

Galatians 6: 1; “Spiritual Restoration”, Message # 53 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on May 18th, 2016, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

We want to think together tonight, of how a person who has fallen into any sin in their attitude or actions, can be spiritual restored. What can we do; we who are Christians, to restore a fellow Christian to a closer walk with God; when we see that they are not walking straight on the path of righteousness, or not following Christ according to the truth of the word of God? How can we do this good work of spiritual restoration, to help this person for Christ's sake, and for their sake? Well, 1st of all – I want to talk with you about the responsibility which truly spiritual persons have to restore an erring or sinful Christian. 2nd – I want to attempt to show you how this spiritual restoration is to be done. And 3rd – I want you to think with me about the need which every spiritually-minded Christian has, to consider themselves. May the Lord help us to better understand this important work of spiritual restoration.

1st of all – Let's think about the responsibility which truly spiritual persons have to restore an erring or sinful Christian brother or sister.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one...” With regard to these verses, it will do us well to remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original Greek letters of Paul, and so, verse 1 of chapter 6 can be considered a continuation of Paul's thoughts in chapter 5. Paul had been speaking to the Galatian churches about living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. He spoke to them about doing all that they would do in serving God, through manifesting the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. He then exhorts them in verse 26 not to become conceited, provoking one another, or envying one another. And then, immediately following this statement, he speaks to them about what those who are spiritual among them should do if anyone is “overtaken” in a trespass. It appears then, that, in the context, those who are overtaken in a trespass may have been those persons who had become conceited, and who were provoking others with their words. But even if this was true the words “any trespass” do not limit the trespass to simply those particular sins. The word “overtaken” in the original Greek is *prolambano* (προλαμβάνω). It can be translated “caught” as it is in the New American Standard translation; “If anyone is caught in any trespass”. But the word “overtaken” is a helpful translation because, the person being described here, may have unintentionally committed this trespass. They may not see what harm or offense they have caused; they may not have understood that what they are doing, or have done, is a sin. Or, the fault or sin may be something which did indeed have intent behind it, and the person somehow felt justified in committing the trespass. Whichever it is, the duty of the spiritually minded Christian is to attempt to restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

The word “fault” or “trespass” in the Greek is “*paraptoma*” (παράπτωμα). Strong's Dictionary says that it means: “A side slip (a lapse or deviation); that is, it may be an (unintentional) error. But we should also understand, he says, that it could be a willful transgression that we are looking at. This word “*paraptoma*” can legitimately be translated: a fall, a fault, an offence, a sin, or a trespass.” When I think of the word “trespass”, it brings to my mind the thought of turning aside from the path of righteousness, and walking in forbidden ways or ground, contrary to the express teaching of the word of God; turning from the true and right way to a selfish or sinful way. The person who sees this happening in another Christian needs to do something about it. They need to attempt to restore the trespasser to the true and right way. The first duty in this process is prayer. Turn with me over to 1st John 5: 14-17. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He

hears us.” “And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.” “There is sin leading to death.” “I do not say that he should pray about that.” “All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.” It says here, that if we see a brother sinning a sin not leading to death, we should pray and ask for God’s help and intervention. He will give life. That is, God will give the sinning brother life; that is, that He would see the error and sin of his way and turn from it. The grace of repentance given is the grace of life.

The Christian who is thinking about the work of spiritual restoration also needs wisdom, and he should ask God for it. Often a Christian needs to pray and ask for wisdom as to whether this trespass, this offense that they are looking at, is great enough to require their attempting to initiate the process to restore the person. Turn with me over to 1st Peter 4, verses 7 and 8. “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.” “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” Sound judgment and a sober spirit are mentioned here; and they are needed so that each Christian who is attempting to restore one of their brethren would be able to do so in love, praying that they would be able to see that this is an offense which should not be covered. We as Christians are called to cover a multitude of sins; a multitude of everyday offenses which should be overlooked and not confronted. These are often sins of weakness in the other person; sins of lightness and inconsideration in speech or action; sins which we know that a fellow Christian is foolish or unwise to have said this, or to have done that; but if we were to correct all of these sins in other people, we might spend most of our time in doing so. And so we pray and ask – “Lord, what is my duty towards this person?” “Is this an offense that should be covered? Or is this an offense which cannot and should not be covered? Has this person lost the ability to see that what they are doing is wrong? For to restore here, I believe, implies that the person has lost something which they will not be able to get back without your help; that is, without the help of you and perhaps other spiritually-minded Christians in the church. Restoration is necessary because sin has produced the awful effect of blinding that person to thought that what they are doing is wrong. And therefore, my responsibility, in connection with others in the church if necessary, is to attempt to restore them to a clear sight of this particular issue, which will hopefully lead them to repentance and a closer walk with Christ.

2nd – I want to attempt to show you how this spiritual restoration is to be done.

“You who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness”, our text says. The restoration of a wayward or erring person should be initiated by spiritually-minded men filled with the Spirit. And it should be done in a spirit of gentleness, or meekness, as it says in the King James. Yes, confrontation is needed, but it will need to be done in gentleness in order to have a real hope of success. Why is gentleness so needed? Because the restoring of an erring or sinning brother or sister is like the setting of a bone. Listen to Ralph Cudworth on this: “It is the nature of sin to set all things out of order.” “Small sins are like to slips and slidings whereby men fall and hurt themselves, but great sins are like downfalls.” “For as they wound, lame, disjoint, or break some member of the body, so these do wound and waste the conscience.” “Therefore as we are careful for our bodies to avoid downfalls, so ought we to be as careful, nay a thousand times more careful, for our souls, to take heed of the downfall of sin or falling away from grace.” “Sinning is the breaking of a bone or disjuncting of a member.” “And reproof is the setting of it in order again.” “Now the sooner a bone newly broke or out of joint is set, the sooner it is restored to his right frame and cured.” “So the sooner a man after his fall is admonished, the sooner and more easily shall he be able to recover himself.” “This shows that it is a point required in setting of a bone, and surgeons find it a matter of great difficulty to set a joint; much

more difficulty is there in the soul.” “And therefore as it is not for every horseleach (a veterinarian for horses) to meddle with setting of bones, no more it is for unskillful workmen to tamper with men’s souls.” Great care should be taken in how it is done and that it is done right. Listen to John Gill on this: “The allusion is to the setting of bones that are broken, or out of joint, which is done with great care and tenderness.” “Professors fallen into sin are like broken and dislocated bones; they are out of their place, and lose both their comfort and usefulness, and are to be restored by gently telling them of their faults, and mildly reproofing them for them; and when sensible of them, and troubled for them, by speaking comfortably to them, and by bringing them again, and resettling them in their former place in the church, and restoring them to their former usefulness and good conduct: in the spirit of meekness.”

Let us understand that a person in sin, even a Christian overtaken in a trespass, is not often convinced of their sin by harsh words. Harsh words may even make them angry and cause them to think that they should not change their own attitude or repent of their actions. Turn with me over to Proverbs 15: 1 and 2. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” “The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.” You can see how plain this text is. Using the knowledge of the truth of the word of God in the right way will accomplish God’s will in the matter of confronting a Christian, or anyone for that matter, over their sin. A soft answer will turn away their wrath, but a harsh word will stir up anger. Let us understand that there is a right way to confront a Christian over their sin and there is a wrong way. There is a way which, by the Spirit of God will be blessed, and there is a way which will prevent the spiritual restoration that you seek. Turn over to Proverbs 25: 15. “By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone.” Here we have the example given of what will persuade the ruler of a kingdom; long forbearance. That is, being patient to bear with injuries and affronts, but eventually, in time, confronting that ruler with gentle speech, trying to persuade Him to do the right thing. The same is often the right approach with an erring Christian. A soft answer will turn away wrath and a gentle answer bring conviction where needed, and will break the bone of their stubborn refusal to listen and to consider what you are saying about their need of repentance.

Look also over at 2nd Timothy chapter 2, verses 24-26. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” It is extremely important that we remember this principle of truth; that only God can grant persons repentance so that they may know the truth and come to their senses. This is not only true of unbelievers, but in the case of a believer who has been overtaken in a trespass, it is also true. Now, it is most certainly true that in a true believer’s life God will grant repentance to them. But we who would restore them need to understand how dependent we are upon God ourselves. We need to see that one of the means that God will use to restore such a one will be our not arguing with them; rather, it will be by our being patient with them, and our correcting them in gentleness. This will be the means that God will use, so that they will come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, if they have fallen into it.

Perhaps someone will ask about Titus chapter 1, verses 10-13 where it says: “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole household, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’” “This testimony is true.” “Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.” In considering why a person should be rebuked sharply, we need to remember the context of the verse that we are studying tonight versus the context of these verses. In the text we are studying tonight, a man is overtaken in a trespass. You need to

be patient with such a one. In these verses in Titus, the Cretans were people who were insensibly entrenched in their sinful bad habits. They needed to be awakened and confronted with a sharp rebuke from Titus to them so that they would repent. I would guess that Titus did this both publicly through the preaching of the word, and privately when he thought it was necessary. However, I want you to see that these were differing situations, and what should be done depended upon how the pastor perceived them. He needed to consider how aware these people were of their sin, and how long they have been in it. And as such, we see that they require separated considerations related to the use of either gentleness or sharp rebuke.

And then 3rd - I want you to think with me about the need which every spiritually-minded Christian has, to consider themselves.

“Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Notice how, here, the singular is used instead of the plural. He began the verse in the plural with the use of the word – “Brethren”. Now he says: “Consider yourself.” How easy it is, sometimes, for us to see the sins of others so clearly, and yet we do not see the danger to ourselves, in not considering ourselves in regard to our own speech and conduct, as those who must pray to be kept back from sinning ourselves. We may find, when we look, that we have been sinning in the very same way that those whom we are attempting to restore, have sinned. How can we restore others when we will learn to resist temptation ourselves. We should remember to love our brother, our neighbor, as ourselves. Let’s read Matthew 7: 1-5 as we close. “Judge not, that you be not judged.” I think that this does not mean that we would never judge our neighbor, but rather that we would judge him with righteous judgment. We should not judge others by a standard which we ourselves do not hold to. For, look at what follows here. “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye” “Hypocrite!” “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Now, I hope that you can see, there is judgment being made here, in looking at your brother and seeing his faults. But in order to avoid hypocrisy, or falling into the same sin as that of the person whom you are looking at, and judging, there needs to be a real consideration of your own eye, and the plank that may be there. You may be seeking to remove the speck in your brother’s eye, and you have not sufficiently considered what is in your own eye. Here is a good principle which will do us good in every situation: “Consider yourself, lest you also be tempted”.