

The Right Road to Restoration

(Galatians 6:1-5)

(preached 9/25/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

I was introduced to flea markets from a very early age.

Very often, my dad would take me to the Jockey Lot in Anderson SC for a day of walking around looking for deals...

After 30 minutes, my little legs were give out and I would ask my dad to hold me...

Now, that I am a dad with a 4 year old, that is back breaking work, so most times daddy would hold me in his arms but i would eventually get a ride on his shoulders....

That was the best seat in the house....

I could see good, I was sitting down...

But it didn't come without its dangers because I will never forget the time that my head hit a the frame of the door as we were leaving one of the flea market buildings....

I cried, but I got a bag of popcorn, and so it was worth it.

But that picture of a dad or mom carrying their children is a picture of love...

We see their little legs getting tired...

We see them getting tired...

And we reach down and pick them up to ease their pain...

To lighten their load...

Even if it means inconvenience and pain for us...

Because our love of them provokes us to care for them even when it pains us to do it...

Well, that is a good backdrop for Galatians 6:1-10 this morning...

You see, Paul was writing to the the churches in Galatia that were being drawn into legalism, and like a good parent, he saw the Galatians being weighed down like a little kid at a flea market by this false teaching...

Because one horrible consequence of a gospel of works and a legalistic system is that it creates burdens on the people...

The Pharisees are the best examples of legalists in the Bible and their system of good works had created such a burden on the people.....

That the Jewish religion at the time of Christ was just a complex system of do's and don'ts that just beat the people up...

Do you remember what Jesus said to the people in his teaching?

Come to me you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest....

My yoke is easy and my burden is light...

And that was a direct argument against legalism from the very lips of Jesus Christ, who felt sorry for the people under the strain of man made laws and rules....

And so Jesus called people to trust in Him because he was keeping the law in their place, and bearing the burden of the law in his own life...

And He was offering freedom...

Well, the churches in Galatia were being led away from freedom in Christ and back to the burden of legalism by these false teachers...

And Paul is writing them to call them out of going back under the heavy yoke of Jewish law....

He wrote the Galatians trying to convince them of the error of a saying that salvation comes through good works and keeping the Jewish law...

He has shown them that the true gospel is a gospel of faith alone apart from good works...

He has shown them that God had given him the true gospel of faith alone and Paul had preached it to them...

He had shown that the gospel of works was never even taught in the OT, and now as Paul closes out his letter in Galatians 5 and 6....

He is trying to show them other real life problems with the gospel of works...

First of all in the first half of chapter 5, he teaches that a gospel of works and legalism robs people of their freedom in Christ...

And then last week in the second half of chapter 5, we saw that the gospel of works actually leads people to sin all the more...

Because if you try to live by the rules, all you are going to do is want to break the rules...

So, Paul taught us that living by faith and walking by the Spirit was the better way to live the Christian life...

Living by the law simply leads people to do the evil deeds of the flesh...

Living by the law and legalism only makes us want to break them...

For instance, you can have a jar of cookies on the counter for weeks and a 4 year old may never notice them, but once you tell him not to reach in that jar, all he wants to do is reach in that jar...

The same is true of trying to live the Christian life by following the law; you end up living with nothing but a desire to break the law...

In other words, the gospel of works and law leads to a legalistic lifestyle where law breaking and the deeds of the flesh is all you do.

It is no coincidence that many legalistic churches have scandals and affairs and coverup and financial crimes...

Because living under a set of laws only causes people to sin all the more...

You would think just the opposite would happen that people would be afraid to move a muscle...

But what happens is people sin in those environments and learn to cover it up until it grows out of control...

And though this is still the introduction, let me add something here...

This is why it is important to teach your kids that Christianity isn't following the rules...

It is repenting of your sins, trusting in Christ alone, and walking by the Spirit through daily Bible reading, prayer and following Christ...

It is trust that kids of Christian parents often live the worst lives once they are out of the house....

Because many grow up in a legalistic system of trying to keep the rules of the house or the church and never seek to grow in their knowledge and love of God...

It is a mistake that is repeated over and over in homes of parents with good intentions but very little understanding of the true gospel that says works are useless but relationship with God is everything....

You are burdening your children with a wrong view of Christian living, and that leads to serious problems in the home and down the road...

And that is but another horrible consequence of a gospel of works, yet there are others and we will look at another real world consequence of a gospel of works in Galatians 6:1-5...

So, let's dig into chapter 6 this morning by simply reading the first five verses....

1 Brethren, even if [a]nyone 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. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

I have entitled this passage...

The Right Road to Restoration.

You see, as the churches in Galatia turned away from the gospel of faith and walking by the Spirit and back to a gospel of works and living by the law, a spirit of spiritual pride began to sweep over the church....

This still happens today in legalistic churches and false religions where people who keep the rules are honored and law breakers are shunned...

The religion of the Pharisees and the Saducees is a great example...

If you sinned in the religion of the Pharisees, you were considered defiled and cast from the group forever...

Islam has much of the same view even today...

Lawbreakers are publicly humiliated and excommunicated from their families and the mosque...

This is what legalism does...

It says keep the rules and if you can't, you don't belong...

And this is the mentality that was spreading through the churches in Galatia that were turning back to a gospel of works...

And this mentality is so destructive in the church...

So, Paul writes verses 1-5 to correct that behavior and offer the biblical perspective on dealing with people who get caught in sin...

Because there is nothing worse than a church full of sheep who love nothing better than to eat up one another by failing to practice biblical restoration...

So we are going to look at the right road to restoration in 3 parts in verses 1-5, and each of these 3 aspects of restoration is going to be helpful to us for this simple reason...

Christians sin, and those who repent and desire to come back to the church should be restored in the most biblical way possible...

So, the first sign on the biblical road to restoration is this....

I. The Requirements of Restoration (1)

Now, let me start by saying this...

Everyone sins, but not every situation is the same...

For the unbeliever who sins, your role as a Christian is to call him to repentance over all his sin and point him to his need for forgiveness of sin that is only found in Christ...

For the Christian who sins, there are also categories....

The first group are the sins that we commit on a daily basis...

Sins that we desire to avoid but commit anyway by losing the battle to the flesh..

Those sins should be repented of and confessed to the Lord to restore fellowship to Him immediately..

However, there are sins that are more public and may go on much longer than these sins...

In this case, the Bible is clear on how to handle them...

Matthew 18 gives us the process of confronting a sinning brother...

And this would be necessary when someone continues in sin and either can't see it or refuses to repent...

In that case, you go to that person and talk privately one on one, calling them to repentance and confession...

If that doesn't work, you take along another Christian who has seen the sin and you both confront the sinning brother or sister and call them to repentance...

If that doesn't work, the sin and the unrepentant sinner need to be made known to the church so the whole church can go to the sinner and call them to repentance...

And then if that is not effective in motivating the sinner to repentance, he is removed from the church as a last chance effort to move him to repentance...

If that doesn't work, the church is then to treat him as an unbeliever until he repents....

Now, the goal of this process is always the restoration of the sinner...

The church often mistakenly sees the goal of church discipline as a way to remove the sinner from its membership...

And though that is a purpose, it is not the primary purpose...

The primary purpose is repentance and restoration of the sinner to the fellowship of the church....

Now, in churches where legalism and the gospel or works is creeping back in like it was in the churches in Galatia, the purpose of church discipline is not to restore the sinning brother but shun him or her....

And that is what was happening in Galatia....

People were being caught up in sin, which is the norm in places where living by the law is a way of life, and they were being looked down upon by the ones who were supposedly keeping the rules....

And Paul is saying to the Galatians....

No, No, No.....

Look, brothers, the goal of catching someone in sin is not to kick him out of the church or look down upon him, the goal is to restore him or her to fellowship...

Now, one obvious truth behind these verses is that the sinning brother or sister wants to be restored to fellowship...

If the person continues in sin and doesn't repent, they have to be removed to protect the reputation of the Lord and His church....

And to protect their sin from spreading like leaven through the church....

Because when people see others living in sin with no consequences, it encourages them to do the same...

So clearly, if a person refuses to repent, these verses are of no use...

However, if a person is caught in sin and desires to repent and be restored, there is a right way to do that...

So the first requirement of restoration even though it is isn't seen here is this...

#1- Restoration must be the desire of the sinner.

We must also consider this....

The repentance of the sinner and his or her desire to be restored can happen at any step in church discipline...

If it happens at step #1 where its a one on one conversation that leads to the repentance, the restoration may just occur on that level as well as the confronter restores the sinner....

If it happens at step #2, you may have two or three people help in the person's restoration...

If it happens at step #3, the whole church is involved in the restoration....

In general, the restoration is as big as the level to which the sin was confronted...

Regardless of where it happens, the important part and the first requirement of restoration is that the sinner desires it.

The second requirement of restoration is found in the middle of verse 1...

#2 - Restoration should be handled by the spiritually mature...

Paul writes, ***"you who are spiritual.."***

Which takes us back to the previous verses of those who are walking by the Spirit...

In other words, you want Christians who lives are in order restoring the sinning brother...

People who are engaged in daily Bible study...

People who have regular prayer lives...

People living lives of obedience to God....

You certainly don't want someone who is living in sin themselves restoring a sinning brother...

He or she may even be a temptation to sin of someone who is trying to put off sin...

So, restoration should be handled by those who believe in a gospel of faith and walk by the Spirit on a constant basis...

#3 - Restoration should occur in a spirit of gentleness.

Living by the law makes people harsh and unloving...

It makes them unsympathetic to those who do fall into sin...

How many times have you heard someone say or maybe even said yourself...

"I can't believe he acts like that. He should know better."

Look, that can be true, but you should also know better than to think like that...

Who are you?

You are someone who knows better as well, but you still sin everyday as well...

Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit, but legalism takes gentleness and tosses it out the window and replaces it with harshness and arrogance...

People who think that salvation comes and is kept by good works are some of the most unkind people you will meet...

Sure, they may smile at you, but all the time they are checking you out to see if you are better off or worse off than they are...

On the other hand, people who see salvation by grace through faith in Christ know and hold to this important truth...

“This could have been me in need of restoration if not for the grace of God.”

John Bradford was an English preacher in the 1500s and was one of the preachers who took on the Catholic church for not being biblical...

Bradford was arrested and put in prison.

While in prison, a fellow inmate remarked to Bradford that at least he was there for righteous reasons.

And even said, “At least you are in here like the thieves and robbers all around you.”

Bradford rebuked the comment, and simply said... “But for the grace of God, I would be in here for much worse.”

The phrase eventually became....

“But for the grace of God, there go I.”

And that is the kind of humility makes us gentle even with the worst of sinners....

Lovers of the gospel law hold their heads high in pride, but lovers of a gospel of faith stay on their knees in humility....

This leads in to requirement #4 found at the end of verse 1...

#4 - Restoration should be done carefully.

Paul writes that the restorer should keep an eye on their own weak flesh as they aid in restoration so that they won't be tempted as well....

How many times do you read with horror as pastors fall into sin through counseling women with marital problems....

It may start out with good intentions on both ends, but it ends with both being led into sin even in midst of trying to restore someone...

I even read where a pastor was led into a gambling addiction trying to help a man recover from his own gambling problems....

And often the attitude behind these sins committed while trying to restore someone else is an attitude of pride...

A feeling of superiority...

I don't have this problem, so I can help you with yours without any threat to myself....

And that attitude is the attitude that leads to failure...

As we said last week...

He who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall, and many people do fall in the process of trying to help someone else recover from their fall....

It is tragic...

That is not to say that we don't help anyone, we do...

These verses tell us we should, but we do it with safeguards in our life and without an attitude of "I would never fall into this sin."

It can happen and it does, so as Paul writes...

"Keep a watch on yourself so that you aren't led into temptation in the midst of leading someone out of temptation...."

So, those are the requirements of restoration...

#1- Restoration must be the desire of the sinner.

#2 - Restoration should be handled by the spiritually mature...

#3 - Restoration should occur in a spirit of gentleness.

#4 - Restoration should be done carefully.

The second aspect of biblical restoration is found in verse 2....

And it is.....

II. The Purpose of Restoration (2)

Let me read verse 2 again....

2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

The clear purpose of restoration is to bear the burdens of your fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord...

This is the picture of the toddler on the dad's shoulders and the daughter in her mother's arms...

The church is a place where your burdens are shared by those who are your family...

Too often, Christians who fall into sin become the subject of gossip and slander when they should be the subject of our prayers and petitions to God...

Too often, friends run from the sinner instead of running to him calling him to repentance...

Too often, people handle their sins on their own because the church looks down their noses at them...

Restoration of the sinner is what separates the church from the world...

Look, the world of unbelievers abandon people with problems...

They shun them.

They attack them.

They abandon them...

But the church often looks like the world when it comes to reacting to the sinning Christian....

Our first reaction to the news that a fellow church member has fallen into sin is to go to them to call them to repentance....

And then to take other with us if necessary and then go to all the church in hopes that the sinning brother will see his error and be restored....

But most of the time, we let their names slip from our minds and hearts in hopes, and we over use the phrase....

Well, they know better....

God only helps those who help themselves....

That phrase is not in the Bible!

However, the Bible does say to go to the sinning brother and call him to repentance and then to restore him gently if he repents...

Look, there is a need for church discipline and there is a time for breaking fellowship...

The Bible is very clear when those times occur in the life of an unrepentant sinner, and they should occur if the sinner refuses to repent...

But before it gets to that point, the church needs to be busy bearing others burden in hopes that the sinning Christians see the error of their ways and wants to be restored...

There is a time for excommunication, but before that, there needs to be a lot of communication to the sinning brother in hopes of restoration...

When we carry the burdens of others and urge them to repentance, we fulfill the law of Christ...

What is the law of Christ?

Jesus said that all the law could be summarized into tow commands....

Love God and love others...

And you love others when you go to them seeking their repentance and help them in their restoration...

The church is precious to God and it must be kept pure, so the sinner first needs to be called to repentance and holiness restored or they must be removed...

May we at Pine Grove first seek the restoration of unrepentant Christians, but may we also seek the removal of unrepentant Christians if it necessary....

The first shows our love for others, and the second shows our love for the Lord and his church...

One more aspect of restoration to see in verses 3-5....

III. The Humility of Restoration (3-5)

Let me read verses 3-5 again....

3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

Much of this is simply a repeat of the end of verse 1, where Paul tells those who restore others to have the right attitude unless they fall into the same sins....

And the point of these final verses is to keep those who restore from spiritual pride....

Pride lurks even in the hearts of those who love grace and faith...

Pride is the hardest sin to see in ourselves and the hardest to kill....

It will pop its head up in the most unusual of places....

And often times, it rears its ugly head in the spiritually mature...

Those who know their Bibles and try to live obedient lives often suffer from pride because “they get it, and nobody else does.”

In the context of Paul’s letter, I am sure there were people there who had rejected the gospel of works and were frustrated with the people who were turning back to it...

And there are always people in any church who have a good understanding of the Bible...

But instead of that making them humble, it fills them with pride and arrogance and hardens their heart to people who struggle with sin....

Look, the goal of my ministry is to see this church mature and walk with the Lord by His Spirit...

But even I need to realize that we all don’t learn to walk at the same time....

And some are more prone to falling than others....

However, my reaction to failure must never be....

“Just find somewhere else to go.”

Instead my attitude must always be....

“Let me help you. Repent of this sin bother or sister, and I will help you get back on track.”

That is the work of a good shepherd, right?

But that also needs to be the attitude of the sheep as well....

WE should love our flock and the others in it, and when one gets caught in the fence trying to eat what they through was the green grass on the other side....

Our attitude should be...

“Serves him right. Let him get out of it.”

Instead it should be that we all run to him, tell him to eat from the Lord’s pasture and help to find good grass again...

And let add a final note...

Restoration, like shepherding, is messy business.

It is not a one size fits all solution...

Not two problems are the same, but the goal is always the same...

To get the sheep out of danger and back into fellowship...

And that should be our hearts as a church, and my heart as your pastor....

And I pray that God would help us both...

Conclusion

How do we wrap summarize these verse this morning?

Well, let me help....

#1 - A gospel of works and a religious system of law leads to more sin.

When dos and don't dominate a religious system, people end up doing more don't than do's.

Laws and legalism only push people to more disobedience...

Stay away from any religion or church that values a gospel of works over a gospel of faith.

#2 - A gospel of works and a religious system of law leads to hard hearts when Christians fall into sin.

When you measuring stick is "how well do you keep the law," people who sin are put in your dog house never to come out...

However, when you hold to a gospel of grace by faith alone, people who sin are opportunities for repentance restoration.

#3 - A gospel of works and a religious system of law leads to pride and arrogance.

When you base your goodness of what you do, your head swells when others fail and you do well...

However, when you base your goodness on what Christ has done for you, you will understand that you are nothing and that He is everything....

#4 - A gospel of works and a religious system of law leads to hell.

I have preached this point before and Paul has written about numerous times in this gospel, but it needs to be preached again...

The gospel of works has horrible consequences for daily living, but the worst consequence is in eternity...

Yet, there are many who hold tight to their good works in order to get them into heaven...

The good works that you need to get into heaven are not found in anything you can do...

They are found in Jesus Christ who you must put your faith in in order to be saved...

And when you repent of your sin and trust in Him, you are credited with all of Jesus' good works, but also forgiven of all your evil deeds through his death on your behalf..

Why don't you do that today?

Let go of your good works and cling to Jesus' obedience

And let go of your sin, and trust in Jesus' death...

God will save you and he will save you completely...

Your good works will perish with you, but Jesus' good works and forgiveness will be with you forever...

Let us pray...