels. And every step you take, you must keep an eye out or you might slip and be overtaken with a fault.

In fact this word fault is the Greek word "paraptoma" which means to slip to the side. It means you were walking in a straight line and then your foot slipped, causing you to deviate from your path.

And perhaps this is a good illustration of the Christian. The Christian has a new nature, powered by the Holy Spirit. And this new nature wants to serve God. The Christian doesn't wake up in the morning and say, "Let me plan how I might sin against my God today." But as he walks through life, he slips to the side here and there. His flesh overtakes him here, Temptation surprises him there. And he is often overtaken in various faults.

Now let me ask you this question. Is it likely that in our fellowship with one another that some of us may be overtaken in a fault? And the answer is that it may certainly happen. You may be caught unsuspectingly, and you might slip on that banana peel. One of your deacons might slip. Your pastor might slip. None of us are immune to slippage, are we? And the question is, "What should be the attitude of the church toward a brother who has been overtaken in a fault?"

- C. The Church Should Seek to Restore the Faulty Brother.

I want to direct your attention to one word in verse one. And the word is, “ye.”

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual . . .

Galatians 6:1

This word is in the plural in the original language. (humeis) And the import is that this command is directed to the entire church. The church is to seek the man’s restoration. When a man is overtaken in a fault, it is the desire of the whole church to have him restored.

Now our fleshly nature would have us rise up in hateful defiance against a fallen brother. And we might immediately try to ostracize him, or throw him out of the church. Or we might confront him in a threatening manner. And we have to be very careful in such a circumstance that we don’t act according to the flesh ourselves. And if we do that, then we might be the one overtaken in a fault.

D. The restoration effort is to be undertaken by the “spiritual.”

There is no room for fleshly activity when it comes to this delicate effort of restoration. It goes without saying that we should not send an unregenerate man to restore a sinning brother. This is like sending a lion to restore a lamb. But the effort of restoration is undertaken by those who are “spiritual.”

I take it here that the work of restoration is only undertaken by those who are under the control of the Spirit of God; those who by their life and practice are particularly sensitive to the prodding of the Spirit. If we send a delegation to speak to a fallen brother, we should send those who have a large dose of love, joy, peace, longsuffering and gentleness. We should send those who show in their life a heavy measure of goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

How inappropriate it would be to send men who are full of hatred and strife and disagreement. These types of men are yet controlled by the flesh. But when a man falls into a fault, Paul says,

Ye that are spiritual, restore such a one.

You see how important it is that the church be made up of regenerate persons only. The church is not an organization for the fleshly. It is an organization for the spiritual only. And churches have sadly forgotten this most basic requirement. They have invited the masses into their fellowships on the barest of credentials. And they have structured their programs to appeal to the unregenerate. And those churches are populated by those who operate by the flesh.

Let me just say here that one way to appeal to the unregenerate is to preach a watered down gospel. Lost people love to hear that they are okay after all. They love to hear that God loves everyone. They love to hear that all they have to do is perform some ritual. They love to think that they can join the church and have access to God and the gymnasium by church association. They love the gospel that says that God will give them everything their heart desires. They love to come to church and be entertained with a beautiful orchestra.

But sinners are often shocked when they come to a church where the preacher is not telling them that they are okay. They are bewildered when the preacher tells them that they are condemned by Adam's sin. Their mind is spinning when the whole focus of the worship is the Word of God. Why, this wasn't what they had in mind. Where is the basketball court?

And my point is that church membership is for the saved only. It is for the regenerate. It is for the "spiritual." And many problems are alleviated when we adhere to that principle.

So, you see here that restoring a sinning brother is a job for the "spiritual." It is not a job for the fleshly.

D. The restoration effort is to be undertaken with an attitude of meekness.

Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Meekness, of course, is a fruit of the Spirit. It is a wonderful Christian quality that the Holy Spirit works in the

regenerate man. It means to operate with a kind and forgiving spirit. Obviously, when we are attempting to restore a brother, we cannot go to his house in anger. We can't go to him with an overbearing posture. We don't go to him as an enemy, trying to find fault in him. We are not looking for a reason to throw him out of the church. We are looking for just the opposite. We are looking to find a way of restoration.

The spiritual man who goes to restore a brother goes with great gentleness and humility and with patience. And he goes fully ready to forgive if any wrong has been done to him.

It seems to me that this passage teaches that if any man cannot go with meekness, then he should not be sent by the church to restore a brother. What if we sent a hot tempered man to restore a hot tempered man? We can easily see that this would not be wise.

E. The restoration effort is to be done by one considering himself.

Maybe, before we go to the sinning brother, we should consider first the sins that we have committed during our Christian walk so that we are not so harsh on our brother. And I suspect that if we did that, none of us would go with a haughty spirit. And if we haven't yet fallen into a similar sin, we should consider our own weakness, because we may yet fall.

When we knock on our brother's door we should be considering our own propensity to sin. We should be considering the strength of our own fleshly nature and giving it full credit, for our flesh can rise up against us at a moment's notice. If our brother can stumble, then we can stumble. If our brother has fallen to temptation then so may we. And that's why it says,

Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

If we only had a proper understanding of our own weaknesses, then we would not be overly harsh on our brother when he stumbles.

It seems as though if we were to knock on our brother's door with a haughty, self-righteous attitude, then we might

ourselves be in line for a fall.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

I Corinthians 10:12

So, we have seen the first duty that is enjoined on us in our liberty, and that is to seek to restore our offending brother. But, there is another duty found in verse two.

II. The Duty to Bear One Another's Burdens (v.2)

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

Now when it says, "Bear one another's burdens," the primary idea here is to bear with another's burdens. We are to endure with them. We are to be patient with their infirmities. We are not to rush to judgment. We are not to be anxious to kick them out of the church.

You know, so many times we are very impatient with others, especially when their weakness is not our weakness. When we are the stronger brother, we tend to take his weakness lightly. And we wonder why he is always whining about his problems. And we tend to despise him if he worries us too much with his problems.

But the Scriptures teach us to sympathize deeply with our brother and to do everything we can to alleviate his distress. This command especially applies to the strong brother.

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:1

But in addition to "bearing with" our brother in his trouble, we are also encouraged to actually carry his burden if it be possible. If there is some way that we can take his burden off of his shoulders and put it on our own, then we are to do so.

Example: If we see Bro. Dana toting a big air conditioner unit on his shoulders and he is slumping down under the weight, then we should rush to help him carry it.

And if any of our brothers are burdened down under a physical burden, then if we have opportunity we should help him carry the load.

Now if we do this, if we engage in self-sacrifice in order to help our brother, then look what we are doing.

And so fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

You see, we have been liberated from the law of Moses, but now we are under the law of Christ. We are free from the law of compulsion, but we are under the law of love. And if we find opportunity to help a brother, it is the law of Christ to do so.

III. The Duty to Avoid Self-Esteem (3-5)

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Galatians 6:3-5

It seems that we are still in the context of trying to restore a fallen brother. And we are called on to bear with his burdens. And the thing that will cause you to be a poor burden bearer is if you think you are something.

No one wants to be counseled by someone who thinks he is perfect. A self-righteous man makes a poor counselor, doesn't he?

And so, we have a duty, when we are trying to be helpful to someone else, to have a proper estimation of ourselves. It says,

If a man think he is something . . .

This is virtually a universal malady. It is certainly the attitude of the legalist. He thinks that everyone else is nothing, but he is something. He thinks himself to be so good that he is

even accepted by a holy God.

But this is not only the attitude of the legalist, but it is also the attitude of the fleshly. Those that do not have the influence of the Holy Spirit, always have a wrong opinion of themselves. They are the most important person in the world. Everything in the world revolves around them. And the fleshly man thinks himself to be something.

But here is God's opinion of the man who thinks he is something.

When he is nothing. (6:3)

This is the true state of a man, especially a man who is a self-righteous man or a fleshly man. He is nothing. There is no moral worth to such a man.

There is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:10

The Scriptures also confirm that there is no strength in man. He cannot make himself worthy. And so, the proper assessment of a man is that he is nothing.

A man who thinks himself something, when he is nothing,

He deceiveth himself. (6:3)

Have you ever noticed that a person who thinks himself something usually doesn't fool everyone else? Everyone else usually knows that this man is nothing. But he deceives himself. He is the only one who doesn't know!

And so, our duty under the liberty of Christ is to have a proper estimation of ourselves. A man who thinks himself under the law is always trying to prove himself worthy because that is what the law requires. But we are not under law anymore. We are free in Christ. And one of the great benefits of being free from the law is that we are free to have a proper view of ourselves. We don't have to convince God or ourselves that we are something. We can give all of that vain glory up. And we are

free to say, "I am nothing and Jesus Christ is everything."

IV. The duty to examine our own work.

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Galatians 6:4

When it says, "Let every man prove his own work," this means, "Let every man examine his own work or behavior. Take a good hard look at yourself and your works and compare it to the Word of God so that you can get a proper estimation of yourself.

Now this is the duty of every man, but it is especially the duty of the man who engages in the attempt to judge another man. If we are going about the business of examining another man, we should spend some time examining ourselves first, don't you think? And if we do so, the more likely we will be to be compassionate and help others in their infirmities and afflictions.

A. This will result in a clean conscience.

And then shall he have rejoicing in himself.

Galatians 6:4

If you examine yourself and make yourself right before God, then you will find peace in your own heart and in your own conscience. You won't be trying to compare yourself with the fallen brother or with anyone else. And you will be more likely to help your brother.

B. This will result in not comparing yourself to others.

If you go to his house with an unclean conscience, you may be trying to vindicate yourself in comparison to him. You may be trying to find fault in him to make yourself look better.

So, examine yourselves before God so that you find your joy within yourself rather than in your comparison with someone else.

C. This will prepare us for the final judgment.

For every man shall bear his own burden.

Galatians 6:5

Note: This verse shows the difficulty of translating the Scriptures. You will notice in verse two it says that we are to bear one another's burdens. But in verse five it says every man shall bear his own burden. And this seems like a contradiction. But, the word burden in verse two is the word "baros" (heavy load) and the word burden in verse five is "phortion" which means task or service.

You should also note that in verse two Paul uses the present tense, whereas in verse five he uses the future tense.

So, when it says that every man will bear his own burden in verse five, most commentators think it means that we will all be responsible for our own various acts of service in the day of judgment.

It appears that if we examine ourselves now, and have a proper understanding of ourselves now, if we don't think more of ourselves than we should, and if we help our brothers with a meek attitude, then we will stand in better stead in the day of judgment.

V. The duty to pay your teachers. (v.6)

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Galatians 6:6

VI. The duty to be involved in well doing. (v.9, 10)

These last two duties we will expand upon next time as we conclude this book of Galatians.