

Small things can have devastating effects if they aren't taken care of right away.

A tiny **loose thread** is easily overlooked until it gets pulled and a knit sweater starts to **unravel**.

We **appreciate** it when a **friend points it out** so we **can fix it** before the damage is done.

When we're **driving on an interstate** and not paying close attention, it's easy to **miss an exit** and end up going miles out of the way.

It's helpful to have an **alert passenger** to **help watch** for things like that.

On a **more serious** scale it's happened to **nations** in the course of history.

People get lulled into **not paying serious attention** to actual policies and laws.

Slick talking politicians get them excited about **impossible promises** and **tough talk**,

but their words **can't alone preserve** a nation's **liberties** and **resources**.

Little by little those nations **become weak** and **vulnerable to enemies**.

Little mis-steps might seem **unimportant**, but if left **unchallenged** they lead into **dangerous territory**.

Aiming at something as big as a **planet** might seem easy enough. But it depends on many small variables.

The unexpected effect of the **sun shining** on a Mars mission space craft caused a **very small deviation** in it's path.

After about **17 minutes** the **solar wind** only amounted to **pushing it off track** by almost **10 inches**.

After a month being **slowly nudged off course** it was **off by** about **1,891 miles**, more than the width of the moon.

People's lives can get pushed way off track by **little things too**.

Things **sneak up on us** from **seemingly insignificant compromises**.

They **don't seem** to be very bad at first.

But when our **lives are shaped into patterns** that **don't fit** with the **way God made us** to live

that **little nudge over the years** **turns us way off course** and the **consequences** can be **devastating**.

It's easy to be **drawn in little by little** until wrong things **grow** into **serious problems**.

Evil has a way of **sneaking up** on us, and it's **no accident**.

This is where we benefit from **caring believers** who **do the hard thing** and help us **see the danger** before it's too late.

The **situation** in this **first part of Galatians 6** deals with a **very real and practical problem**.

Those we care about, **other believers** in Christ, often get **taken in** by something **morally wrong**.

There are **right ways** and **wrong ways** to deal with those who need our help.

Verses 1-5 give us a set of **principles to guide us**.

Galatians 6:1-5 (ESV)

1. Brothers, if anyone is **caught in any transgression**, you who are **spiritual** should **restore him** in a spirit of **gentleness**. **Keep watch on yourself**, lest you too be tempted.
2. **Bear one another's burdens**, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
3. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
4. But **let each one test his own work**, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.
5. For **each will have to bear his own load**.

Believers in Christ still **do things they shouldn't do** and **neglect things they should do**.

1. Brothers, if anyone is **caught in any transgression**, you who are **spiritual** should **restore him** in a spirit of **gentleness**. **Keep watch on yourself**, lest you too be tempted.

Since Paul calls them "**brothers**", we know he's **still writing to Christians**.

This **isn't advice** for how we deal with those **outside** the family of the True Church.

The one's who are overtaken, are those who **evidenced that they were redeemed** by Jesus Christ.

The **previous part** of this **Letter to the Galatians** explains what things he's talking about.

After listing the **wrong attitudes and behaviors** that come from the **fallen heart**

in **5:22-23** Paul listed the **fruit the Holy Spirit produces** in God's people.

22. **But the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23. **gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law.

Those who fall into the **opposites of these ways**,

and who get **caught up again** in behaviors that go **against God's moral principles**, are **in need of help**.

The word translated as "**transgression**" is from the root word παρ-άπ-τώμα (παρ-απ-τώ-ματι).

The word refers to **going where it's forbidden**. More literally it means *to go off the path*.

Transgressions are **not lesser sins** that don't offend God as much.

As **Dr. Lenski** says, "**this word is never used in the mild sense in the New Testament**".

These are the **sins that tempt us personally**, things we might **not see as sinful** on our own.

They're sometimes immoral things we were **brought up with** as if there's **nothing wrong** with them.

They may be things our **culture** and the **unbelieving world excuse as normal**.

They're things **glorified** in movies, music, facebook, and television.

The people Paul's talking about here are **overtaken without realizing it**.

They **fail to appreciate the danger until the consequences begin** to take hold.

That's how the word translated as "**caught in**" was used at that time.

One ancient writing uses it to describe **a ship suddenly caught by waves**.

The **unexpected swells** threw the ship against rocks that **tore it apart**.

Paul **doesn't mean** that the brother transgressing **isn't aware** of what God's word says is sinful.

But he **doesn't see** that what he's doing **violates God's moral law**.

When this happens, there is an **important responsibility** to those who are **able to help**.

We have **an obligation** to reach out to **help those not doing things God's way**.

Those who are "**spiritual**" are those **walking in the spirit** as described in the last chapter.

They **aren't** a **special class** or **rank** of Christians.

We don't get divided into **spiritual** and **non-spiritual** believers, as if there's some **second step** beyond being redeemed.

It's not a second work of grace that **sets some apart as better** than the rest.

Every believer should be **striving to live as God guides him** by his word,

and by the convictions of the indwelling **Holy Spirit**.

No one is immune to falling into sin. **No Christian is perfect**.

The great **King David** sinned very seriously.

The **Apostle Peter** pretended he didn't know Jesus when the Romans arrested him.

He even abandoned the Gentile Christians to please some visiting immature Jewish believers. (2:11-14)

Moses fell into sin in the wilderness. **Jeremiah** had to be taught to trust God's calling.

But when each of them was **walking in God's ways**, they were a **help to others** who were tempted.

Sin didn't become their *way of life*.

They **didn't defended** it, **excused** it, or **openly rejected** God's truth.

Those **who won't admit** their own faults, who **get angry** when corrected,

or who **prefer the advice of a God-ignoring world**, **aren't behaving as "brothers"** in the Lord.

We're told to **restore that person** The Greek word here for "**restore**" is "kat-artiz-ete" (καταρτίζετε).

Our words "**art**" and "**artisan**" comes from it. It's that **careful and skilled work to re-shape something**

The Christian commentator John Gill explains the **original use** of this word.

He says, "**The allusion is to the setting of bones that are broken, or out of joint,**

which is done with great care and tenderness."

The same word's used in **Matthew 4:21** of **mending fishing nets** that were torn.

When we help, it should be with a **careful, skilled, gentle, and humble attitude**.

As helpers, we need to be **aware** of and **admit** our **own vulnerabilities** and weaknesses.

There is **no room** for an **attitude of superiority**.

This **admonition** should be **humbly submissive to God as the real helper**.

We come to him in **prayer** before we attempt to restore others.

We need to **use his word carefully**, not just offer our own criticisms and opinions.

Philippians 2:3 says, "**Do nothing from rivalry or conceit,**

but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

In the "**love chapter**" in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 4 says,

"**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant** "

We need to remember that **we too can and do fall** at times into **unintended sins**.

We're all susceptible

Even the **Apostle Paul** himself knew that he **battled** the **remains of sin** in himself.

In **Romans 7:17-21** he wrote, "So now it is **no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me**.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.

For I have the **desire to do what is right**, but **not the ability** to carry it out.

For **I do not do the good I want**, but **the evil** I do not want is what **I keep on doing**.

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, **but sin that dwells within me**.

So I find it to be a law that **when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand**."

He's **not denying personal responsibility** when he sins.

But he admits that the **lingering effects** of the fall are still there **battling away in all of us**.

There is a **great danger** of **feeling superior or judgmental** of others when they fall into a sin.

The poet **Man-tua-nus** said, [in his Eclogue "De Honesto Amore"]

"This is a **common evil**; at one time or other we have all done wrong.

Either we **are, or have been, or may be, as bad** as he whom we condemn."

Meekness and **gentleness** are the particular **element of the Spirit's fruit** that are relevant here.

Bearing one another's burdens is more than just a good suggestion.

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

Bearing their burden **doesn't mean taking over their responsibilities**.

It means **comforting, sympathizing, understanding**, and **understanding** their struggle.

It also means **forgiving them individually** if you were personally harmed by their sins

You need to be **patient** with them, and make them know they are **loved, cared for**.

You might even have to **endure hardships while dealing** with the **demands** of helping others

This is the fulfilling of the law of Christ.

Jesus said in **John 13:34**, "A **new commandment** I give to you, that you **love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another**."

In James 2:8 the Bible says, "If you really fulfill the **royal law according to the Scripture**,

"You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**," you are doing well."

By **law** here, it's **not** referring to the **ceremonial laws of Moses**.

It means **the principles God gives us to live by** as his redeemed children.

But it's not to be done as if the helper sees himself as a superior.

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

To forget **where the glory belongs** when someone is helped, is to **steal God's glory**.

To give the **glory to men** as if they could do it without God's enablement and mercy

is **the height of human arrogance and ignorance**.

No one can obey God's commandments in Scripture **without God's gracious enablement**.

And should not **think he needs no one else's** sometimes help,

or that **no one else** needs him.

So, honest self examination is a vital part of helping others.

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

Your duty is to **look to your own responsibilities** in each situation where you help others.

When you know that you've humbly tried to restore another believer,

you have good reason to rejoice in what God has done through you.

You have that **peace** that you have **helped someone** and **obeyed God's assignment** to you.

It's **humbling** and gives you a **good reason to be thankful**

when you've been **used by God** as he **works his grace in others**.

At the end of this little passage Paul adds these words.

5. For each will have to **bear his own load**.

He's **not contradicting** what he just said.

To **bear one another's burdens** by **helping them recognize and overcome sin** is the **fulfilling of our own duty** to God through Christ.

We're responsible for our own attitudes, words and actions.

If we **pass up opportunities** to be a positive encouragement to those slipping into sin, we **forfeit God's blessing**.

Don't wait until the little things become big things.

When we **see someone slipping slowly** into wrong attitudes and behaviors

we need to **pray** for them, **encourage** them, **be a humble friend** to help them see the danger.

The longer it goes uncorrected, the **harder** it becomes **to restore** the person to a right fellowship with God.

Their **sinful habits** become **harder to overcome**.

We **don't give up** even at that point, but the **restoring work becomes harder**.

At times we all need some **helpful course correction** in the Kingdom of Christ.

It's the responsibility of each of us, humbly as those who are also just **redeemed sinners**,

to **reach out in love**, even when it's hard to do so, to **help** another believer **get back on track**.

When we do, we **discover the joy of helping** those who need a **biblical and loving word of advice**.

The Bible quotations in this article are from the English Standard **Version** of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

ESV Galatians 6:1-5

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- 1 Ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν καὶ προλημθῆ ἄνθρωπος ἐν τινὶ παραπτώματι, ὑμεῖς οἱ πνευματικοὶ καταρτίζετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν πνεύματι πραότητος, σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν, μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς.
- 2 Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε, καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσατε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- 3 εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν, ἐαυτὸν φρεναπατᾷ.
- 4 τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμάζέτω ἕκαστος, καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἔξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον·
- 5 ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.

NKJV

- 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
- 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
- 5 For each one shall bear his own load.