

RESTORE SUCH A ONE

Dowlen Road, March 22, 2009 AM

INTRODUCTION:

- A. There are a lot of great things about being a Christian. We are blessed in so many ways because we are part of this great, spiritual family.
 - 1. This worship service is one example. How blessed we are to be able to come to this place, sing these songs, study together, remember our Lord's death with all these other disciples.
 - 2. I enjoy being able to spend time just hanging out – going to dinner, a ball game – with other Christians. I don't have to worry about someone's foul mouth or who will drink too much.
 - 3. I'm thankful to have people in my life who I know will come to my aid any time I need them (Todd's accident).
 - 4. What are some of the blessings that you appreciate about being part of a great spiritual family?
- B. But we must appreciate that with this great blessing also comes great responsibility.
 - 1. There are things we do for each other because we are family.
 - 2. Some of these duties are difficult and unpleasant (Galatians 6:1).
 - 3. Have you ever had to do this? It isn't a very pleasant task. In fact, it may be one of the most difficult family duties we have.
 - 4. For that reason, it is often neglected. And yet, it is vital. Failure to do this work may contribute to some family member being lost forever.
- C. Think about this.
 - 1. What kind of family would you have if you enjoyed each other's company, but were unwilling to do the difficult things families must sometimes do (discipline children, corrected each other, hold each other accountable). Some might argue that this is not a family at all. Love drives us to do what is best for each other, even if it is difficult.
 - 2. Are we truly a spiritual family, then, if we are unwilling to do some of the difficult things that love demands?
 - 3. Think about that as we explore Paul's admonition.

THE DILEMMA: *"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass"*

- A. It happens.
 - 1. It happened to Simon. This new disciple had come so far. But his old thinking crept back in and he fell into sin (Acts 8:18-20).
 - 2. Oddly enough, Peter – who is doing the rebuking in this story – found himself being rebuked later. This seasoned disciple was also tripped up and had to be confronted with his sin (Galatians 2:11-13).
 - 3. It happened to this new Christian; it happened to this veteran disciple; and it happens to us. We have an enemy that is constantly battling us, trying to get us to deviate from God's path and pull us into sin (1 Peter 5:8).
 - 4. Sometimes he is successful. Sometimes the problem is our ignorance. Satan lures us into things that we do not know are sinful. This is a struggle for new Christians. Sometimes he preys on our weaknesses, assaulting us again and again in areas where we struggle. Do you find yourself caving to the same temptation over and over again? Sometimes he pursues us at a moment of vulnerability. When we are discouraged, isolated, burdened, overloaded, Satan will use those moments in an effort to catch us when our defenses are weak.
 - 5. The reality is this, we are involved in this ongoing war with the devil and sometimes he wins a battle.
- B. It is obviously tragic when this happens.
 - 1. The choice to sin – whether willful or in ignorance – can bring terrible consequences into our lives.
 - 2. But even more serious are the spiritual consequences. The Calvinists are wrong when they suggest that, after we are saved, there is nothing we can do to be lost again (Galatians 5:4). If we deviate from God's path and continue in sin, we will be lost. The dilemma described here is a serious one. Because we are a spiritual family, it should stir the greatest concern and compassion in our hearts. It simply should not be possible for us to be indifferent about sin in each other's lives.
 - 3. And yet, it is also one that every Christian faces. While we do not want to minimize the seriousness of this situation, nor should we consider it a terrible insult when someone approaches us about sin in our lives. It's a moment every disciple must face. If the great Apostle Peter can fall and need correction, why would we expect to be the exception? Much is at stake when this moment comes. We need to handle it well. But what is to be done? First, Paul will identify the doers and tell us who should take action.

THE DOERS: *"you who are spiritual"*

- A. We must be careful not to misunderstand Paul's point here.
 - 1. He is not trying to create a class of "super-Christians" who have the exclusive responsibility to address this dilemma.
 - 2. The duty he will go on to describe is not left only to those who do not know this person well.
 - 3. It is not left to church leaders who have a special duty to be watchful (Hebrews 13:17).
- B. The doers in this passage are those who are spiritual.
 - 1. It is language that takes our minds back to the previous chapter. Those who are spiritual are those who: "walk by the Spirit" (5:16), "are led by the Spirit" (5:18), "bear the fruit of the Spirit" (5:22), "live by the Spirit" (5:25).
 - 2. Who is this? These are phrases that should describe every Christian. Thus, the duty he is about to describe belongs to every faithful disciple. The only person who would be exempt is the person who is not following the Spirit, who is caught up in sin himself and needs to be restored. Either I'm numbered among those caught up in sin, or the spiritual that need to be rescuing them, but I'm in one group or the other.
 - 3. If I know of a brother in sin, I have a duty. Paul will define this duty.

THE DUTY: *“restore such a one”*

- A. Here is the objective.
 - 1. Scholars tell us that this word, “restored,” was used by Greeks to describe a doctor returning a dislocated limb back to its proper place.
 - 2. This is what needs to happen with a brother who has fallen into sin. He needs to be brought back to his proper place. This requires some things. It requires abandoning whatever conduct has taken him off God’s path. It requires that he repent and make things right with God. It requires that he return to the life God would want him to live.
- B. My task is to help him do this. How we pull this off will differ with each person and each situation.
 - 1. Sometimes all that is needed is a little teaching. Some new Christians just need someone to show them where they are going wrong and help them get back on track.
 - 2. Others are more stubborn and need a firm rebuke to shake them loose from their sin. There is a place for that (Acts 8:20-23, Galatians 2:11).
 - 3. There is frequently a need for ongoing instruction and encouragement. A brother battling an addiction to internet pornography may need someone to hold him accountable. A husband or wife struggling with sin in their marriage may need ongoing instruction to become the spouse God wants them to be. A young person wrestling with peer pressure may need someone to lean on when the pressure is really building.
 - 4. Here’s the point: whatever my brother needs to escape this sin and get back on the right path, this is what I need to do! It’s what families do for each other. But notice that Paul does not simply tell us what to do, he also address the demeanor with which we do it.

THE Demeanor: *“in a spirit of gentleness”*

- A. Let’s be sure that we don’t misunderstand his point.
 - 1. Gentleness does not require that we “beat around the bush” and never get to the point.
 - 2. It does not require that we allow people to manipulate and bully to avoid dealing with their sin.
 - 3. It does not require that we avoid talking straight to someone about their sin and its consequences.
- B. But it does require something of us.
 - 1. It does require that we carefully examine our motive. Confronting someone with their sin should only be about one thing – restoration. If that’s not what I’m after, then I’m probably in trouble before I begin. If I’m just trying to get someone told, vent my irritation, or settle a grudge, then I’m no better off than the person I’m confronting. I better make sure my motives are true.
 - 2. It also requires that I handle people carefully. This is what gentleness is all about. We are dealing with souls and issues that will impact eternity. I need to think about whom I am working with and what I’m trying to accomplish. People need to be handled differently. Some are very fragile and easily wounded. In cases like these I need to be calm and encouraging. Others are hard and stubborn. They need someone to be direct and plain with them.
 - 3. The point is this, I need to think about each person I’m trying to reach, the objective I’m after, and tailor my approach to achieve the best response. This admonition to be gentle speaks to a danger we face as we execute this mission.

THE DANGER: *“each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted”*

There are at least three possible ways to understand Paul’s words.

- A. He may be speaking to the danger we just discussed – that I might be guilty of sin in the way I approach a brother in sin. This is the most natural way to understand his warning. To do this multiplies the tragedy – when our efforts to rescue one actually lead another into sin. It may be that Paul is urging us to take a good, long look at ourselves before we approach someone. Are my motives pure? How will I conduct myself if they become angry with me? We need to be cautious that our efforts to help others do not cause us to sin. We need to be godly in our attitudes and actions, no matter what the other guy does.
- B. It may also be that Paul wants us to remember that we too are sometimes tempted and fall into sin. This goes back to our point at the beginning – every disciple goes through this. Every disciple must at times be confronted about sin in their life. Paul’s point is this: how would you want to be treated? How would you want them to approach you? What motives would you want to drive them? Apply the golden rule (Matthew 7:12). When I’m treating others in a way that I would never allow others to treat me, I am sinning.
- C. It may be that Paul is warning us not to allow ourselves to be pulled into our brother’s sin as we are trying to help him out. How many times has a man tried to help a woman in a troubled marriage, only to become involved with her in immorality? Helping someone who is struggling with pornography or gambling could create an opportunity for Satan to tempt us with these same things. Paul may be warning us to be cautious. Sin is alluring. In trying to help others out of it, we need to be careful that we do not get drawn into it.

CONCLUSION: *If this work is difficult and even dangerous, why do we do it?*

We do this work for two reasons: First, because we are family. We love each other. This love will not allow us to sit on the sidelines while a brother is in jeopardy. Second, we do this because so much is at stake. If a brother continues in sin, he will be lost. This possibility is so dreadful that it provokes to muster all our energy and do all we can to rescue them. Are you in danger right now? Are you in a right relationship with God?