

## Chapter 6

Verse 1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.

IF we carefully weigh the words of the Apostle we perceive that he does not speak of doctrinal faults and errors, but of much lesser faults by which a person is overtaken through the weakness of his flesh. This explains why the Apostle chooses the softer term "fault." To minimize the offense still more, as if he meant to excuse it altogether and to take the whole blame away from the person who has committed the fault, he speaks of him as having been "overtaken," seduced by the devil and of the flesh. As if he meant to say, "What is more human than for a human being to fall, to be deceived and to err?" This comforting sentence at one time saved my life. Because Satan always assails both the purity of doctrine which he endeavors to take away by schisms and the purity of life which he spoils with his continual temptations to sin, Paul explains how the fallen should be treated. Those who are strong are to raise up the fallen in the spirit of meekness.

This ought to be borne in mind particularly by the ministers of the Word in order that they may not forget the parental attitude which Paul here requires of those who have the keeping of souls. Pastors and ministers must, of course, rebuke the fallen, but when they see that the fallen are sorry they are to comfort them by excusing the fault as well as they can. As unyielding as the Holy Spirit is in the matter of maintaining and defending the doctrine of faith, so mild and merciful is He toward men for their sins as long as sinners repent.

The Pope's synagogue teaches the exact opposite of what the Apostle commands. The clerics are tyrants and butchers of men's conscience. Every small offense is closely scrutinized. To justify the cruel inquisitiveness they quote the statement of Pope Gregory: "It is the property of good lives to be afraid of a fault where there is no fault." "Our censors must be feared, even if they are unjust and wrong." On these pronouncements the papists base their doctrine of excommunication. Rather than terrify and condemn men's consciences, they ought to raise them up and comfort them with the truth.

Let the ministers of the Gospel learn from Paul how to deal with

those who have sinned. "Brethren," he says, "if any man be overtaken with a fault, do not aggravate his grief, do not scold him, do not condemn him, but lift him up and gently restore his faith. If you see a brother despondent over a sin he has committed, run up to him, reach out your hand to him, comfort him with the Gospel and embrace him like a mother. When you meet a willful sinner who does not care, go after him and rebuke him sharply." But this is not the treatment for one who has been overtaken by a sin and is sorry. He must be dealt with in the spirit of meekness and not in the spirit of severity. A repentant sinner is not to be given gall and vinegar to drink.

Verse 1. Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. This consideration is very much needed to put a stop to the severity of some pastors who show the fallen no mercy. St. Augustine says: "There is no sin which one person has committed, that another person may not commit it also." We stand in slippery places. If we become overbearing and neglect our duty, it is easy enough to fall into sin. In the book entitled "The Lives of Our Fathers," one of the Fathers is reported to have said when informed that a brother had fallen into adultery: "He fell yesterday; I may fall today." Paul therefore warns the pastors not to be too rigorous and unmerciful towards offenders, but to show them every affection, always remembering: "This man fell into sin; I may fall into worse sin. If those who are always so eager to condemn others would investigate themselves they would find that the sins of others are motes in comparison to their own."

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (I Cor. 10:12.) If David who was a hero of faith and did so many great things for the Lord, could fall so badly that in spite of his advanced age he was overcome by youthful lust after he had withstood so many different temptations with which the Lord had tested his faith, who are we to think that we are more stable? These object lessons of God should convince us that of all things God hates pride.

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

The Law of Christ is the Law of love. Christ gave us no other law than this law of mutual love: "A new commandment I give to you, That ye love one another." To love means to bear another's burdens. Christians must have strong shoulders to bear the

burdens of their fellow Christians. Faithful pastors recognize many errors and offenses in the church, which they oversee. In civil affairs an official has to overlook much if he is fit to rule. If we can overlook our own shortcomings and wrong-doings, we ought to overlook the shortcomings of others in accordance with the words, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

Those who fail to do so expose their lack of understanding of the law of Christ. Love, according to Paul, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This commandment is not meant for those who deny Christ; neither is it meant for those who continue to live in sin. Only those who are willing to hear the Word of God and then inadvertently fall into sin to their own great sorrow and regret, carry the burdens which the Apostle encourages us to bear. Let us not be hard on them. If Christ did not punish them, what right have we to do it?

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

Again the Apostle takes the authors of sects to task for being hard-hearted tyrants. They despise the weak and demand that everything be just so. Nothing suits them except what they do. Unless you eulogize whatever they say or do, unless you adapt yourself to their slightest whim, they become angry with you. They are that way because, as St. Paul says, they "think themselves to be something," they think they know all about the Scriptures.

Paul has their number when he calls them zeros. They deceive themselves with their self-suggested wisdom and holiness. They have no understanding of Christ or the law of Christ. By insisting that everything be perfect they not only fail to bear the burdens of the weak, they actually offend the weak by their severity. People begin to hate and shun them and refuse to accept counsel or comfort from them.

Paul describes these stiff and ungracious saints accurately when he says of them, "They think themselves to be something." Bloated by their own silly ideas and schemes they entertain a pretty fair opinion of themselves, when in reality they amount to nothing.

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

In this verse the Apostle continues his attack upon the vainglorious sectarians. Although this passage may be applied to any work, the

Apostle has in mind particularly the work of the ministry.

The trouble with these seekers after glory is that they never stop to consider whether their ministry is straightforward and faithful. All they think about is whether people will like and praise them. Theirs is a threefold sin. First, they are greedy of praise. Secondly, they are very sly and wily in suggesting that the ministry of other pastors is not what it should be. By way of contrast they hope to rise in the estimation of the people. Thirdly, once they have established a reputation for themselves they become so chesty that they stop short of nothing. When they have won the praise of men, pride leads them on to belittle the work of other men and to applaud their own. In this artful manner they hoodwink the people who rather enjoy to see their former pastors taken down a few notches by such upstarts.

"Let a minister be faithful in his office," is the apostolic injunction. "Let him not seek his own glory or look for praise. Let him desire to do good work and to preach the Gospel in all its purity. Whether an ungrateful world appreciates his efforts is to give him no concern because, after all, he is in the ministry not for his own glory but for the glory of Christ."

A faithful minister cares little what people think of him, as long as his conscience approves of him. The approval of his own good conscience is the best praise a minister can have. To know that we have taught the Word of God and administered the sacraments rightly is to have a glory that cannot be taken away.

The glory which the sectarians seek is quite unstable, because it rests in the whim of people. If Paul had had to depend on this kind of glory for his ministry he would have despaired when he saw the many offenses and evils following in the wake of his preaching.

If we had to feel that the success of our ministry depended upon our popularity with men we would die, because we are not popular. On the contrary, we are hated by the whole world with rare bitterness. Nobody praises us. Everybody finds fault with us. But we can glory in the Lord and attend to our work cheerfully. Who cares whether our efforts please or displease the devil? Who cares whether the world praises or hates us? We go ahead "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report." (II Cor. 6:8.)

The Gospel entails persecution. The Gospel is that kind of a doctrine. Furthermore, the disciples of the Gospel are not all

dependable. Many embrace the Gospel today and tomorrow discard it. To preach the Gospel for praise is bad business especially when people stop praising you. Find your praise in the testimony of a good conscience.

This passage may also be applied to other work besides the ministry. When an official, a servant, a teacher minds his business and performs his duty faithfully without concerning himself about matters that are not in his line he may rejoice in himself. The best commendation of any work is to know that one has done the work that God has given him well and that God is pleased with his effort.

Verse 5. Every man shall bear his own burden.

That means: For anybody to covet praise is foolish because the praise of men will be of no help to you in the hour of death. Before the judgment throne of Christ everybody will have to bear his own burden. As it is the praise of men stops when we die. Before the eternal Judge it is not praise that counts but your own conscience.

True, the consciousness of work well done cannot quiet the conscience. But it is well to have the testimony of a good conscience in the last judgment that we have performed our duty faithfully in accordance with God's will.

For the suppression of pride we need the strength of prayer. What man even if he is a Christian is not delighted with his own praise? Only the Holy Spirit can preserve us from the misfortune of pride.

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

Now the Apostle also addresses the hearers of the Word requesting them to bestow "all good things" upon those who have taught them the Gospel. I have often wondered why all the apostles reiterated this request with such embarrassing frequency. In the papacy I saw the people give generously for the erection and maintenance of luxurious church buildings and for the sustenance of men appointed to the idolatrous service of Rome. I saw bishops and priests grow rich until they possessed the choicest real estate. I thought then that Paul's admonitions were overdone. I thought he should have requested the people to curtail their contributions. I saw how the generosity of the people of the Church was encouraging covetousness on the part of the clergy. I know better now.

As often as I read the admonitions of the Apostle to the effect that the churches should support their pastors and raise funds for the

relief of impoverished Christians I am half ashamed to think that the great Apostle Paul had to touch upon this subject so frequently. In writing to the Corinthians he needed two chapters to impress this matter upon them. I would not want to discredit Wittenberg as Paul discredited the Corinthians by urging them at such length to contribute to the relief of the poor. It seems to be a by-product of the Gospel that nobody wants to contribute to the maintenance of the Gospel ministry. When the doctrine of the devil is preached people are prodigal in their willing support of those who deceive them.

We have come to understand why it is so necessary to repeat the admonition of this verse. When Satan cannot suppress the preaching of the Gospel by force he tries to accomplish his purpose by striking the ministers of the Gospel with poverty. He curtails their income to such an extent that they are forced out of the ministry because they cannot live by the Gospel. Without ministers to proclaim the Word of God the people go wild like savage beasts.

Paul's admonition that the hearers of the Gospel share all good things with their pastors and teachers is certainly in order. To the Corinthians he wrote: "If we have sown to you spiritual things is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (I Cor. 9:11.) In the old days when the Pope reigned supreme everybody paid plenty for masses. The begging friars brought in their share. Commercial priests counted the daily offerings. From these extortions our countrymen are now delivered by the Gospel. You would think they would be grateful for their emancipation and give generously for the support of the ministry of the Gospel and the relief of impoverished Christians. Instead, they rob Christ. When the members of a Christian congregation permit their pastor to struggle along in penury, they are worse than heathen.

Before very long they are going to suffer for their ingratitude. They will lose their temporal and spiritual possessions. This sin merits the severest punishment. The reason why the churches of Galatia, Corinth, and other places were troubled by false apostles was this, that they had so little regard for their faithful ministers. You cannot refuse to give God a penny who gives you all good things, even life eternal, and turn around and give the devil, the giver of all evil and death eternal, pieces of gold, and not be punished for it.

The words "in all good things: are not to be understood to mean that people are to give all they have to their ministers, but that they

should support them liberally and give them enough to live well.

Verse 7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked.

The Apostle is so worked up over this matter that he is not content with a mere admonition. He utters the threatening words, "God is not mocked." Our countrymen think it good sport to despise the ministry. They like to treat the ministers like servants and slaves. "Be not deceived," warns the Apostle, "God is not mocked." God will not be mocked in His ministers. Christ said: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." (Luke 10:16.) To Samuel God said: "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me." (I Sam. 8:7.) Be careful, you scoffers. God may postpone His punishment for a time, but He will find you out in time, and punish you for despising His servants. You cannot laugh at God. Maybe the people are little impressed by the threats of God, but in the hour of their death they shall know whom they have mocked. God is not ever going to let His ministers starve. When the rich suffer the pangs of hunger God will feed His own servants. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied." (Ps. 37:19.)

Verse 7. For whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

These passages are all meant to benefit us ministers. I must say I do not find much pleasure in explaining these verses. I am made to appear as if I am speaking for my own benefit. If a minister preaches on money he is likely to be accused of covetousness. Still people must be told these things that they may know their duty over against their pastors. Our Savior says: "Eating and drinking such things as they give; for the laborer is worthy of his hire." (Luke 10:7.) And Paul says elsewhere: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?" and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so has the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (I Cor. 9:13, 14.)

Verse 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 everlasting life.

This simile of sowing and reaping also refers to the proper support of ministers. "He that soweth to the Spirit," i.e., he that honors the ministers of God is doing a spiritual thing and will reap everlasting life. "He that soweth to the flesh," i.e., he that has nothing left for the ministers of God, but only thinks of himself, that person will reap

of the flesh corruption, not only in this life but also in the life to come. The Apostle wants to stir up his readers to be generous to their pastors.

That the ministers of the Church need support any man with common sense can see. Though this support is something physical the Apostle does not hesitate to call it sowing to the Spirit. When people scrape up everything they can lay their hands on and keep everything for themselves the Apostle calls it a sowing to the flesh. He pronounces those who sow to the Spirit blessed for this life and the life to come, while those who sow to the flesh are accursed now and forever.

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

The Apostle intends soon to close his Epistle and therefore repeats once more the general exhortation to good deeds. He means to say "Let us do good not only to the ministers of the Gospel, but to everybody, and let us do it without weariness." It is easy enough to do good once or twice, but to keep on doing good without getting disgusted with the ingratitude of those whom we have benefited, that is not so easy. Therefore the Apostle does not only admonish us to do good, but to do good untiringly. For our encouragement he adds the promise: "For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Wait for the harvest and then you will reap the reward of your sowing to the Spirit. Think of that when you do good and the ingratitude of men will not stop you from doing good."

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

In this verse the Apostle summarizes his instructions on the proper support of the ministers and of the poor. He paraphrases the words of Christ: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work." (John 9:4.) Our good deeds are to be directed primarily at those who share the Christian faith with us, "the household of faith," as Paul calls them, among whom the ministers rank first as objects of our well doing.

Verse 11. Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with mine own hand.

With these words the Apostle intends to draw the Galatians on. "I never," he says, "wrote such a long letter with my own hand to any of the other churches." His other epistles he dictated, and only



subscribed his greetings and his signature with his own hand.

Verse 12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Paul once more scores the false apostles in an effort to draw the Galatians away from their false doctrine. "The teachers you have now do not seek the glory of Christ and the salvation of your souls, but only their own glory. They avoid the Cross. They do not understand what they teach."

These three counts against the false apostles are of so serious a nature that no Christian could have fellowship with them. But not all the Galatians obeyed the warning of Paul.

The Apostle's attack upon the false apostles was not unjustified. Neither are our attacks upon the papacy. When we call the Pope the Antichrist and his minions an evil brood, we do not slander them. We merely judge them by the touchstone of God's Word recorded in the first chapter of this Epistle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

Verse 13. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

In other words: "I shall tell you what kind of teachers you have now. They avoid the Cross, they teach no certain truths. They think they are performing the Law, but they are not. They have not the Holy Spirit and without Him nobody can keep the Law." Where the Holy Ghost does not dwell in men there dwells an unclean spirit, a spirit that despises God and turns every effort at keeping the Law into a double sin.

Mark what the Apostle is saying: Those who are circumcised do not fulfill the Law. No self-righteous person ever does. To work, pray, or suffer apart from Christ is to work, pray, and to suffer in vain, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It does a person no good to be circumcised, to fast, to pray, or to do anything, if in his heart he despises Christ.

"Why do the false apostles insist that you should be circumcised? Not for the sake of your righteousness," although they give that impression, but "that they may glory in your flesh." Now what sort of an ambition is that? Worst of all, they force circumcision upon you

for no other reason than the satisfaction they get out of your submission.

Verse 14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"God forbid," says the Apostle, "that I should glory in anything as dangerous as the false apostles glory in because what they glory in is a poison that destroys many souls, and I wish it were buried in hell. Let them glory in the flesh if they wish and let them perish in their glory. As for me I glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He expresses the same sentiment in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he says: "We glory in tribulations"; and in the twelfth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities." According to these expressions the glory of a Christian consists in tribulations, reproaches, and infirmities.

And this is our glory today with the Pope and the whole world persecuting us and trying to kill us. We know that we suffer these things not because we are thieves and murderers, but for Christ's sake whose Gospel we proclaim. We have no reason to complain. The world, of course, looks upon us as unhappy and accursed creatures, but Christ for whose sake we suffer pronounces us blessed and bids us to rejoice. "Blessed are ye," says He, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you. and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." (Matt. 5:11, 12.)

By the Cross of Christ is not to be understood here the two pieces of wood to which He was nailed, but all the afflictions of the believers whose sufferings are Christ's sufferings. Elsewhere Paul writes: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24.)

It is good for us to know this lest we sink into despair when our opponents persecute us. Let us bear the cross for Christ's sake. It will ease our sufferings and make them light as Christ says, Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Verse 14. By whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.

"The world is crucified to me," means that I condemn the world. "I am crucified to the world," means that the world in turn condemns me. I detest the doctrine, the self-righteousness, and the works of

the world. The world in turn detests my doctrine and condemns me as a revolutionary heretic. Thus the world is crucified to us and we to the world.

The monks imagined the world was crucified to them when they entered the monastery. Not the world, but Christ, is crucified in the monasteries.

In this verse Paul expresses his hatred of the world. The hatred was mutual. As Paul, so we are to despise the world and the devil. With Christ on our side we can defy him and say: "Satan, the more you hurt me, the more I oppose you."

Verse 15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Since circumcision and uncircumcision are contrary matters we would expect the Apostle to say that one or the other might accomplish some good. But he denies that either of them do any good. Both are of no value because in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything.

Reason fails to understand this, "for the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:14.) It therefore seeks righteousness in externals. However, we learn from the Word of God that there is nothing under the sun that can make us righteous before God and a new creature except Christ Jesus.

A new creature is one in whom the image of God has been renewed. Such a creature cannot be brought into life by good works, but by Christ alone. Good works may improve the outward appearance, but they cannot produce a new creature. A new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, who imbues our hearts with faith, love, and other Christian virtues, grants us the strength to subdue the flesh and to reject the righteousness of the world.

Verse 16. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.

This is the rule by which we ought to live, "that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) Those who walk after this rule enjoy the favor of God, the forgiveness of their sins, and peace of conscience. Should they ever be overtaken by any sin, the mercy of God supports them.

Verse 17. From henceforth let no man trouble me.

The Apostle speaks these words with a certain amount of indignation. "I have preached the Gospel to you in conformity with the revelation which I received from Jesus Christ. If you do not care for it, very well. Trouble me no more. Trouble me no more."

Verse 17. For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

"The marks on my body indicate whose servant I am. If I was anxious to please men, if I approved of circumcision and good works as factors in our salvation, if I would take delight in your flesh as the false apostles do, I would not have these marks on my body. But because I am the servant of Jesus Christ and publicly declare that no person can obtain the salvation of his soul outside of Christ, I must bear the badge of my Lord. These marks were given to me against my will as decorations from the devil and for no other merit but that I made known Jesus."

THE marks of suffering which he bore in his body the Apostle makes frequent mention in his epistles. "I think," he says, "that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." (I Cor. 4:9.) Again, "To this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things to this day." (I Cor. 4:11-13.)

Verse 18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

This is the Apostle's farewell. He ends his Epistle as he began it by wishing the Galatians the grace of God. We can hear him say: "I have presented Christ to you, I have pleaded with you, I have reproved you, I have overlooked nothing that I thought might be of benefit to you. All I can do now is to pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would bless my Epistle and grant you the guidance of the Holy Ghost."

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who gave me the strength and the grace to explain this Epistle and granted you the grace to hear it, preserve and strengthen us in faith to the day of our redemption. To Him, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be glory, world without end. Amen.

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