

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPIRITUAL

Galatians 6:1-5

Responsibility always comes with spiritual privilege. It is surely a privilege to have the Holy Spirit living in your life, and to be able to walk in His strength day by day. It is a privilege that has been extended to us by a loving and gracious heavenly Father. But with this blessed privilege there comes some responsibilities.

The first paragraph of this last chapter of the Galatian letter focuses on these responsibilities. In what might seem on the surface to be some contradictory statement the Apostle writes, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ". But then he comes back to add, "For every man shall bear his own burden." That he connects these with our walk in the Spirit is made clear by his reference to the "spiritual" in the very first verse. By this term he simply means those who are walking in the strength which the Spirit provides day by day. Walking in the Spirit has some pitfalls, as we noticed last week (v. 26). But walking in the Spirit also has some responsibilities. To be a "spiritual" person does not get you out of life, but makes you a very responsible person right in the midst of life. This is the reason that the Apostle addresses these admonitions to those who profess to be spiritual. The spiritual are to be burden-bearers! What does this involve?

I. THE SPIRITUAL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR BEARING THE BURDEN OF THE FALLEN BROTHER.

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

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Who is the man overtaken in a fault? Since Paul begins with the affectionate word of address, we can assume that this is a family matter. The man is a brother within the Christian family. This brother has been discovered in an embarrassing situation. "Fault" is the Greek word for trespass. The man has been found involved in an unlawful matter; he has trespassed and been caught. The "overtaken" probably means that he was overtaken by you, the Christian brother, and not by the sin. He was surprised by you, and you caught him "red-handed". What are you supposed to do?

The basic injunction is to "restore such an one". This term "restore" was borrowed by Paul from the medical profession. It was used of the physicians setting a broken bone. It was also used by fishermen to refer to the mending of a broken net. The basic responsibility of a Christian man when he discovers a brother in sin is to be redemptive, to be corrective. Everything he does is to have

the good of the brother in view, and is to have as its goal restoring the brother to the fellowship of the Lord and the fellowship of the church.

Such a ministry is to be done with a spirit of meekness. This means that a spirit of submissiveness and patience will prevail. There is a real temptation to become angry with a fallen brother. If you are close to him, you will probably be hurt by what he has done. You will probably be hurt at what his wrong has done to others. Your temptation is to berate him, to chastise him, to judge him. Meekness is just the opposite of this. Rather with the patience and meekness of the Lord, you set out to kindly and gently restore him into the fellowship of the Lord. You will be like the surgeon who seeks to reset the broken bone with as little damage to the other parts of the body as possible so that healing can take place.

Another thing that is to make this ministry is careful consideration of oneself. "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." This is just the opposite of the pride we talked about last week. We are to enter into this work of restoration with a full awareness that we are capable of the same kind of trespass. What they have done, we might do if the grace of God does not keep us. Our spirituality does not give us immunity to falling into sin.

When we go about this in the right way we are "bearing one another's burdens". This is precisely what the Apostle has in mind. To bear his burden is to be willing to help him find a right relationship with the Lord and with his church again. Have you ever encountered such a situation? Each of us has if we have been in the way of the Lord very long. What was your first reaction? Somewhere along the way you probably felt an inclination to think, "well that is his problem. He got himself into this mess so he will just have to get himself out." You might have even voiced such an expression. God says "Not so. You are responsible for getting under the burden with him and helping him out of the situation in which he has found himself." To encourage us in doing this he reminds us that this is the way we fulfill the law of Christ. This is probably meant to be a reminder to the Galatians of the contrast between the law of Christ and the law of Moses. You might keep the law of Moses by being circumcised and observing religious days, but you must fulfill the law of Christ by assisting your fallen brother in his moment of need. The law of Christ that the Apostle has in mind is probably the law of love. We are to love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. Jesus stated this law in a very practical way in the so-called Golden Rule, "Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you." Can you put yourself in the position of the fallen brother? What would you want the brother to do if the roles were just reversed? How would you want to be treated if you were the one caught in the act of trespass? What you would want would be for someone to help you overcome the situation, someone to get under the burden with you. You can fulfill this law of love, the law of Christ, by bearing the burden of your fallen brother.

Do you know the greatest barrier between us and such a work of burden bearing? It is a false estimate of ourselves. We think such a responsibility to be beneath us. We are too spiritual to get involved in such a task. Surely, we reason, God has made us spiritual like this to be leaders, to teach, to sing, to perform some public kind of ministry. When we get to feeling that way about ourselves, we need to remember "for if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself!

Have you ever been a fallen brother? If you have ever experienced some great fall, in your Christian life, you will probably remember what your first reaction was. You were so disappointed with yourself, and so ashamed. One of the feelings you had was that you would no longer be welcome in the fellowship of the believers. And it may well be that what you encountered confirmed this. What a difference it makes if when you fall someone comes in the spirit of Christ, with a real caring love, and gets under the burden of the situation with you, and helps you back to a full life. This is the real need. We are not responsible for delivering condemnation or advice, but a loving willingness to get under the burden with the fallen brother. This is a responsibility of the spiritual man.

II. -THE SPIRITUAL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR BEARING THE BURDEN OF PERSONAL DUTY.

One of the great temptations in the Christian life is the temptation to compare. We are tempted to measure our spirituality or dedication by our brother. Whenever you encounter a brother with some obvious failure in his life, you are tempted to bend your arm out of shape patting yourself on the back. You reason, "Well compared with him I am doing all right. Compared with him you are a pretty good Christian. You pray more than he does. You witness more than he does. You know more about your Bible than he does. You have never been guilty of the things he is guilty of." The biggest problem with this is that we usually pick out the weakest of the Christians with which to compare ourselves, and furthermore God never measures us against each other. God always measures us against His Ideal --- the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the reason for the admonition, "but let everyone man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." "Burden" in this case was used of the military pack carried on the back of each soldier. Each soldier of Jesus Christ has his own burden of responsibility to carry. The word was also used of the cargo carried by a ship. The basic idea in the text is that the Lord has laid out a cargo, of responsibility for each of us to carry. Our basic concern must be how well we are doing with our own cargo. We must not concern ourselves overly with how our brother is doing with his until we have ours under control. When we stand before the Lord, he will not hold me responsible for the cargo of my brother, but what did I do with mine.

Jesus emphasized this. In his memorable meeting with Peter after the resurrection, he applied this principle. After confronting Peter with his need for love, and charging him with the responsibility of feeding the sheep, he indicated to Peter that some rough days were ahead. He would suffer confinement and many things, including martyrdom, for the cause of Christ. Just as Jesus had revealed this to him, John walked by. Peter questioned Jesus about what was ahead for John. Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." To paraphrase a bit, Jesus was saying to Peter, "Peter, if you will take care of the assignment I have given you, you have a full time job. I have an assignment for John, and I will take care of that. Bear your own burden,"

Are you bearing the burden the Lord has for you? Are you doing what the Lord wants you to do? Are you fulfilling the responsibilities he has assigned to you? Are you under the burden, carrying the load? Your spirituality does not make you immune to burden bearing. When you stand before the Lord at the last day, he will require of you an accounting concerning the cargo he laid out for you to carry.

We have all of the spirituality we need that excuses people from responsibility. Walking in the Spirit does not involve walking irresponsibly. That is a heresy of the worst sort. All of us have encountered some so called spiritual people who were so heavenly minded that they were no earthly good. Paul will not approve of such. Walking in the spirit makes a man a responsible member of the family, one who will bear his own burden.

CONCLUSION:

Has this study reminded you of a burden that you need to begin bearing? Have you been avoiding any responsibility to help some wayward, fallen brother? Have you been avoiding some duties that the Lord has laid upon you? Then let me encourage you to make a personal commitment to the Lord right now that you will begin at once to pick up those burdens. This is the reason He has provided you such a generous supply of the Spirit --- so that you might bear some burdens.