

Today we're going to be talking about the 'one another' aspect of being a disciple of Jesus...

Something really wonderful about 'becoming a Christian', is the way we gain a whole new family. Jesus didn't save us, so that we then try and live the Christian life on our own – we're not meant to. It's about being joined together in God's family. And, if we truly love Jesus, we can't help but love His family.

Yes, being in a family means 'some of our family members (at times) are going to rub us the wrong way'... And sometimes our love for Jesus and our love for His family means that we have to extend a lot of grace and forgiveness. ... but that's all part of 'living as a family' / 'living by the Spirit.'

In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, over the last 2 weeks, we've been seeing the difference between the 'works of the flesh', and the 'fruit of the Spirit'.

- The works of the flesh, are that fleshly part of us that's rebellious against God, and wants to put ourselves ahead of others; and
- The Fruit of the Spirit, is the very character of Jesus, growing and developing in our lives, as we walk with Him.

And for the Fruit of the Spirit, to become the dominant feature in our lives, we need to keep in step with the Spirit...

Now, today, we're discovering a very practical expression of 'being spiritual'. A Spiritual person, is someone who keeps in step with the Spirit (Right???). Thus, a Spiritual person, will be someone who truly loves the family of God.

If I don't love the family of God, that's a sure sign, that I'm not a Spiritual person.

Alright, so Paul here, is talking to a church, and he says this:

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

You see, those things are works of the flesh (**become conceited; provoking; envying**). BTW, to be "conceited" means to be proud of something where there's nothing to be proud of – pretentiousness – to pretend to be all important, when I'm not important at all..

Now, if we're living by the Spirit, we're going to love our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, aren't we... because, think of the Fruit of the Spirit: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control;**

Who would like to be in a family like that??? – A family who have the flavour of Christ about them... Me too...

But something we're going to discover today, is this loving family of God has to, at times, tackle some difficult issues, and share some hard truths...

6 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression... What do we do????

- Turn a blind eye....
- Say nothing...
- Pretend it didn't really happen...
- Assume they've got it all sorted with God, and that it's not going to happen again...
- Let sleeping dogs lie...

Let's clarify what we're talking about here: to be **caught in any transgression** ... They've been caught out – it's been discovered about this person has sinned (in a way that it's shocked you). And the concept of a transgression, is it's a misstep – they've tripped – they've stumbled spiritually and sinned, but it's **not** a settled course of action...

Do you understand the difference???

E.g. If a man and a woman who are dating, find themselves alone one evening, and they go 'too far', and they repent of that, that was a transgression... But if they move in together before they're married, or if they regularly set up opportunities where they may 'go too far' (going on a holiday together) (sharing accommodation), then that's a settled course of action...

BTW, a lot of times when we're confessing our own sins, we can be a bit inclined to say, "God, I've tripped up here; I've made a mistake; my failings; my shortcomings", when, I don't know about you, but I've deliberately and consciously, sinned...

Righto, so what do we do, when someone in the church is caught in a transgression...

Well, I'll tell you what the 2 most common responses are:

1. Firstly, there are those who are very quick to condemn... And if you've had many years of experience in a church, you may immediately picture someone who is quick to condemn...

Probably a good example of this, is the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Luke 18:9-14 (ESV)⁹ [Jesus] told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:

¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather

than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Some are very quick to condemn.

I heard someone say once:

"The Christian church is the only army that shoots its wounded"...

Do you understand what they were saying??? When a person is caught in a sin, that isn't a chosen settled way of life,,, they're a wounded person – they've tripped up – they've stumbled. And in such times, it's not our role to condemn and reject them...

Oh yes, there **are** times for that. And there's times when Paul would say, "Don't even eat with such a personⁱ – kick them out of the church".... But in **those** cases, he's talking about unrepentant, ongoing sin (that's been embraced and affirmed, "This is who I am")...

But, in cases of stumbling; tripping up, the way forward is restoration...

2. But the second, and by far the most common response to when somebody is caught in a transgression,,, is nothing...

Let sleeping dogs lie; We pretend we didn't notice. Or more commonly, we remember the words of Jesus: "Judge not, lest you also be judged"...

But you know what? That's less than half of what Jesus said. And what Paul is teaching us here, is entirely consistent with **all** of what Jesus said in

Matthew 7:1-5 (ESV) 7 "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Some of us may be inclined to judge, but Jesus says, "**Don't judge**", but then He teaches us about personal holiness, and restoration of the transgressor...

Now, when we read this, most people take home the message, "I can't judge anybody, because I've got a log in my own eye". And they leave the log in their own eye...

Can you imagine, as Jesus is telling this story, people would be getting a great old chuckle out of it – it's a funny image...

This person with a dirty great big log sticking out of their eye, saying, “Let me get that speck out of yours”... (*I know somebody just like that*)

But just as absurd, is for us to notice that they need holiness, but for us to not deal with our own sin... And we walk away, “Oh, I obviously can’t take the speck out of your eye – I’ve got this log in the way...” And we continue on, with this dirty great big log in our eye... It’s absurd...

And we usually get the first part “Don’t judge”... But we miss the 2nd part – that **we** will be judged... And so the message of Jesus is, “Get the log out of your own eye” – (Repentance; Forgiveness; Restoration) for us... And then, (3rd part of the message) work on the restoration of the other...

And that’s exactly what **Paul’s** teaching us here – about personal holiness, and restoration of the transgressor.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Who are the Spiritual people in the church???

- Is it the Pastor?
- Is it the one who can quote the most Scripture?
- Is it the one who has the most spiritual gifts???
- Is it the one who’s been a Christian for the longest?

Who are the Spiritual people in the church?

Well, we've just been told this – we **all** should be the Spiritual people in the church... When we are saved, we are filled with the Holy Spirit... And we talked last time, about the fruit of the Spirit... The spiritual ones, is “**us**”, as we keep in step with the Spirit... And the character of Christ begins to grow in our own lives..

And here's a hint: **you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness**

“Gentleness”, isn't that one of the Fruit of the Spirit??? Yes, it is – along with Love; patience; kindness...

In other words, with the character of Christ, that is growing in you and I, **we** are to restore our brother (when he trips up in sin), and hopefully, he'll do it for us, when we trip up in sin... And we do it with a spirit of Gentleness.

We don't turn a blind eye... We're not filled with condemnation...

And in 2 ways, Paul is telling us, “Get the log out of your own eye first”... Put off the works of the flesh; and keep in step with the Spirit (that's the 1st way)...

And secondly, he says:

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Sadly, the road paved with good intentions, is often strewn with the wreckage of those who have also fallen...

- The pastor who wants to be a tremendous support for a lady who's struggling with lots of issues, and in the end, they find themselves in one-another's arms;
- The recovering alcoholic who tries to save someone else from their addictions, and he's back in the culture, and he gets sucked back in himself;
- The lady who wants to help another learn to forgive, but she enjoys hearing their story just a bit too much, because the flesh is wanting to hear all the gossip...

The spiritual person is very aware of the dangers of temptation. **Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**

I have been very aware, that the three greatest temptations for a pastor of a church – that which sees many pastors fall, can be summarised as the 3 G's.

- Gold;
- girls;
- glory...

For some:

- the temptation is money.
- it's been sexual sin;
- pride, and the quest for glory...

But of course, that's not the limit. There's lots of temptations, and your temptations will be different from mine.

keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

V² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

I used to be an instructor at an Ag College. And I mainly taught practical, hands-on stuff & machinery operation out on the farm. And let me tell ya, some students were good, and others took a great deal of patience. And even during the holidays, there would be students rostered on to do holiday work... But very occasionally, (e.g. between Christmas & NY), there would be no students rostered on, but if there was urgent farm work to be done, I'd be there...

And I used to feel “This Ag College is a magnificent place to work when there’s no students”... And I even worked out, that the College spent a whole lot less money, when there was no students... But of course, having students, was the whole purpose of the college...

Did you know that being a Christian is much the same??? If we didn't have to deal with other Christians, in some regards, it would be much easier. If you didn't have to bear the burdens of other Christians who were doing it tough, it'd be easier, wouldn't it... If we didn't have the burden of helping to restore a wounded Christian who's tripped up, it'd be easier, wouldn't it...

But this is the whole purpose of the church – this is what we do... **We Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

What's the Law of Christ? We've talked about this already... Love God; And love your neighbour as yourself... On these 2 commandments, hangs all of the Law and the prophets...

I don't just bear your burdens; You bear my burdens. We bear one another's burdens. I need you, and you need me. And if you look around this room, you need these people, and they need you... This is how Jesus has designed His church.

And what Paul's doing here, is he's warning us against "Spiritual Pride"...

Spiritual pride is something that destroys fellowship.

- It's spiritual pride that makes a person believe "I don't need that church – they're so needy – they're such a burden, and they're holding me back"; and
- It's also spiritual pride that says "That church needs me"...

Whereas the Spiritual man understands , "I need that church"... Those people, they carry my burdens, every bit as much as I carry theirs.

³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

What a terrible deception: I don't need those people – I can be a better Christian on my own...

Instead, Paul is really saying, “Make a sober assessment of yourself”... Test the waters closer to home...

I learned a lot of years ago, when I'm visiting people, it's easy to talk 'small-talk',,, and we never get around to the things that really matter... But I've since learnt to get straight to it:::

“How's your walk with God going???” And that gives people permission to talk about the things they really want to talk about.

And this an assessment we need to be making on ourselves:
“How's my walk with God going?”

V⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour.

Now, when Paul's using the word “boast” in this context, he's not meaning the bad sort of boasting... What he's saying is, “Make a sober assessment of yourself, and don't compare yourself to other people.”

Do you know what the danger is, of comparing ourselves to others? Some of us have way too high of a view of ourselves, and we do what the Pharisee did to the Tax Collector – compared to the scum-of-the-earth, I'm pretty good...

But then others of us have a very dim view of ourselves. And we compare ourselves to those who are:

- pinnacles in their field;
- the most beautiful;
- athletic;
- skilful people in the world;

and it simply affirms our low opinion of ourselves.

Let's not compare ourselves to other people – there's no future in that...

How do we make a sober assessment of ourselves? It's about “flesh” vs “Spirit”...

And it's a very practical thing. **let each one test his own work** ... He's not asking what we believe. He's talking about our conduct, or our actions...

- How do I behave?
- What am I like when nobody's watching?
- Am I the perfect family man, until I'm alone with my family?

If the Fruit of the Spirit is the Character of Jesus, is that practically demonstrated in my life??? And if there's anything to boast about, the only good in me is Christ.

I believe the sober assessment we are to make, is “How am I going with God?”

Now initially, that question is about whether I am saved... And I urge you, if you haven't yet given your life to Jesus, do it today. And if you're not sure if you even know what that means, there is nothing more important (that I can do today), than to talk to you about that...

But as we walk with Christ, the question becomes, “Is the fruit of the Spirit becoming the dominant feature of my life?” If not, there's some adjustments that need to be made, so that I can be keeping in step with the Spirit.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
we want to thank You for the church.

Lord, forgive us for the times
when we haven't loved our Brothers and Sisters
as we should have.

Help us to be a people who bear one another's burdens;
Help me to understand, that I need others,
and they need me.

And Lord,
Help us to keep in step with Your Spirit,
Knowing that any good in us comes from You,
and seeing the Fruit of Your Spirit, grow in our lives.

Help us to love one another enough to challenge one another;
To hold one another accountable; and
to restore one another...

And Lord, may others do this for us, when we fall,
That we, Your church,
would be a loving; forgiving; reconciling; and
restoring community.

In the Name of Christ,
Amen.

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 5