

Fight the flesh together (Galatians 6:1–5)

Believers need one another to fight the battle against that remnant of the sinful nature which still resides in them, even though having been born of the Spirit. The desires of the Spirit are against the desires which arise from the “flesh” and which tempt the believer (cf. James 1:14). God designed the Body of Christ so that its member could provide help for one another: restoring sinners, bearing the burdens of others, but each carrying his or her own load.

I. *Restore sinners (6:1).*

1. *The need* is clear in that some fellow believer is caught in some transgression. Though possibly “discovered in a sin” or “overtaken by a sin”, the sense more likely is “entrapped in a sin”.
2. *The helpers* are those who are spiritual. Unlike popular ideas about being “spiritual”, the context indicates that the “spiritual” are those who are of the Spirit and not of the flesh. All believers should be spiritual, though not all are mature. “Spiritual maturity” would refer to an increased consistency in demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in varied circumstances.
3. *The task* to those who are spiritual is to restore the sinner. They need to help “mend” the sinner, that is, bring this brother or sister back to a spiritually healthy condition. It is not to punish.
4. *The manner* toward the sinner is characterized by gentleness, but at the same time the “spiritual” must be alert against temptation. That temptation could be to gossip, become impatient, to lack self-control, or have pride (cf. v.3; Matthew 7:1–5; 18:15–17).

II. *Bear burdens (6:2–3).*

1. *The task* which every believer has is to bear one another’s burdens, that is, those struggles too great for the individual to carry themselves. In the context the burden is the sin or temptation in which a person is caught, but this principle can be applied broadly. Bear the burden by reproving, correcting, and instructing in righteousness. Come alongside and give what they cannot give to themselves.
2. *The greater accomplishment* in doing this is fulfilling the law of Christ, which probably refers to Christ’s command to love one another, a special application of loving one’s neighbor (cf. 5:14).
3. *The caution* which accompanies this task is to guard against imagining oneself to inherently have strengths and qualities which one does not have. The sinner should not imagine greater strength than is true and thus resist help. Neither should the “spiritual” proudly imagine him or herself to be superior, stronger, or immune to temptation, forgetting that all which the believer has is of Christ.

III. *Check yourself (6:4–5).*

1. *The personal responsibility* is for each one to test, that is, examine or approve, his or her own work on its own merits before God rather than by comparing it with others.
2. *The result* will be a true ground for boasting, not based on comparison with others, but on what God has done in and through the individual alone.
3. *The reason* each should examine him or herself rests in the responsibility which each has to carry the bearable load which God has given. The help from others for excessive burdens does not excuse from carrying one’s own packet.

To help others you must discern sin as sin, but you need to look to yourself at the same time. Keep in step with the Spirit so that you can help restore those caught in sin. Do it to the glory of God, because He is the one who has made it possible in Christ and who gives harmony among believers.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- What keeps you from helping another believer when you have observed sin in his or her life? Is it a right reason?
- What has made it easiest for you to receive correction from another believer? How might this fit with Paul’s instruction here? Is it a model for you to follow?
- In verse 1 “you” in the first half of the verse is plural but singular in the second half. What might this indicate about the involvement of others in restoring a sinning brother or sister and the individual responsibilities?