

### **New Series: The Ministry of Restoration**

This evening we are beginning a series to address a critical need. The need is not unique to us, nor to us at this particular time. All churches will always need to pay attention to this subject for all churches are made up of sinners who are “prone to wander,” as the hymnwriter aptly put it.

I’m talking about the *ministry of restoration*. Restoration is something we do with the lost—through preaching the gospel we seek to reconcile alienated sinners to God—but that’s not what I have in mind in this series. I have in mind biblical exhortations regarding our responsibility to fellow believers who are entangled in sin, who need to be *restored* to the Lord and possibly to His church.

Many passages address this subject, as we’ll see. How do you restore a fellow Christian who is caught and trapped in sin? That’s a tough question. But it’s a question the Bible addresses in straightforward fashion.

There’s a great need for recovery work in the church. But how? And by whom? And with whom? And what is ‘recovery work’ really (what makes it different from ‘meddling’)? And why is restoration so important? We’ll seek to answer those and other related questions in this series.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. *What passages in the Bible address the issue of ministering to people who are caught in sin?*

Key Texts: Gal 6:1; II Cor 5:18-21; John 21; Rom 12:15-16; Rom 15:1-3; Prov 3:27; Matt 18:15-17

Christians are not perfect. At times, Christians stumble, and some fall flat on their faces. How should the church respond when this occurs? These texts tell us.

2. *What are some examples of people who need the ministry of restoration?*

- A young Christian who hasn't been to church in 2 months
- A 40 year old father who never has time for church or his family because he is working 80 hours a week
- A teenager engaged in a sinful habit or pattern of living
- A couple that’s having serious marriage trouble

3. *According to the Bible, whose responsibility is it to get involved in the life of a Christian who is overtaken by sin?*

To answer this question, let's turn to one of the most basic biblical texts dealing with this issue. Galatians 6:1

NIV--Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

KJV--Gal 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Let's probe the verse word by word.

### **“Brothers”**

What does this word indicate about the importance of the ministry of restoration?

The church is a family. We are related to one another. We have a common bond. We are responsible for each other. When a fellow-Christian is overcome by sin, it affects all of us. The family name is on the line, that is, the name of Christ.

### **“If someone is caught in a sin” [KJV "If a man be overtaken"]**

Think of a word picture to depict this phrase.

Picture a mouse under your kitchen sink. He moved inside because he heard there was easy-to-get food there. And lo and behold, it was true! There was a big chunk of cheese laying on a tray, right out in the open, just for him. He learned too late that what he thought was "free food" was a deceitful trap. He was caught.

So are Christians at times. "If someone is caught in a sin." A person who is caught is powerless to free himself. He set out pursuing a sinful course he thought was marked "freedom," but ended up in bondage.

### **“In a sin [KJV ‘fault’]”**

When is the ministry of restoration needed? When someone is caught in a *sin*. Please realize we are not dealing with preferences here. Paul is not referring to a situation where somebody is doing something WE don't like, but rather, where someone is doing something GOD doesn't like.

Gal 6:1 is not an endorsement to "stick our curious noses" into the lives of others. It doesn't endorse meddling. The issue is specific. If a brother in Christ is caught in sin (in other words, if a professing follower of Christ isn't following Christ in a particular pattern of life which is in violation of Christ's commands and example in His Word), and when that occurs...action must be taken.

By whom?

### **“You who are spiritual”**

Objection: "Well that excuses me. I'm not spiritual."

But who does Paul have in mind? Who are the "spiritual," according to the context? The "spiritual" are not some super elite group in the church. There is an unfortunate chapter break between chapters 5 & 6 which blurs the connection.

What topic did Paul discuss at the end of chapter five? The ministry of the Spirit

The "spiritual" are people who do what, according to 5:25? "walk in the Spirit"

How do we "walk in the Spirit," according to 5:22? By allowing Him to produce His fruit in our lives.

Who is responsible to exhibit the "fruit of the Spirit" rather than the "works of the flesh"? Every person who has the indwelling Spirit, that is, every Christian.

What is every Christian responsible to do, according to 5:16? "Walk in the Spirit"

Key: If I have the Holy Spirit, I have the capacity and potential and responsibility to do the ministry of restoration.

Discuss: Do you agree with that? If you agree, why is it so many Spirit-indwelt Christians are NOT involved in recovery work?

### **“Restore him” [KJV "Restore such an one"]**

What picture does the word "restore" bring to mind?

The Greek word "katardidzo" is graphic. It means "to put in order," or "to restore to its former condition." It was used in secular Greek as a medical term for setting a fractured or dislocated bone (Stott, 160). It appears in Mark 1:19 where fishermen are "mending" their nets.

So what are we to do when we see a brother floundering in sin? If we do nothing, that too is sin (this is a command). Are we to say, "Serves him right. He made his bed, so let him sleep in it"? Does Paul say we should report him to the pastor or deacon, so they can pay him a visit? No. He says, "You who are spiritual restore such an one."

Discuss: What are some barriers that make this difficult? One is a misconception of the word "spiritual." Many churchgoers would not describe themselves as *spiritual*. They would not see themselves as fitting into this category in Galatians 6:1. Hence, they do not see that the responsibility applies to them.

### **“Gently” [KJV "In the spirit of meekness"]**

How are we to restore a wayward brother? What must be our attitude?

The NIV says, "Restore him gently." Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. We are to restore with the tender, yet firm care of a medic lifting a wounded soldier on a stretcher.

### **“But watch yourself” [KJV "Considering thyself"]**

What must we keep in mind in the restoration process? It could have been me, and in fact, it could be me the next time. He who is without sin can cast the first stone. That's not me.

## **“Or you also may be tempted” [KJV “Lest thou also be tempted”]**

Restoring is spiritual work. There is a spiritual enemy. What must I do to protect myself when I get involved in helping recover a fallen brother?

The NIV says, “Watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” I must not enter the ministry of restoration unprepared. My relationship with Christ must be in tact. The armor of God must be on.

Discuss: What are some practical things we can do to “watch ourselves?”

Key Question: What is the aim of the restoration process?

Compare Galatians 6:2 & 6:5 and we find an important piece of counsel... The KJV says, “For every man shall bear his own burden.” The NIV reads, “Each one should carry his own load.” Once the trap is broken, the former victim is free. He can stand now stand on his own feet. But the process isn’t complete until something occurs? What? Until that freed person, that person whose burden has been lifted by other burden bearers who reached out to him... until he is a valuable contributor to the ministry, until he himself is serving others and is involved in bearing burdens.

Note the sequence:

Phase 1: Verse 1—A person isn’t bearing his own burden and needs help

Phase 2: Verse 5—The person learns to bear his own burdens

Phase 3: Verse 2—The person begins to help others bear their burdens

Word of Caution: What are some potential obstacles we must avoid in the ministry of restoration? Here are two...

1. *Conceit* (6:3-4)--Beware of thinking, “I’m too good. It could never happen to me.”
2. *Envy* (5:26)--“I’m glad he fell into sin. Everybody always made such a fuss over him before.”

### **To do:**

1. Pray now for those who need to be restored.
2. Allow the Spirit to direct you this week to help restore a fellow-Christian who is struggling. Write them. Call them. Visit them.

**Next Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21**

