

Text: Gal 6.3-5

As we start with the next few verses in Galatians, I think we need to review the first two verses of Gal 6:

Gal 6.1-2 ¶ 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.

Two instructions:

1. Restore the one caught in a trespass (lift him up)
2. Help the one weighed down by burdens (bear him up)

As we move on to the next few verses, we will find that the attention focuses again inward, but it is in relationship to how we relate to others that we are to think.

The idea of involvement in the life of others that verses 1 and 2 call for is something we resist in our natural self-interestedness.

Years ago, when I was in the mortgage business, I was making up an ad for my services that I was going to send around to all the realtors. I was "tooting my own horn" in this ad, and I was a little worried it might sound too boastful.

I took my ad in to my boss, and asked him what he thought. His reply, "Everyone understands self-interest."

Yes, everyone understands self-interest, but self-interest is a barrier to Christian service and the walk by the Spirit that is the subject of our recent studies.

The next few verses offer a caution and a remedy to this kind of spirit, one that allows self-interest to prevent serving others, or causes one to serve others in the wrong spirit.

Read Gal 6.1-5, text 3-5

One more thing to mention before we look at the detail. There is some confusion in understanding these verses. The confusion comes from the English, and the difficulty of translating from one language to another.

Our message will attempt to clear up the confusion and give us a strong spiritual tool for successful Christian living.

I. Warning for those who serve: pride has no place (3)

A. Reminder: we are assuming an engagement in service

1. We are trying to lift the fallen (1)
2. We are trying to assist the stumbling (2)

B. The warning has two applications

1. Some could resist assistance because of self-sufficiency
2. Some could resist assisting because of assumed superiority

“The myth of self-sufficiency is not a mark of bravery but rather a sign of pride.”¹

“Something must be laid aside if a believer is to be a burden-bearer and that is conceit, an attitude that breeds intolerance of error in others and causes one to think he is above failure.”²

C. The error in relationships is self-deception

“Part of the problem is that gifted Christian leaders are so often told how great they are that they start believing it. We must realize that all the good we do takes place through the Spirit in us, not as a result of our personal gifts, which are specific tools at the Spirit’s disposal for his use.”³

¹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: B&H, 1994), 413.

² Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 609.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Galatians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 201.

II. Direction for those who serve: put self to the test (4)

A. Called to rigorous self-examination

1. The word means a serious examination

“The word for ‘test’ is *dokimazō*, which is the word used for the fiery testing of gold so as to determine its purity.”⁴

2. We are not talking about introspection (a kind of morbid self-pity)

a. We must take stock of ourselves according to a standard

b. Our standard is Christ and the Word

c. What of our motives, our heart, our desires?

We can look at someone we are serving (or asked to serve) as some how beneath us or a bother or inconvenient.

Does that reflect the Spirit by whom we are called to walk? Gal 5.16?

How do our attitudes reflect the fruit of the Spirit?

B. Spiritual satisfaction when properly tested

1. Here is the first area of confusion: isn't “boasting” bad?

a. The word isn't the normal word associated with pride

b. We could think of it as satisfaction when we pass the test

“The word ‘pride’ (*kauchēma*, GK 3017) refers here more to glad exultation than vulgar self-promotion (Burton, 333), and so is not in this case a manifestation of sinful self-will. ... When one is not self-deceived, one has occasion to rejoice in God's grace in one's life.”⁵

⁴ George, *Galatians*, 417.

⁵ Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 634.

2. When we put ourselves to the test, check our motives by the standard of Christ, and follow Christ
 - a. Then we have real joy and satisfaction in Christian service
 - b. And we have confidence in our standing before the Lord

Note: there is an eschatological sense in vv. 4-5, with a view to the judgement seat of Christ

“This kind of honest scrutiny will issue in confession, not competition, in humility, not in vainglory.”⁶

III. Hope for those who serve: you will stand before the Lord on your own (5)

A. Here is the second area of confusion

1. Bear one another’s burdens (2)
2. Bear your own burden (5)

Simple solution: two different words

“This does not contradict verse 2 because the reference there is to heavy, crushing, loads (*barē*)—more than a man could carry without help. In this verse a different Greek word (*phortion*) is used to designate the pack usually carried by a marching soldier. It is the ‘burden’ Jesus assigns to His followers (cf. Matt. 11:30).”⁷

B. Bearing our own burden points to the future more than to the present

1. The verb is in the future tense
2. Even more than v. 4, the look is forward, to the judgement seat of Christ
3. The one who examines himself (puts himself to the rigorous test) and judges himself in his own ministry...

⁶ George, *Galatians*, 418.

⁷ Campbell, “Galatians in BKCNT,” 609–10.

4. *Will* bear his own burden before the Lord, especially in the judgement

The idea is that if you serve others in the Spirit (see Gal 5.16-25), you will look ahead to the meeting with the Lord, with full confidence to stand before him in the judgement.

Conclusion:

We are still thinking about our service to others, even though these verses turn the focus back towards ourselves.

You can serve out of a sense of duty, you can serve with a sense of pride, you can serve out of a feeling of superiority.

Put your heart to the test.

Are you serving from a walk by the Spirit?