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GALATIANS 6:1-5

Galatians Series

Open your Bibles please to Galatians 6. Today in our passage we're going to learn about correction. Correction is part of life.

Some people don't like conflict. If you don't like conflict you don't have to raise your hand. You probably don't like to raise your hand in church either. So I understand that. But this passage is going to be helpful to you in that regard because we're going to talk about correction from what God has to say about it. We're going to let God speak. We're going to look at the words that are in our passage in Galatians 6:1-5 and we're going to understand more about correcting.

I trust that as we get done with this passage, you will be more effective as you correct. Students will be able to correct their students better. In fact I suggest that students sometimes have to correct their parents. Will you know how to do it? Parents need to correct children. You likely will have to correct a coworker or a friend. You need to know how to do that and the passage here in the scriptures gives us some indication of what that looks like.

So we want to look at Galatians 6. I want to read verse 1-5 and then I'm going to come back and take the verses apart for you and show you more about what they look like.

In Galatians 6:1 it says this: *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.*

When we talk about this word (look at the first words there) – *if someone is caught in a sin* – the word *sin* is the word 'trespass.' It's what Christ died for. He died for our trespasses and sins. It's one of the several verses in the Bible, the New Testament, used to describe the word sin or the concept of sin. It's a violation.

I think a good way to look at it is to imagine a "No Trespassing" sign. When you trespass sometimes it's a willful disregard of the sign. You just go and cross it and "I'm going to go on this land. I'm going to cross that border without any care of the sign at all. I'm going to willfully trespass." Sometimes we wander off the path. We don't realize we're trespassing. Both of those are sins.

The word trespass is just one of the words that refers to mistakes that we make either willfully or we wander off the path and Christ died for those for us.

Now when Christ died for those, He then gave us the Holy Spirit to live inside of us so that -- I want to take you two verses prior to this chapter. In 5:25 do you see what it says there about the Holy Spirit? *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit* (or some versions say *let us walk in the Spirit*). We're still in that motif about the "No Trespass" sign. It even makes more sense now because the Holy Spirit empowers us to stay on the path. When we take the Holy Spirit and recognize that His design is to keep us on the path, then the trespasses that seem to take place we can ask God for forgiveness and we can get back on the path with the Holy Spirit's help because He's the one who puts us back on the path. We can walk in step with Him.

That's what we're talking about here. Whether we wander off or whether it's willful disobedience, that's the word trespass or sins.

The other word that we already mentioned there is the word *caught*. The word *caught* has to do with overtaken by surprise. Like a trap. Like being ensnared by something. The idea is that the person didn't have the perception or the skills necessary to meet the task.

It's like the four year old who comes into the room and just interrupts continually while you're trying to have a conversation with your mate. That person doesn't have the skills, doesn't have the ability to match what's needed in order to move forward.

So we're trying to help people understand that being trapped or overtaken or caught in a sin may happen by surprise. Sometimes that person who gets angry and just reacts to the situation doesn't have the skills or ability. They're caught in a sin. They're caught in something that gets them into trouble. They didn't have the perception or the skills to match what it takes, so they're caught in that.

Sin at its core is self-deception. So whenever we have sin in our lives, we become deceived. We're caught in something and we need someone else to help us make the correction in our lives.

That's what we're going to talk about today because we all need correction in our lives. I'm sure you've gotten in a situation where you've wandered off the path and you say, "I can't believe I did that again." Those are the kinds of things we're talking about here.

I think some people when they look at this particular passage think of big sins (if there are such things) like a leader falling or like someone caught in an addiction. But I want to go back to the context of the passage. Because if you look at the context, you'll remember that we just talked about the fruit of Spirit. We talked about keeping in step with the Spirit and now we immediately move into this *if anyone is caught in a sin*. We're in a context here that's talking about more than just big sins that we think are huge. We're talking about small everyday sins that get us into trouble.

If you think about the fruit of the Spirit, you remember love? We said love is sacrificial love. If a person has hurtful sarcasm instead of love, well, they're wandering off the path. They need correction. Or continual complaining instead of joy. Or worrying instead of peace. Or meanness instead of kindness. Or doing wrong things when no one's watching instead of goodness. Giving into peer pressure instead of faithfulness, living by moral convictions. Yelling at someone instead of having gentleness. Anger outburst instead of self-control. Now the passage becomes more relevant to all of us. Now we all realize that we need some help.

The reason for that is because we all live with sinful people, even if you live alone. We all need correction because what correction does is it gives us some perspective.

Just imagine hanging a picture on the wall. When I hang a picture on the wall, I straighten it out then I step back and it's off. So I go closer, I try to straighten it up again, step back. It's off again. That's when I call my wife. I say, "Honey, would you come? I'm trying to fix the picture. You tell me when it's straight." She'll say, "Correct it by moving it up a little bit on that side" and so on until the picture is straight.

I would suggest we all need that in our lives because we're often too close to our situation. Our perspective is clouded because we can't see it and someone who's stepped back a little bit can see this person needs to be corrected a bit, and then that person is able to offer that correction.

In verse 1 it says, *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you*. Let's just stop there with the next word *you* because we want to make it personal. You could put your name in there. God says He wants to use the hands and feet of people to accomplish the correction task.

Now sometimes we can just be corrected by God in God's word. 2 Timothy 3:16 says one of the purposes of the Bible is to *teach, rebuke, correct us, and train us in righteousness*. Sometimes just reading the Bible straightens you out on the path.

But many times God wants to use the hand and feet of individuals to bring about that correction because He wants to strengthen us. Our temptation is to make misery out of our mistakes, but God wants to make fruit out of our faults. These are things you could tweet if you're into tweeting – important statements I think that come out of this passage.

In Galatians 6:1 it starts by focusing on the way that correction is delivered. So part of my comments today have been the fact that we all need correction. That's kind of on the receiving correction side. Well let's turn this around to the correction side because there are six things here that help us correct other people more effectively, things that will make your correction most effective. All of us need to correct people, whether it's telling someone that they have a spot on their shirt or maybe you're correcting a coworker for a particular problem. We are regularly correcting people. We need to know how to do it. There are six things from these verses you'll want to remember as you correct others.

The first one, as you'll notice, in chapter 6:1 is we need to *live by the Spirit. You who live by the Spirit* (or who are spiritual) *should restore that person gently*. That's what it says.

Now when we say *live by the Spirit* I think what he's saying is you're not qualified to correct unless you're being led by the Spirit. That's pretty significant, especially if you're a parent and every day you have to correct kids.

It's all the more important then for us as parents to be very careful about our Spirit-filledness, that we are regularly coming before the Lord. Every day we're praying for this child – "Lord, I don't know what to do with this kid. I know I need to correct him regularly; I need help here." So even in the midst of that correction, we're relying on the Holy Spirit to know whether we're going to take an easier approach or take a more firm approach. We're allowing God to work in us so that we can make some changes in that child or try to bring about some correction, but we're doing it being Spirit-filled.

What does that mean? I think it means we're yielding to the Spirit, allowing the fruit of the Spirit to be present in our lives so that even though we might be firm with someone, we might have to bring correction to a particular situation, we can do it with the Spirit's presence in our lives and the Spirit's direction and guidance. I think it means we need to be prayerful regularly. We need to be thinking continually not about "something's wrong there; I need to solve it," but "Lord, something's wrong there. What can I do to bring healing into that situation? How can I respond out of your grace in this situation to approach this particular problem that exists?"

That's the first thing. If we're going to correct well, we need to live by the Spirit.

The second thing you'll see right in the verse there is the word *restore*. *You who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently*. The goal is restoration, not justice. Think about that. The goal is restoration, not justice. Because those who think that justice is the goal often miss correction opportunities because the goal is to bring someone to a place where they are restored.

The word *restore* here in this passage means mending. You remember the story of the disciples being recruited by Jesus Christ? As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw James and John by the sea there *mending their nets*. It's the very same word here. It means to mend, to prepare, to equip. Restore has the idea of fixing something up so that it's useful again.

That kind of goal in our correction is much different than what we often see in correction where some people are just eager to point out something wrong. "You did something wrong and I want to tell you about it," is not the approach we're seeing here.

What we're seeing is "I want to bring you to a place of restoration," which makes Psalm 23 (the Good Shepherd psalm) have some even greater meaning when the passage says, *He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake*. Oh we're back to a path. Trespass. Staying in step with the Spirit. In Psalm 23 it's saying *He leads me in the path of righteousness* right after it says *He restores my soul*. It's putting it back together.

I like the idea of providing a cast. I've shared this illustration with you before, but I like it a lot. When a parent is working with a child, the goal is to provide a cast for that leg so that it can heal. When the doctor puts a cast on the leg does the doctor do the healing? No. It's God who does the

healing, but God uses the doctor to put the cast on so that the healing can take place in the right direction.

I would suggest that when parents correct their children they often do that in a way that puts the cast on the leg so that God can do the healing that needs to take place in the heart. That's why firmness is often important in a family because when that firmness takes place then it establishes that cast that needs to be there.

This idea of restoring deals with an attitude. The attitude that we come to when we're trying to address correction wisely. When you correct a mate, you're trying to restore that person gently. When you're trying to correct a child, you're trying to restore that person. The goal is focusing on moving them to the right place, getting them to a place where they're mended, they're equipped, they're restored.

I think it really illustrates the difference between punishment and discipline. Punishment is negative, where discipline is positive. Punishment is motivated out of anger, where discipline is motivated out of love. Punishment focuses on past misdeeds; discipline focuses on future good deeds. Punishment focuses on justice; discipline focuses on teaching.

There's a difference in perspective when we come to the correction process and we understand this word restoration. It provides us with an attitude that helps us to be able to move forward. A goal in mind. That my goal isn't just to get justice and set the record straight. My goal is to equip that person, mend them, and move them in the right direction.

That is something we can do not just in the family. We do that everywhere we are. When we correct someone we're trying to help them get straightened out. Not for our benefit, but for theirs so that they can function more effectively.

Let's go to our next word in the passage. *You who live by the Spirit should restore the person gently*. Literally in the Bible the words are *a spirit of gentleness*. The ESV says that. The King James Version says *spirit of meekness*. It's that same word used in the fruit of the Spirit, *prautais*. It's that word I like to say, *prautais*, because it's just fun to say. It sounds like gentleness is what it is. It's an attitude.

Now sometimes when you see the word *spirit* in the Bible it refers to an evil spirit or an angel, a good spirit. There's a spirit world out there that we need to be sensitive to. But sometimes when you come to the Bible and the word *spirit* is used, it refers to an attitude.

Some people go to a passage like the one in Timothy where it says *God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity*, and they say this: there is an evil spirit of fear, that's his name, and he wants to embody you or he wants to control you or influence you.

Now maybe there are certain spirits that have certain job descriptions like that, however I would suggest that there are some times when we see the word *spirit* in the Bible it means the word attitude, as it does here in this passage. There is a spirit of gentleness.

The word *spirit* is used twice in the verse. *Those who live by the Spirit* (that is those who are spiritual, relying on the Spirit) *should restore that person with a spirit of gentleness*, an attitude of gentleness. It means that we're not pointing a judgmental finger in the person's face, but we're putting an arm around them and walking them back to the path so that they can do the right thing.

I like looking at the story of Jesus' correction or teaching of the disciples when He washed the disciples' feet at the Lord's Supper. The lesson He was not teaching the disciples was that you need to have clean feet. He wasn't teaching about cleanliness on that particular day. On that day He was teaching about the approach that you take, that you need to be a servant. He says that He wants us to *wash each other's feet*. That's the idea. We want to be servants to one another regularly.

But I imagine the stories that unfold that Jesus didn't take scalding water as He washed the disciples' feet, as sometimes we use when we correct someone with intense anger and we're upset and yelling. That's not the kind of approach that Jesus took when He washed the disciples' feet. And He didn't take ice cold water with a callus approach like "I don't care. You just need clean feet." I'm sure that He did that gently.

In part that servant attitude needs to take place in our lives as we approach this idea of correction because it allows us to move forward in this process by helping people to grow and change. Sometimes the gentle approach is what wins the day.

I love it when someone corrects me and does it gently. I like correction in general, I value correction, so when someone corrects me even when I don't like it or even when I think they're partly wrong, I try to ask myself the question, "Is there some way I could handle that situation better? Is there something I can learn from this person?" But I'll tell you this: if you're going to correct me, I sure like it better when you do it gently. I think we all like that as we're trying to make changes in our lives.

I think the lesson we learn from the story of Jesus is that we don't want to be dirty feet inspectors unless you're willing to wash the feet. Or one author I saw this week said, "Don't be foot-sniffers unless you're willing to be foot-washers." Gently. Not scalding water.

The next word is a word I suggest that comes from the rest of verse 1 is the word 'carefully.' The word carefully isn't used there. That's my word that I'm using to describe what I see in the passage. You look at it in verse 1 and see what the rest of the verse says. *You who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.*

Watch yourselves. See, I think correction is one of those areas in our lives where we easily wander off the path. We have to correct. We can easily find ourselves doing something right that is pointing out someone else's error, in trying to straighten them out find ourselves wandering off the path, thus doing something good and doing something bad at the same time. We can do something good by correcting someone or we can do something bad by doing it in the wrong way. That's why Paul is telling us to do it carefully.

Watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. You may as you're wandering off the path step in the puddle of pride or harshness or selfishness. When that starts taking place in your life then you get yourself off the path. It's one of those areas that we have to be very careful about. That's why I'm sure Paul is saying *live by the Spirit* if you're going to correct someone. Because you need to be in the Spirit and step in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit in order to correct effectively without getting side-tracked yourself and losing something.

I sometimes see parents disciplining their children because they're embarrassed because the kid has embarrassed them in public. You can see that. They're yelling at their kid because their child embarrassed them. It's a problem. Or sometimes parents correct their kids because they're personally offended or because their kids are irritating them.

Kids do need to be corrected in all of those cases, but the way that it's handled is very important. Because the focus isn't on my pride, the focus isn't on the fact that I'm embarrassed, the focus isn't because I'm taking my parenting too personally. It's the fact that I need to be out there looking for the best in that other person. I need to be helping that other person to grow and move forward.

Do correction carefully on the job, with a friend, or in the home.

The next words come from verse 2. That was just all of verse 1. Let's see if we can pick it up here a little bit.

Get into verse 2. *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* I would suggest that we need to be willing to help. "Let me carry that for you a bit," we might say to someone who is struggling. When someone is weak they often need help carrying the burden that they have because they just can't carry it themselves. They need help.

I would suggest that many times parents are like Jell-O molds with their kids because the Jell-O isn't set yet. So a child doesn't have what's needed in order to manage himself effectively.

A child who's mismanaging his cell phone, for example, may need the parent to pull the cell phone back for a little bit and "let's talk about a plan for dealing with the cell phone so he can do the right thing when I'm not around." That's parental control when self-control isn't present. It's part of that Jell-O mold that I suggest God wants us to have sometimes with others, not just in a family relationship but with a friend to come alongside that person. It's a gift.

When a friend offers you accountability and says, "Let's meet once a week so I can support you in the midst of this struggle as you're working on this in your life," that's accountability. That's bearing one another's burdens, as it says. We carry them. Willing to help.

The next word I'm going to draw attention to takes place in verse 3. It's the word *humbly*. We do it humbly. *If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.* It's thinking that you're something when you're not. Sometimes we get a pretty high opinion of ourselves, especially when we're right and the other person is wrong. We start thinking, "I've got the truth and they don't," so then we find ourselves wandering into this area of pride. So the

passage he was talking about the importance of humility in our lives, that we be careful not to think that we are something when we are not.

My early training as a pastor took place with my father as I pastored a church with my dad for eight years. Our church was growing quite rapidly; God was doing some amazing things. It was really fun to watch the Lord work. My dad said this statement in order to keep me humble and to keep us both humble. He often said something like this: “If you start to feel like you’re something then take your finger, put it in a bowl of water, then pull it out, and see what impression you’ve made.”

The point he was trying to make is that none of us are irreplaceable. That none of us has the corner on spirituality. We all need to be careful in our own lives about thinking that we’re too great. That’s what the passage is saying here.

It continues on in verse 4. It says, *Each one should test their own actions*. Look at yourself.

Do you remember as Jesus was teaching His disciples He took a common illustration from His childhood to illustrate a very important point to them. Remember Jesus grew up in a carpenter shop. He saw the disciples bickering with each other and He said to them, “Don’t judge one another. If you see your brother has a piece of sawdust in his eye then you need to get the plank out of your own eye first.” That’s what it’s saying here in this passage as well. Each one should test their own actions.

Then they can take pride in themselves alone. Is pride wrong? No. You can take pride in yourselves, but notice what the rest of the phrase says – *without comparing themselves to someone else*.

Each of us runs a race, the Bible says. We’re not running a race looking around at each other trying to see who we’re running faster than. The fact that you can run faster than other people doesn’t make you better than that person. We’re all running our race before the Lord and *our eyes are fixed on Jesus* is what the passage says when it’s talking about the race.

The reality is that when God gave these talents in the parable, some got five, some got two, and some got one. You might say, “Wow. That’s sure unfair of the landowner to do that in the passage.” But the reality is that’s what happens in our lives.

If I’m a two-talent person, that’s what God has given me. I can’t feel bad because I got two and somebody else got five. I need to maximize what God has given me with my two and that’s okay. But I can’t feel better than the person who got one. I need to be able to be running my race before the Lord, not comparing myself to someone else.

It’s interesting because when it comes to correction we tend to lift ourselves above sometimes. We need to recognize we’re all in this together. All of us are human, all of us have weaknesses, we all have problems, and we need to recognize that the other person may have a fault that we’re trying to help correct. But we have faults that other people are going to correct in our lives as well.

If we take all of those words together then we see this. We see that the correction guidelines mentioned in the passage are these: *live by the Spirit, restore*, do it *gently* but carefully, be willing to help, and do it *humbly*. Those are all examples or statements that the passage is saying right there in that scripture that we need to guard ourselves against. When we're making that correction process we need to be able to move forward.

Look at the next verse, verse 5. It's kind of puzzling to me and this is where we want to tie up what's happening here. I had to ask myself a question because in verse 5 it says *for each one should carry their own load*. Now which is it? Should we bear another person's burden or should we tell them, "Carry your own load?" What should we do? It seems inconsistent to me, but you know Paul's writing this, it must be consistent in his own mind. So I was trying to figure out what is it? Do we encourage people to carry their own load or do we carry their burden with them?

I think part of the answer is discovered in the actual words, the Greek words themselves because the words are different words.

In verse 2 it says, *Carry one another's burdens*. That's the word *baros*. It's an overwhelmingly heavy load.

It says *and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ*. When you carry one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ – you remember the law of Christ is when He was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself*.

You're going to fulfill the law of Christ by carrying someone else's load. That's what he's talking about in verse 2. It's a heavy weight. It's overwhelming. You know that feeling. It might be feeling overwhelming or just is overwhelming you and that's the kind of burden that we share with each other and we carry.

In verse 5, though, we have a different word being used. It's the word *phortion*. It's a word that describes a backpack, a nontransferable load. There are some loads that you and I carry. I can't take it. You've got to do it yourself. You have that load. I can't take the load for you. You have to carry that load yourself. That's what's being talked about here. It's personal and it's nontransferable. It can't be shifted to someone else.

Two kinds of words that are used there. Carry your own load, the one you are prescribed to carry, but be willing to carry someone else's load at the same time when they are overwhelmed in the process.

Now here's what's interesting. If we take the second word, the word that's talking about the individual load, and we take it now into the passage in Matthew 11 where Jesus is talking to us, He's giving these words of advice. He says to me (and I put the place where the Greek word is translated there) – "*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened (phortion)*, with your personal load that you're to carry. If it's too heavy for you to carry, come to Him all you who are

weary and burdened. Because we find ourselves weary and burdened with the struggle that we're facing in our own personal load, *and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden (phortion) is light.*"

What He's saying is if you're having a struggle in your life in a particular area, several things are going to come to bear. One, you need to deal with it. Carry your own load, according to Galatians 6:5. Secondly, if someone sees you walking off the path because your burden is so heavy, they're going to come along and they're going to say, "You're wandering off the path," and they're going to correct you gently. They're going to help you get back on the path and maybe even help you carry your burden.

But you have to realize that in all of this, the Holy Spirit is the one who's keeping us in step with Him. Jesus invites us to give Him this burden that we carry so that we can experience rest. In that passage it says *rest for our souls*. It's not just for our muscles, not just rest for our emotions. Rest for our souls that Jesus provides for us.

I just love that passage because sometimes the burdens are great and sometimes the challenges that we experience are overwhelming for us, and God wants to provide rest for our souls. I think in all of this one of the things that we understand is what grace is all about. God wants us to realize that it's only by His grace that we get through this day without wandering off the path. It's only by His grace that someone comes along and says, "You're wandering off the path. Let me help you get back on the path." Every day we live by God's grace and it's by God's grace that we receive Jesus Christ into our lives and we are saved in the first place.

I like the illustration of the man who dies, goes to heaven, and then Peter's meeting him at the pearly gates. A lot of stories seem to start that way.

In this case, Peter says, "Alright. Let me tell you how this works. In order to get into heaven you have to have a thousand points. You tell me the good you've done and I'll tell you how many points it's worth."

The guy says, "Well I was true to my wife for fifty years. I never cheated on her, not even in my heart."

Peter says, "Wow. Terrific. That's worth three points."

"Three points?! Well I went to church and I gave to the church and I served all the time."

"Fantastic. That's worth one point."

"One point?! Well I helped create a soup kitchen and I cared for the homeless." Well those were each worth one point. The guy says, "I only get two points for that? This is ridiculous. At this rate the only way that somebody is going to get to heaven is by the grace of God!"

Peter says, "Bingo. A thousand points!"

I would suggest the same thing's true in our lives. We need to recognize it's God's grace that gets us through the day today. It's not our own strength. It's not who we are, comparing ourselves to other people. It's God's grace as He moves us forward.

If you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to do that. That's where grace starts. He's drawing you to Himself. He's calling you to Himself. He's saying, "I want you to be in my family. I want to adopt you in my family. I want you to be a child of mine." He's calling you. When He calls you like that, that's His grace pulling you in that direction. You want to accept that grace that He gives and ask Jesus Christ to come into your life and run your life. When you do then amazing things start to happen inside of you and God's grace starts to work itself out inside.

Part of that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that we talked about last week. Part of that is the correction that comes into our lives when God makes significant changes and adjusts us and moves us in the direction that He wants us to be.

If you've never asked Jesus Christ into your heart, I want to invite you to do that today. This next song is going to talk particularly about our need for the Lord. We all need to sing this song. This is our prayer before the Lord as we come before Him. But if God is speaking to your heart and you'd like to ask Him to come into your life today, would you just slip to the sides where we'll have prayer counselors available. They'll pray with you and help you come to know Jesus Christ personally. What a great way to start the new year.

Let's stand and worship the Lord together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you now. We thank you for who you are and we know we need you. We're weak. We have mistakes in our lives. We wander off the path. We need the correction, we need the perspective that you provide. So Lord, we come as needy people recognizing in humility that we can't do this ourselves. We need you as we enter this year. As we go through the process of growing spiritually this year we want you to be leading our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.