

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
Galatians 5:25-6:10

**Galatians 6:1-5 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.**

Paul, aware that all fall into sin, fresh from listing the numerous sins the Galatians and all may be prone to, now swiftly moves to restoration of a fallen brother or sister in the faith. The church is to pursue the lost, but must be careful in doing so. In seeking to win back the straying or to convert those who have lived their whole life in unbelief, we must reach them where they are at, but not become like them. The distinction is important. One can talk to an unbeliever or fallen Christian so that he or she is understood, without talking like an unbeliever. Apply this to contemporary Christian music and Evangelicalism's tendency to be the devil's ape, rather than the devil being God's ape.

Here we have a guide for dealing with one another in the real world. As sinner/saints, we are in constant need of instruction, admonition, encouragement, and correction. I am an irresponsible brother when I ignore my brother's or my sister's sin. I am allowing Satan to get a foothold. I am also remiss as a Christian brother when I fail to encourage my brother's or my sister's continued growth in knowledge and holiness. In all this, I am to deal gently with my brother or my sister, knowing all the while that the day will come when I will need him or her to do the same for me.

There is a dual responsibility when a Christian is caught in a sin. The wrongdoer has the responsibility to accept correction. The one catching the wrongdoer has the responsibility to lovingly and gently correct the wrongdoer in keeping with the Scriptural truth involved.

Why does the orthodoxy of a Christian denomination ultimately depend upon the faithful practice of these responsibilities?

Why are those in the correcting position especially prone to fall? Why is arrogance always close upon the heels of correction?

**If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.**

Few words could be less aptly spoken to the America and the American church of our day. Everyone is something now. Everyone knows everything. We are eager to devour the failures of others. Gossip abounds and we love a train wreck. We revel in the sins of others, all the while ignoring our own sins.

We as the church are especially prone to hypocrisy in this way. For instance, how often is sin of the single mother reiterated, but not her courage for having a child in a day and age where she could have easily murdered it in a few minutes.

We as Americans have more polls than a fence factory. We are Monday-morning quarterbacks, precious little snowflakes entitled to be authorities on everything and indignant when the idea that we could be wrong is even hinted at. History is read critically and the present is reported forgivingly. We even take polls on what the church is doing, as God instated a democracy, and not a "people of the book," as Mohammed called us.

We consider ourselves "good people" since we are not Hitler or Stalin. Living together outside marriage isn't so bad, because at least "we love each other." Homosexuality is fine, because at least no one is getting hurt. Vulgar lyrics are acceptable because "its not like lyrics every killed anyone." And abortion is no big deal because "its better than having a child no one wants or will take care of." Everything is relative to something else. No one carries his own load, judging each action according to absolute truths and according to messages, not messengers.

**Galatians 6:6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.**

Why should a pastor be supported by the congregation? Doesn't he have time to work on the side, I mean, after all, Sunday is his only busy day? Why is the pastor's study the most important piece to the spiritual life of a church?

What danger lies in not providing for the recruitment, education, and livelihood of ministers of the gospel?

What danger lies in making the ministry of the gospel a more affluent profession than that of the members of the congregation?

What danger lies in making the pastor's relationship the congregant a contractual, rather than called, arrangement?

**Galatians 6:7-10 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!**

What does Paul mean, "God cannot be mocked"?

How do we often think God can be mocked, that we can pull one over on Him?

For instance, how do we often live as though God only sees and hears us when we want Him to?

Paul relates the matter to our support of the ministry. How does our support of the ministry reveal our view of God's grace?

How do we "reap what we sow" in providing for the ministry of the gospel?

Luther: **Whoever is not willing to serve God in a small way for his own great advantage, let him serve the devil in a big way to his own supreme loss.**

Is Paul saying here that we reap eternal life because we sow to please the Spirit? Think in context of the whole epistle. How does supporting the ministry bring eternal life?

Are Christians rewarded for doing good?

Why should we show preference to those who are members of the family of believers? Are we some sort of special club?

And we are a family. We are the children of God. Why? Because Christ has carried our burdens on His wide shoulders and in His deep love. He has forgiven us our wrongs and lovingly restored us when we've fallen. He's sent us ministers of the Word to guide us on the way to heaven and to absolve us when we've sinned. His actions have been tested and found perfect. He's kept the law in our place, just as He's died in our place, just as He's risen in our place, and now He wants nothing more than to strengthen in our Christian life, to put our sin to death,

and to bring us to new and eternal life through His resurrection. We are Christians, followers of Christ called to bring Christ's love to others in Word and deed. In that we have a great responsibility, but also a great joy. And most importantly, in all of it we have a great Savior. Amen.