

Eyes that Focus on the Needs of People
Galatians 6:1-2

Martin Luther wrote in his introduction to Galatians, “The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora.” Luther loved the message of deliverance by grace. He desired to lift the burdens of religious obligations: “do this, pay this, donate to this, say this prayer, bow, etc.,” and Galatians gives that message. But like all of Paul’s Epistles, the message of grace shifts half-way through the book, and the Apostle shows how graced people are to live. There is a change in verb tenses, from Greek aorist, or perfect, to imperatives and participles. He goes from truth to how it should be lived out.

I. Working on behalf of those trapped by destructive behaviors is grace at work.

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one” (6:1).

A. This is physician work, not detective work.

“Caught” does not mean an “Aha, I caught you!” moment. No. We are not responsible for going looking for others’ sins, hoping to catch them doing something wrong. The word Paul uses means “trapped” or “entangled” (see Heb. 12:1-2). It’s being stuck in sin. It’s like quicksand. The harder one fights, the worse it gets. The people around us will likely get “stuck” in something they shouldn’t. But to “restore” them is like mending or setting a broken bone, not capturing a suspect.

B. This is delicate work, not forceful work.

“You who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness” (6:1). Interestingly, the word translated “anyone” is *anthropos* (man). Any man trapped by sin is to be treated with gentleness. We make the mistake of separating believers and non-believers, but Scripture says, “any man.”

C. This is healing work, not punitive work.

Think of the woman caught in adultery in John 8, or the Samaritan woman in John 4. Jesus says, “Hey, what you’ve been up to is wrong, but let me help you. I am not interested in seeing you punished, but in seeing you made whole.” Jesus only gets harsh with the religiously self-righteous.

II. Working to help others escape destructive patterns requires my *personal* diligence.

“...each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted” (6:1b). “The plural is beautifully switched to the singular in this verse. It’s a corporate responsibility to help others; a personal responsibility to be diligent” (Matthew Henry). Be careful. Watch yourself; don’t watch them. They’re already stuck in their sins. If you end up stuck too, you can’t be of any help to other people. *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Galatians 6:3).*

III. Working to help others caught up in sin is a fulfillment of the law of Christ.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). What is “the law of Christ?” The Bible nowhere specifically defines what precisely is the law of Christ. However, most Bible teachers understand it to be something that Christ emphasized repeatedly throughout His ministry. *“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” (John 13:34).* How is Jesus loving you? He is removing you from your entanglement with and addiction to sin. *“You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).* All too often the temptation of the grace-minded is to say, “Hey, everyone sins; leave people alone.” On the other hand, legalistic-minded religious people think, “You’re a sinner; God hates you.” We are to incarnate the love and grace of God for sinners. But what if a person doesn’t see their sin? They will. *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).*