

Love for our fellow Christians seems to be the motivation behind Paul's words in this passage. We are urged to bear each other's "burdens" (weaknesses, troubles) as we restore a fallen brother back to fellowship with the Lord. By doing so we are sowing the Spirit, which will have an eventual reward if we do not give up and quit. Thus we are encouraged to always do good to others.

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

"Brethren" – Paul is speaking to the genuine Christians among the Galatians and not those who have been deceived into trusting in the law to be saved. He is continuing the thought he began in the previous verse (**Gal. 5:26** "*Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another*"), where he cautioned the Galatians to not become prideful in their own self-righteousness. Pride in our own self-righteousness (based on the effort to keep the law) is "vain [empty] glory" and has no basis in reality.

"if a man be overtaken" [lit. *to take before; fig. to surprise; anticipate*] **in a fault** [sin; misdeed]" – The meaning of the Greek word translated "overtaken" lends itself to two possible interpretations. Paul may be talking about someone who has been surprised by a temptation and then commits a sin, much like a mouse being surprised and caught by a trap. He did not intend to commit the sin but accidentally yielded to the temptation. The other possibility is that the man committing the sin is surprised by the fact that the church has discovered what he has done. The former interpretation seems most likely and Paul advocates that the church address the situation with grace.

"ye which are spiritual" – Paul advocates a course of action that those who are truly governed by the Holy Spirit should follow. Rather than being prideful of their own supposed self-righteousness and ready to condemn someone who has been caught in a sin, they should be humble in their efforts to remedy the situation.

"restore" [mend; repair; to make complete] **such an one in the spirit of meekness** [gentleness]" – Someone who is prideful of his own self-righteousness might be tempted to condemn, berate, or humiliate the man who has been overtaken in some sin. However, Paul urges us to gently help that man by leading him repentance and instructing him in the scripture so that he can avoid this sin in the future. The idea is to pull the man back to God rather than driving him away.

"considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" – When restoring such a man, we should always remember that "but for the grace of God, there go I." None of us are righteous enough on our own that we could not fall into the sins that others might commit. We should thank God that He has protected us from those sins and we are letting down our guard whenever we think we are above being tempted by a particular sin.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

"Bear ye one another's burdens" [weight; trouble]" – The Marines have a tradition of "no man left behind" in which they refuse to leave a man behind on the battlefield. They will risk their own lives to rescue their wounded comrades and retrieve the bodies of the fallen. Paul has a similar idea here, that when a brother/sister has been wounded by sin, we should help that person come back to God by helping them carry the weight of whatever tempted them into sin. We all have weaknesses to particular temptations and we are to help one another resist these temptations and remain faithful to God. By doing so we are bearing one another's burdens.

"and so fulfil the law of Christ" – The law of Christ is to love one another (**John 13:34** "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*") and bearing one another's burdens is an expression of that love. The Galatians had become focused on keeping the law to obtain righteousness but Paul points out that the love that comes from God will naturally fulfill the law (**Rom. 13:8-10** "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*").

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Paul warned them not to seek after "vain glory" in Gal. 5:26, an expression of pride in their own supposed self-righteousness. He now expands on that warning by stating a person is self-deceived if he thinks he can boast in anything about himself. If any of us are "something," it is only because of the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

"But let every man prove" [to test; examine for genuineness] **his own work"** – We are to examine what we do for God to verify that it is coming from the right source (God) and that we are doing it for the right reason (love). We can be guilty of doing good deeds so that we will get the credit or glory for it before men. In context, Paul probably was thinking about doing good works because you love God and others instead of doing them as a means to be righteous before God.

"and then shall he have rejoicing" [a reason to boast] **in himself alone, and not in another"** – Some people seek the accolades of others, desiring the "vain glory" that Paul warned against in Gal. 5:26. Such people are dependent on others for their satisfaction, but Paul says that if we have examined our own works and found them to be genuinely built upon the law of Christ (v. 2), then we will not need to look for others to applaud what we have done. We can rest in the smile of God, knowing He is pleased with our obedience.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

Critics have tried to say that this verse contradicts v. 2, but no contraction exists. The Greek words for “burden” are different as well as the context. The burden in v. 2 refers to the day-to-day temptations, troubles and trials that we all face that hinder us from serving Christ as we would like. The Greek word translated “burden” in this verse refers to the lading of a ship and implies the individual responsibilities that God has given us to bear. God has individually given each of us different gifts and responsibilities for our lives. Not everyone has the same job in the church (**Rom. 12:4-5** “*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*”). Everyone serves in their own God-given way and when we are faithful in doing what God has gifted us to do, we can “rejoice in [ourselves] alone” (v. 4) and enjoy the satisfaction that God is pleased with us.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

The Greek word translated “communicate” means “to fellowship with; to be a partner; to share” and “all good things” can refer not only to material things but also to spiritual things as well, such as encouragement and appreciation. The Biblical pattern for the church is for believers to minister to each other according to the gifts that God has given them. God has given to pastors, preachers and teachers the gift of ministering through the Word of God. Those who are taught may not be gifted to respond in like manner but they are able to minister to those who has taught them according to the gifts that God has given them. **1 Th. 5:12-13** “*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*”

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

“Be not deceived [*to be led astray*]; **God is not mocked** [*to turn up the nose; to deride*]” – Paul warns the Galatians not to be led astray into the error of thinking that they can ignore what God has said (such as sharing all good things with those who have taught them or relying on the law for righteousness) without any repercussions. Many people know the commands of God but chose to disregard them and instead do what they want to do. Paul is warning us that such people are doing this at their own peril because God will allow them to reap the consequences of their disobedience.

“for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” – This is an ancient proverb that expresses a simple principal: what a man reaps is always based on what he has sown. Someone has said that the law of the harvest is: 1) you reap what you sow; 2) you reap more than you sow; 3) you reap later than you sow. Paul’s point is that disobedience sows seeds that they will not want to reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption [*something that is perishable; destruction*]” – By ignoring God’s will and yielding instead to the desires of the flesh (such as selfishness or pride), they are sowing to their flesh. The flesh loves getting its way and each sin will make it easier to commit the next sin. Sin, like leaven, corrupts and leads us away from God rather than getting closer. **1 Cor. 5:6-8** (Paul, chastising the Corinthians for not dealing with sin in the church) “*Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*”

“but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” – Sowing the seeds of obedience to the Spirit will allow us to reap the blessings of God. We do not earn eternal life through our obedience but the quality of our spiritual lives will be enhanced when we obey God.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

“And let us not be weary [*exhausted; lose heart; discouraged*] **in well doing”** – At times sowing to the flesh can seem to produce favorable results, while the results of sowing to the Spirit aren’t always visible. However, Paul wants to encourage us to keep doing the things that please God (sowing to the Spirit) even when we don’t see the results immediately.

“for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” – If we do not give up and quit, God will insure that we will be rewarded for our labor when the time is right. These rewards come from God and not the world, although occasionally God allows us to see the impact of what we have done during our life. Most of the time we will not see our rewards until we stand before the Lord in heaven.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men” – The “therefore” is based on the assurance that we will reap the fruits of sowing to the Spirit when the time is right. On that basis, Paul urges us to use every opportunity to do good to those around us.

“especially unto them who are of the household of faith” – We are to do good to “all men” but we should give priority to those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as we give family members preferential treatment over friends or strangers, fellow Christians should always hold a special place in our heart.