**The Fruit of the Spirit**

Galatians 5:26-6:5

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**Jeff:** All right. Let’s turn to Galatians chapter 5, and let’s look at chapter 5 verse 26 through the fifth verse of chapter 6. Do you have that, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Let me find it. Starting at verse 26?

**Jeff:** Start with verse 25 and read through 6?5.

**Don:** Okay. *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

*“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** NKJV.

**Don:** This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, I’m going to show you the outline. But I think that to some degree the outline is not going to make a lot of sense to you until I talk to you about the introduction. In thinking about the introduction I want us to think about some preemptive principles. And those preemptive principles are basically going to be preemptive in the sense of how we basically deal with a world that will entice us to sin; how do we handle that? And then we’re going to think about supporting the Spirit’s work among the congregation, and then we’re going to think about Christ as our motivation.

So we’re going to think about those things. And again it will probably make better sense after we talk about the introduction, so let’s just do that.

Now here’s the thing that I want us to think about. We have two patterns here. We basically have a pattern of people with the fruit of the Spirit; that’s our first pattern. And the fruit of the Spirit is listed there: the fruit of the Spirit being *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

Now those kinds of things are paternesque. In other words, there’s a way about living life that manifests those things. Those are not incidental; those things are basically things that lay hold of us because Christ has laid hold of us, and we embody them.

And remember, it’s not just one of them; we embody all of them. When you think about God as simple—that is, God not being composed of parts, but one,--we think about all His attributes, being basically undefinable in terms of who God is prior to creation. But in creation He tries to—well, He doesn’t try to do anything!—but He basically lets us know who He is in an accommodated way; He’s loving and merciful and kind and good and just, and so on. But God in His simplicity is a God without parts and without passions; He’s not acted upon.

And so there’s a sense in which the fruit of the Spirit models the simplicity of God. There’s a sense in which all of these things belong to us by the Spirit living in us. We don’t just say, “I’ve got the fruit of the Spirit, but not all of them. I have love; I don’t have the rest of the fruit of the Spirit, but I just have love.”

Well that’s an impossibility, right? If God is love then God is merciful. If God is merciful God is just, and so on and so forth. God is what He is. And there’s a sense in which we are what we are in the Spirit of God. And what we are is fruit-bearing people.

And what is the fruit? The fruit is distributed in terms of this list. But it’s one batch of fruit in our lives. And so there’s a sense in which the Spirit lays hold of us, and then we embody this list, or at least we ought to as believers.

Now there’s another group of people. And the other group of people is a group because remember, we are talking within the church. It’s a group that comes and goes; there are the strong and there are the weak. The weak can become the strong and the strong can become the weak, and so we need to be careful of that.

And the strong and the weak at different times can embody another pattern, and that pattern is the pattern that we find here in the text. If you are not led by the Spirit and you are doing the works of the flesh, those things are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, and so on.

Now you know, we have a tendency to say that’s a list for outsiders. Well, would that were the case, right? Because the fact of the matter is that sometimes those who have manifested the fruit of the Spirit in their past can get caught up in the works of the flesh.

What we’re talking about today is this. We’re talking about a person who has gotten caught up in the works of the flesh, has repented of it, and manifested repentance. And the question is, what do we do with them? What do we do when someone is caught in sin and is repentant? The question then becomes: How do we treat them? How is it that a congregation of Jesus Christ handles a David? How is it that the congregation handles somebody who has fallen into sin, is repentant and is restored? How do we treat them? And in some ways I think that is basically what best describes this set of verses that are before us.

So what I want us to do is, I want us first of all to think about the preemptive principles, at least a preemptive principle. And I want us to think about this because this is one of those things that we want to speak to one another about, because it’s sort of like anything else. It’s easier to stay out of the mess than it is to fall into the mess and then get cleaned up after having fallen into it.

So it may not feel that way. In fact sometimes, for instance, the struggle with temptation may feel so great that it feels overwhelming. But if you had the ability to sit down and say to yourself, “Now let’s just wait this out a second. I know the overwhelming desire for me to do this thing and commit this sin and to engage in this temptation is so overwhelming that it feels almost like the waves that are crashing against Jonah as he is in the sea.” I know that.

But if you could sit down and have that in front of you, but also have the wreckage of your life in front of you,--for instance if David could have sat down and said to himself, “Okay, here’s that temptation to go after that woman on the roof. But post-adultery here are the four children that I’m going to lose because I’m going to be punished fourfold; (said the prophet); here are the four children I’m going to lose as a result of that. And here is all the wreckage and the carnage that’s going to happen in my life as a result of that.” Had he been sitting there, kind of weighing those things, one wants to believe that at least a believer,--not necessarily an unbeliever,--but one wants to believe that a believer would be able to put those things in the kind of proverbial scale pan and see that the one far outweighs the damage and difficulty of the other. And son the temptation would become in some ways, relatively speaking, easier to resist than to deal with the mess that it would cause.

But that’s not the way of it, is it?; that’s not the way of it. The way of it is that we feel immediately in the moment the torrent of temptation at the time, without thinking about all of the wreckage that comes. So this is one of those principles that says: Let’s think together about how we can preempt these kinds of things.

So what is it to be preemptive? What is it to act in this manner? Well you know, this word *preemptive* is an interesting word. It actually means “to purchase beforehand.”

If you’re preparing for that snowstorm, you’re gonna go out and you’re gonna buy your supplies beforehand. You’re gonna gather your resources up front. And there’s a certain sense in which that really fits the bill for what we’re thinking, right? When we’re thinking about how to preempt an encounter with temptation, the thing that we need to do is to gather our resources, to gather those resources that we have in Christ Jesus and ready ourselves for that conflict.

Now there’s a problem. When we are not preemptive, we may cause someone else to stumble. This is the problem, and this kind of drives at the text. We’re not necessarily talking about what it is to be preemptive; I think we’ve been talking about what it is to be preemptive. We’ve been talking about walking in the Spirit, and we’ve been talking about putting off and putting on. We’ve been talking about what the fruit of the Spirit is and how the Spirit works that in us; we’ve been talking about all those things.

But what I want us to talk about is this: What happens when we are not preemptive? What happens then? Well I think there’s a tendency for us not only to cause a problem for ourselves, but there’s a tendency to cause a problem for others. And I think you see that in the text. Look in verse 26 for instance: *“Let us not become conceited; let us not become boastful.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** Now that’s a preemptive statement; don’t become this. In other words, purchase humility beforehand so that you may not become boastful.

Now why is that? Well, look at what else this text says: because you might provoke one another by your boasting. To do what? To become envious. That’s the idea, or at least that’s the flow of the text. When you become boastful you provoke others. And what happens in others is that they become envious, and so forth. And so you basically you have this cause-and-effect channel that happens when you’re not preemptive, when you’re not checking yourself, when you’re not making purchases beforehand, drawing down on those resources that are in Christ so that you might not only help yourself, but that you might help others.

Now I want you to think about that. I know we’ve been talking about it, but I guess I would really like to pause, because sometimes when you go over stuff you’re not always sure that it’s taken. Let me just ask you the question and let’s just see where we are with it.

When I say that you have to do preemptive work, that you have to gather the resources ahead of time so that for instance you don’t boast, what comes to mind when you think that way? What are some ways in which you’ve been preemptive? And I guess the greater question is that in some ways, when we think about being preemptive as Christians, it’s a little bit more difficult than being preemptive when it comes to a hurricane or a snowstorm, or something like that.

Those things are easy, right? Do we have the blankets or the flashlights? Do we have the extra water? What list did we make up?

But the question when it comes to sort of a spiritually preemptive checklist is a little different, isn’t it? And so what is it to be preemptive? How is it that we curb boasting? Have you given that much thought?

**Jim Hamilton:** Seek the Lord’s help.

**Jeff:** Okay. So prayer; are you praying? I think that’s an excellent one. And I think for instance that the question is not are you praying in the hardship of the moment? The question is: Have you built up a pattern of prayer over time, so that when you meet the hardship you’re drawing down on the relationship that exists? So that’s a great one. The question really is: Is that happening in us? Were you going to say something?

**Don Bishop:** Well, I’m just thinking. If you’re being preemptive, you’re putting up a fence.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** And you’re preventing Satan from getting at it. If you let your guard down, he’s going to come right at you.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right. Okay.

**Brave Man:** I think we’re aware of our own weaknesses, at least prayerfully we should be. We know what causes us to stumble better than anybody else other than the Lord.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** If you know you have a weakness or a propensity towards a certain sin, then you should be protecting yourself against that.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** And not walking in the situation, knowing that this will not be good for you. So avoid it if possible, and if not, be in constant prayer.

**Jeff:** Yes, there is the negative side, right? For instance, we would hope that the positive side would be the main side: that is, the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit in one’s life. But there is the other side. And the other side is I don’t go, or I cut off my hand, I pluck out my eye; I do those things that prevent me from it. In other words, there’s a sense in which one wants the fruit of the Spirit to do the work that I might otherwise have to do if I cut off my hand, right? And so there’s a difference between those, and you’re r night. But they are both important. Go ahead.

**Brave Man:** One verse that I was putting into perspective in my reading is from 1 Corinthians: “There is no temptation that has overtaken you that is not common to man.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** You can make all sorts of excuses if you’re not—

**Jeff:** Yes. When you think about the fourfold state of man, we’re in that third state: we’re able to sin, we’re able not to sin. And no matter how you slice it, no temptation has seized you that’s uncommon to man, and God has provided a way out for you. You can exercise not sinning; Romans 6 says that. We will sin because the sinful nature continues to exist. But that doesn’t change the reality of the situation. Yes?

**Don Maurer:** I think everything that has been said has been very good. I think that a couple things that have been helpful for me is, about sin in general, when I’m tempted—and I should make this every time I’m tempted; unfortunately I don’t!—but why would you want to go back to committing something and doing something that Christ shed His blood for, that cost Christ His life?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ron Baling:** Good question.

**Don:** And t hen as far as most sins are concerned, I often think of the situations where I’m in where I am dependent. Maybe I don’t like to be all the time.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** I am dependent in a number of areas on people. And I think: well, you’re ultimately dependent upon God for everything. And everything that God has given you, every gift that God has given you, is something you didn’t earn.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** And so that is helpful for me in curbing the tendency to boast. I don’t find myself doing that outwardly; sometimes I’m tempted to do it inwardly in my thought lie. And that’s where I have to buckle down on that.

**Jeff:** Yeah. You know, I’ve been reading Proverbs. There are just a number of things that struck me about the preemptive way of dealing with this. You know, one of the things it says is that *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* And when you think about it, when you think about learning how to read and write, the alphabet is crucial, isn’t it? You have to learn the alphabet before you can learn how to read and write. What’s the foundation? You go over your ABC’s. And once you get your ABC’s down you can start learning how to read and write.

It recently struck me that the fear of the Lord is like learning the alphabet before learning how to read and write. If you don’t have that down, you’re not going to be wise; you’re not even going to be able to pursue wisdom. And so the question is: What is that fear of the Lord that we need to have? And I think that the fear of the Lord for a Christian is that we have the respectful, mindful, loving fear that we have for a father. That’s a building block.

And then when you get into Proverbs, the rest of the next part of that text where he talks about, “Look, I’m telling you these things so that when you’re enticed, you remember these words of instruction.” I don’t think that we give enough weight to the fact that words matter, and that they are formative in our lives. For instance I think that’s why a good many churches today in the world and in America at least, have given up preaching. Preaching doesn’t matter anymore because words don’t matter, right? It’s a picture that’s worth a thousand words; it’s an image that’s worth more than words. So why would we spend time listening to a guy in the pulpit just dribble out words? A picture matters, an image matters, a video matters.

And yet that’s not what the Word says. The Word says that the Word dwelt among us, and that the Word does His work in us. The Word recreates: the *Spiritus Recreator,* the recreating Spirit who works in us.

And so I think all of these things are preemptive things that we need to imbibe as we live the Christian life, so that when we face temptation we can be ready to handle it. That’s good; I’m glad we engaged in that.

The second thing the text engages in is that we need to support the Spirit’s work. Now again I’m talking about when we are engaged with trying to minister to a brother who has fallen into the pattern of sin that we see in the list about the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. And how is it that we minister to him? Well, we support the Spirit’s work. There are four principles listed in the text that I think that we engage in.

The first one may be the most difficult. And that is that we recognize each other as family. I don’t know; this may be the most difficult thing for some of us to do, especially for those of us who have had healthy family situations, or those who live near a biological family or at least a large section of a biological family. In those scenarios I think it’s hard for people to think of the church as their family.

And yet I would say to you that the church is primarily your family. That is to say that we say things like blood is thicker than water. Well, that’s not true.

Can I say it like this without being a regenerationist? I say that baptismal water is thicker than blood, or at least it ought to be, right? There’s a sense in which, if you are in the family of God, that’s your family.

That’s hard for a lot of people to hear because a lot of people say: Well, look. If my biological family is doing something and my church is doing something, I’m going to be with my biological family, even if my biological family is unbelieving; I’m going to be with them.

And you know, I just want you to know that I don’t think you can support that Scripturally. When you look at Matthew chapter 10 for instance, I don’t know if you can get any stronger of an image than family in Judaism. But that’s the family that Jesus is talking about. And He says, well what if father and mother are against you? Or what if a daughter-in-law is against a mother-in-law, and so on? What about all those things?

And He says, “Look; I’m the true Head of the house, and you are My family. I don’t care about your blood types to other Jews; you are My family.” This is what Jesus says, remember? When they come to get Him in chapter 12 they think He’s mad. And they say to Him, “Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside, waiting to get You.” And He points to His disciples and says, “These are my mother and brothers and sisters.”

You see, the point is that the family of God is your family. That’s not to say that you shouldn’t have relationships with blood ties; you should. I’m just saying that there are priorities. And the priority is the church family.

Personally, I think that the reason why we don’t think that way is because church has become an option. Why has church become an option? Church has become an option because for instance the evangelical world has made a bifurcation—a distinction—between the kingdom of God on the one hand and the church on the other. And so for instance you’ll hear people talk about doing Kingdom work, but they neglect the church. And so they’ll say, “I’m doing Kingdom work,” because Jesus talked about the kingdom of God. “I’m doing Kingdom work. But the church has become weak and limp, and one of those things doesn’t run very well. So I go there once a month.”

Did you know that there are churches which are giving attendance by month nowadays? They don’t keep weekly attendance because people go on average once a month. So their statistics reported denominationally are for monthly attendance.

That’s amazing to me. But I want to tell you something. As somebody who is part of a parachurch ministry,--The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, which I love and I value,--the church is the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is the church; they are one and the same. There is no bifurcation between the two. And I think that to think that way is to do injustice to what the Scriptures teach.

So the point I’m making is that we need to reclaim something that is Biblical that we have lost. And I think we’ve lost it as a country because of this, and I think it would take too long to try to work through this. But I think that one of the reasons why we have lost this is the dispensationalism that has captured the thinking of a good many in this country.

**Ted:** Amen.

**Jeff:** You know why. It starts with the fact that Israel is the real people of God, and the church is an afterthought. God is going to deal with them and then rapture them out. And then He’s going to take on His real love interest which is Israel. And when that’s your first move your second move is to talk about kingdom work versus church work, and to relegate church to something very subsidiary; it’s an easy move. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Dispensationalism also teaches that the kingdom of God is in the future; we’re not in the Kingdom now.

**Jeff:** Yeah, that’s right.

**Don:** That is a problem.

**Jeff:** Yes. So I guess all of this is to say that we need to reclaim something that I can easily say that we don’t easily feel. It’s hard to feel the church as a family unless the church really is your family. For those who don’t have a big family, who have an unbelieving family and whose family life has been a little more on the difficult side, it’

S a little easier to feel that the church is your family. And so it’s more difficult if you’ve had a good experience. That’s first.

Now if you look at this text it says: *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** Now let’s think about this for a minute. To restore means to set in order. It can even mean to mend him. If someone is caught in sin, restore him; set his life in order; mend him. That’s the idea, okay?

Now that’s the posture that we are to have with regard to someone who has been caught in sin. Now this is the second principle. The question is: Who restores him? And that is those who are spiritual among you.

Now the question is, what is a spiritual man? Who is this spiritual man? Now I want to say this first. It says: *“If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual.”* The idea is that you who are spiritual may not have been spiritual at one point. You may have been on the receiving end of this. But you who are spiritual now,--that is, those who are spiritual among you at the present moment who are walking in the Sprit, those things now a present part of your life,--now you help this person. So what does it mean to be a spiritual person, a spiritual man? What does that mean? Have you thought about it, especially in relation to our text? What does it mean? Do you have something, Jordan? You’re smiling.

**Jordan Obaker:** I was just thinking. In relation to the text we just learned about the fruit of the Spirit and one who walks in the Spirit.

**Jeff:** Yeah. When you think about who the spiritual man is, you think about the one keeping in step with the Spirit. What does that man look like? That man looks like this description: *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against these things there is no law.”*

Notice: one of those things is brought down into the discussion. How is it that this person is to be restored by those who are spiritual? In a spirit of gentleness, part of the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, he’s helping us; he’s drawing down from that list to say to us, “Here is how you’re supposed to do it.”

Now we know that the fruit of the Spirit is not plural; it’s singular. And so when he mentions one he’s including all. He’s not just saying to do it with gentleness, but you can forego love on this one. No, that’s not what he’s saying. He’s saying that you do it with all of the fruit of the Spirit. And so we are spiritual when we are walking in the Spirit and keeping in step with the Spirit, which means that there is a harvest of spiritual fruit produced within us.

And basically this means what? This means those of us who are seeking the Lord in prayer, who are taking part in the means of grace regularly, being part of the communion of the saints; all of those things. It’s not magic. It just means that those of you who are faithful are spiritual. That’s the idea, right?

Martin Luther said this. He was quoting Augustine; it comes from Vol. 27 of his works on page 388. He says: *“Nothing so demonstrates the spiritual man as his treatment of someone else’s sin, when he plans how to set him free rather than how to revile him.”*

Oh, that’s so good, isn’t it? When we treat someone else’s sin, I want you to know something. We are good at being judges of other people’s sins. You know, we’re not so good at being judges of our own sin. And yet that’s what the Scripture calls us to. first take the log out of your own eye. Cut off your hand; pluck out your eye. Deal ruthlessly with our own sin.

But we have a tendency to judge others, to pull the speck out of their eyes before we pull the log out of our own. Yes?

**Mike Davis:** It’s easy to judge others when you forget where you’ve come from. It’s easy to judge others when you forget that you’ve been born again and that you’ve been set apart. It wasn’t me who did it; God did it for me. Who am I to crush somebody else when I know who I am?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Mike:** And the more we look at God’s holiness, the more we see Him in the pages of Scripture, the more I realize how weak I really am apart from the Spirit at work in me. Who am I to judge somebody else?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Mike:** That’s God’s job, and we’re involved as family, right?

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right, and that’s a great point. If you are really thinking in terms of the family, who wants to see their family trashed? Anybody I know, even the kid who has been abused all his life, it’s a rare person who wants to see his parent that abused him all of his life burn. He typically is trying to please that parent that abused him all of his life.

Now you can say any number of things about why that’s the case. But the fact of the matter is, that kid wants the approval of his parent, right? And you can think of all other scenarios in family relationships. The point is that typically, even for the worst of our families, we want to see the best for them. So it’s a great quote.

Third, we need to look out for ourselves. What does this mean? People often say, look: when you’re dealing with the sinning brother you ought to be careful because you don’t want to end up in his sin. If you’re dealing with someone with a porn addiction you’d better watch out, because it could be your addiction next. We have a tendency to think that’s the way to approach this text.

I want to suggest that we think of another way to approach this text. I want to suggest that instead of looking at it as so we don’t fall into temptation, I want us to think that the temptation for us is to boast. The temptation is for us to feel as if we’re better than this person; that’s the real temptation.

The temptation is not that his sins will become my sins, sort of like osmosis. Do you know what I mean? The temptation is that I may feel superior to this man, and I may boast. And we are not to feel that sort of satisfaction that we are not this man. That’s the guy that goes into the temple, the Pharisee along with the tax collector.

The tax collector beats his breast, right? And the Pharisee says, “Oh Lord, I’m so thankful that I’m not that man,” right? That’s the temptation for us.

And I think that the previous text in verse 26 takes us back to that. *“Let us not become conceited.”* If we happen to be spiritual in helping somebody else who is emerging from a pattern of sin, then we are not to boast. We’re not to become conceited; we’re not to hold it over them. I think that’s the idea. So that’s the third principle.

The fourth principle is the question: Where are the elders? You know, where is the leadership in this text? That’s the question. And one of the things that I think when I look at this text is that this is basically a letter written in the early days—maybe the earliest of days,--and maybe there were no elders. But there certainly were principles. And those principles are captured, for instance, in the gospel.

For instance, if you would just go to Matthew 18 for a minute, Matthew 18 tells us what we do. You know, even if the church was in a fledgling state, there is still a pattern that could be used here. Paul and Barnabas were at least visiting the churches regularly in those early days.

But here it is, right? *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. If he repents, then you have won your brother.* If he is not repentant, take two or three witnesses with you so that everything may be established, and then confront him.” And then if he repents, it’s a done matter. If he doesn’t repent, then you take it to the church. You take it to the leadership of the church. So that’s the pattern.

So here we are. We’re in a situation where a person has been restored. He’s been repentant. Now we’re asking: How do we deal with them?

Well we may have to repeat this pattern because the fact of the matter is, a person who falls off the wagon once may fall off the wagon again. But that doesn’t mean we cut them off. Remember what Jesus says: “Forgive them seventy times seven.” So if they come back to us in repentance, we embrace them again. And we move forward with them with the same principles; that’s the idea.

And then we are motivated by Christ. I have four things here that I want us to take note of.

The first is this: We must fulfill the law. Go back to Galatians if you’re not there. Look at what it says in verse 2; *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Now I want you to think about this from the standpoint of what you know to be true with regard to the gospel. You do not fulfill the law and so are saved. You have to think again about the uses of the law.

What are the uses of the law. Well, the first use of the law is that the law is a schoolmaster that drives us to Christ, right? It teaches us that we’re sinners and need a Savior. So that’s what the law does. The law comes along in Romans 7 and says, “Hey, you envy! I’m the law, and the law says, don’t envy.” And Paul recognizes his envy and tries to appeal to the law. The law beats him, right? It’s not the law that saves him; it’s Christ who took the curse of the law upon Himself who saves.

So the question is this. What does he mean here when he says, “Fulfill the law of Christ?” Well, he means this. He means that now in Christ, Christ having become the burden-bearer for us, now in Christ we are able to say, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” And the Lord says to us, “Become like Me.”

Well what does that look like? And the answer is: righteousness. Where do I find that righteousness? It’s embodied in the law, right? And so when I practice the law of righteousness, now I do it not to be saved, but so that I might look like Jesus Christ.

That’s the second use of the law. The second use of the law is that it shapes us into the image of Christ. It teaches us what righteousness looks like, and so we obey the law. We fulfill the law in order to be like Christ.

So we act righteously before our brother who needs us. We’re motivated by that, right? I mean, think about it. If the law says, “Love your neighbor,” I want to love this guy whose my closest neighbor; he is my brother in Christ. I want to do that for him, right?

You know, sometimes when we love our brother, it may sometimes be correcting his thinking. Sometimes it may be correcting his behavior. Correcting his behavior is the easiest thing in the world. Correcting his thinking is hard.

Have you ever run into that guy that says something like this? You’re talking to him. “Look, you want to set your mind on things above, because when you do that you will help yourself to avoid sin.”

And the guy says something like this. “Well, you know, I want to go to heaven. But there are a lot of things I want to do here before I go to heaven; I want to experience some things here.”

I want you to know something. That guy thinks that the things that he’s going to do here are better than the things that he’s going to do in heaven. That guy has a wrong view. He thinks that his enjoyments here are going to far outweigh his enjoyment of heaven. He doesn’t understand that what we experience in heaven will far outweigh what we’re going to experience here.

But you see, his thinking is at least sloppy; it’s wrong. And as long as he thinks like that, he’ll have an earthly mindset. And he’ll be susceptible to the work of the flesh; he’ll always be susceptible to the work of the flesh.

So we need to fulfill the law in the sense that we need to do it ourselves. But we need to be there for others in this regard.

Second, we must become burden-bearers. Now there’s a sense in which we’re emulating the Lord Jesus Christ at this point, aren’t we? Why? I want you to think about it. Christ comes and He bears the burden of the curse of the law on our behalf.

Look at this. *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch, lest you be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens.”*

Be like Christ in this regard. You’re not going to become the atoning sacrifice for your brother. But in so far as you come alongside him and help him to bear his burden, you are acting like your Savior.

Now there are a lot of things that go into that statement; that could be a Bible study of its own. You know, there are many questions about how one does that, and those are wisdom issues. How you walk with someone is always a wisdom issue, right? I mean, there’s a sense in which you could neglect your own family to walk with a guy who doesn’t care about his most of the time. And that would be wrong, right?

You wouldn’t want to fall into that kind of error. You could get to the point where you actually care about the guy’s burden more than he cares about his burden. And that would be a problem. So you can’t just say to yourself, “I’m just gonna walk with this guy until he ruins me.” You can’t do that, right? That’s not wisdom.

Bearing one another’s burdens takes wisdom; it take discernment. Not everybody has the ability to do that, because not everybody can actually look a brother in the eye and say, “I’m not doing that, and you’re not doing that either. And if you do that, you’ll do that alone.” You just need to have that kind of wisdom.

I’ll tell you what you need to be. When you walk alongside a guy you need to be his parent. When a guy is emerging from sin he doesn’t need a buddy; he needs a parent. He needs a spiritual parent for that moment in his life. And if you can’t handle that, then you may not be the guy to walk alongside of him, because he may not be able to receive that from you. Okay?

And then third, we must be nothing. Verse 3: *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* We must become nothing.

And what I mean by that is that we must not think more of ourselves than we ought to think, because if we do we’re going to be tempted. Because we’re trying to help a brother who is in sin, if we think we are something rather than nothing, we’re going to be tempted to boast. We’re going to be tempted to see ourselves as far superior to this brother who is languishing in this particular sin. And it’s going to be difficult not only for him but for us as well. So if we are nothing, then we have everything. If we are something we have nothing.

And you know, I just want to ask you a question. What are you? I mean right now, who are you? How are you thinking about your own spiritual walk?

I was in our youth group not terribly long ago and I was asking the students. I said, “How are you doing?” And this one student said this to me; he phrased it like this: “I’ve never been so good.”

Now there’s a sense in which that could happen; you feel that you’re doing very well. But he framed it almost in the way of saying, “I’m untouchable at this point.” And I’m like “Whoa, there! You might want to slow that one down; let’s talk about that for a minute.” It’s a far fall when you fall from a mountain like that.

But what are you, and what are you thinking about yourself? It’s an important question.

And fourth, how do you treat the one who has been restored? That is going to be the measure of what you think of yourself. If that person who has sinned is someone where you think to yourself: Oh, I’m not gonna mess with that!”, maybe you think something of yourself rather than nothing.

Now I get it. For instance look, let’s face it. If you go to a family reunion, what’s gonna happen? Cousins are gonna hang around with cousins, and the older generation is gonna hang around with the older generation, and so on and so forth. They’re going to have their groups.

But I’ve got news for you. If Grandpa falls when he’s getting his hot dog, everybody comes running, right? And the fact of the matter is that in the church, when somebody falls everybody comes running and kind of assesses the situation. And then what usually happens is that two or three kind of step forward and say, “We got it, we got it; go back to eating.” You know what I mean? And they get Grandpa up.

But in this situation you get a couple of guys that come around. I’ve watched this situation. I had a guy come in who had a problem with drug abuse and alcohol abuse. And there was sort of this immediate thing where everybody was around him. And then about two or three guys just kind of emerged, and then week by week you could just see them holding them up, being with him throughout the week. It was just kind of a great picture of this.

I’m not saying that everybody has to do everybody else’s work. But the Lord may cause you to be one of those two or three people. And you have to think about yourself in the right way before you can be used of the Lord in whatever way He’s calling you to be used.

Okay, that’s all I have. Any thoughts or question that you want to wrestle with before we finish up? Yes?

**Mike:** Don’t we shoot our wounded?

**Jeff:** Well, once they get too bad you’ve gotta put them down. No! *(Laughter)* That was a joke! *(Laughter)* Well, it’s easier to get rid of them, right?

**Don Maurer:** I was going to bring that up too. What happened a few months ago with a prominent preacher and teacher from Ligonier Ministries?

**Jeff:** I don’t know if we shot him, though. I think he shot himself.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** I mean, I have yet to hear him come out and make any sort of admission or repentant statement. And the people closest to him seem to indicate that he’s unwilling to do that. So I don’t know if we’ve shot him; I think maybe he shot himself.

**Don:** Okay. But in those kinds of circumstances a lot of times it’s well, he’s gone. Forget about him; he’s no good anymore, etc.

**Jeff:** Yeah. John, were you going to say something?

**John Gratner:** Yes. The more we meditate on and take the Scriptures seriously, in the sense that all of us humans are made in the same image of God, and also being reminded that our battle is not against flesh and blood, we might be more eager to love our neighbors as ourselves, which is inclusive of all humans.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Okay, let me pray for us. Gracious God, thank You for this day. And thank You for the reminder in Your word that we need to gather around those brothers who are wounded and who have emerged from sin. Lord, we pray that You’ll help us, and we pray that You’ll help us to be mindful of them. And help us to be mindful of ourselves and where we are and who we are. Lord, we ask that Your hand would be upon us throughout this day, and give us more of Christ. Lord, we pray these things in His precious name. Amen. *(Applause)*