

GALATIANS: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING LEGALISM
Part IX: Overcoming A Legalistic Mentality By Bearing One Another's Burdens
(Galatians 6:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. When legalism exists in a body of believers, one who is embarrassed by a sudden spiritual collapse into sinful failure can be "kicked when he is down" by other, self-pious parties in the group. When that occurs, it becomes outright dangerous to make a mistake or sin, and counter-productive tension mounts.
- B. Paul counters this destructive mindset by helpful, insightful input in Galatians 6:1-5:

II. Overcoming A Legalistic Mentality By Bearing One Another's Burdens, Galatians 6:1-5.

- A. As in any church, the Galatians had people who at times were overtaken by sudden, strong temptations to sin so that they "blew it" noticeably before all, Galatians 6:1.
 - 1. The verb translated in the KJV "overtaken" is better rendered "overtake, surprise" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 715). Thus, the fellow believer in this case comes under a sudden, great temptation to which he has yielded!
 - 2. The "fault" mentioned is from the word *paraptoma*, meaning "trespass, transgression" or a violation of the Word of God in one's life, Ibid., p. 627.
 - 3. The party involved has been suddenly, powerfully tempted to violate the Word of God in his life or doctrine, and he has yielded to it!
- B. **Instead of letting him "dangle slowly in the breeze" to be humiliated and thus ruined, spiritual believers are supposed to do what they can to restore him as follows:**
 - 1. Godly believers are to do their best to "restore" such a sinning brother, Gal. 6:1a. The word translated "restore" (KJV) means "restore to a former condition, "Ibid., p. 418. In other words, godly believers must do what is necessary to see that the brother (a) confesses his sin, (b) is instructed in handling future temptations properly, and (c) is restored as much as his sinning record will allow in the dictates of Scripture to what former offices or honor he had before the sin.
 - 2. The attitude expressed by the godly is to be one of self-examination in the spirit of meekness as any one of the godly could conceivably so sin, Gal. 6:1b.
 - 3. In doing so, we bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ in showing real love to one another in the Lord, Gal. 6:2.
- C. Failure to follow this admonition where we let the fallen brother "dangle slowly in the breeze" comes from a feeling of spiritual pride that we could never sin as has the fallen one, Gal. 6:3a. Such a belief is errant and legalistic as it implies a false, intrinsic righteousness, Gal. 6:3b and the context of the epistle.
- D. If we are mature and have grown in the Lord to have victory over a fault existing in another believer, we need to be sure of evidence in our life's **actions** accordingly, but keep the news to ourselves of this growth, v. 4! Otherwise, we set up a "spiritual competition" with the weak which is completely carnal!
- E. When we stand before the Lord, we all shall have to answer for our own lives to our Superior, Righteous Judge, Gal. 6:5. Accordingly, we need to remain meek even if we have grown in Christ enough not to fall for the same sin as a weaker brother has!

Lesson: (1) Legalistic thinking causes us to think that we are intrinsically righteous to. When another believer slips, the legalist looks down on him intolerably, and does a lot of discipling damage by "letting him dangle slowly in the breeze" when he is caught in sinful failure. (2) Grace-oriented, mature believers recognize that if they are victorious in Christ, it is due to CHRIST'S work in their lives and not to any intrinsic righteousness in themselves. Thus, when they see others sin, they do whatever is necessary to restore them to fellowship and to honor. They also consistently examine themselves for weaknesses to temptation. If they pass the test, they keep their maturity to themselves so as not to discourage others or set up a "competitive spirit" with others! They thus answer to God righteously for themselves and similarly are a blessing to those who are less-righteous and less-mature than they are!