

RESTORING THE FALLEN

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INTRODUCTION: (Scripture Reading – Galatians 6:1-9)

- A. One of the most famous parables Jesus told is “The Parable Of The Sower” – When Jesus told this parable he captured the reality of people’s various responses to the gospel with great practicality!**
1. Remember those four types of soils? Every person here finds a description of themselves in one of those soils. I am sure that here this morning we have all four soils represented...
 2. Today let us to focus our thoughts on those who are currently characterized as the thorny ground ...Those who have been choked & whose spiritual growth is dead or dying! **(Matt 13:18-23)**
 3. Satan has set his sights on us... He works hard to destroy us because we’ve turned away from him to serve the Lord. Satan’s fiery darts have pierced the armor of some of our brothers & sisters!
- B. I am sure we have all watched with great sorrow as we have seen people who were once growing and faithful digress spiritually and ultimately fall away from the Lord:**
1. Paul wrote using terms of a burning consuming fire to describe the personal pain someone falling away would bring him or anyone else who is working for the Lord **(1 Cor 3:11-15)**
 2. Who among us isn’t hurt when we experience the spiritual loss of one of our brothers or sisters in Christ? What is there we can do to help us as we seek to restore those who are fallen?

SOME PRACTICAL THINGS WE NEED FOR RESTORING THE FALLEN

- A. Our Motivation: Why we should actively seek to restore the fallen**
1. We need to be proactive about restoring those who have fallen away because we know that falling away means falling away from the Lord: **(1 John 1:3, 6)**
 - a. I have often heard those who have “fallen away” saying, “I need to get back to church” or “I know I’ve fallen away from church” → This is a twisted view of what the church is!
 - b. Getting back to church doesn’t instantly fix things... You’ve got to get back to following Jesus! You haven’t just fallen away from church, you’ve fallen away from the Lord!
 - c. When a person falls away they have quit walking in a light, therefore their fellowship with Christ has been lost! Without Christ we have no hope, peace, or strength!
 2. We have motivation because we know that falling away means falling from grace! **(Gal 5:4-7)**
 3. We should be motivated out of a love for their souls. We need to remember that falling away means being on path heading toward an eternity in Hell! **(Jude 1:22-23; Heb 10:26-31)**
 - a. This is the point that should hurt the most & we don’t like to think about this; but, it’s something we must think about because it inspires us to do something about it!
 - b. Think about one you know who has fallen away → Now picture them suffering in Hell!
 4. We should desire to restore those who have fallen away because we know that falling away also means falling away from our fellowship with one another **(1 John 1:3, 7)**
 - a. What creates our fellowship is our mutual fellowship with God – W/o this fellowship with God we lose the substance that binds us together with cords that can’t be broken
 - b. When a person falls away and we are around them we feel an awkwardness... we feel that something isn’t right, something is missing, something is off... It’s our fellowship!
 - c. How much do we hurt when one falls away? Some do, some really don’t! We’ve got to strengthen our fellowship to the point that it rips us apart if a person falls away!

- B. Our Mission: Some practical things we need to understand and do as we seek to restore them**

1. First of all, we need to remember that restoring those who have fallen away is a very difficult work both for those who seeking the fallen and those who have fallen away (**Hebrews 6:4-6**)
 - a. For one who has fallen away – Years of unfaithfulness may have to be overcome, they must fight through feelings of guilt & shame, they may have to revive a seared conscience, they may have feelings of resentment, bitterness, or anger, & more!
 - b. For one who is trying to restore them – It may take many words of encouragement, may mean enduring their rejection you, or personal discouragement – But don't give up!
 - c. By saying it's impossible to restore one who has fallen away after tasting of salvation, this emphasizes to us that we can't make return, they must get to where they desire it!
 - d. They've already tasted the goodness of God's grace, salvation, the Holy Spirit, God's word, & hope of eternal life and yet they have left it all. What does all that mean to them?
2. One important thing to do for those who have fallen away is to emphasize to them that they still have an important place in the kingdom of the Lord and the local church (**John 21:15-19**)
 - a. After Peter's denial of Jesus, he was in a very vulnerable place spiritually – He could've gotten discouraged, given up, or done worse like Judas did. So after His resurrection Jesus soon says, "Where's Peter?" – Jesus knew Peter needed to be restored & fast!
 - b. How does Jesus restore Peter? By reemphasizing His love, letting Peter know there was still great work for him to do, and that he still had a place in the service of Jesus
 - c. Sometimes those who have fallen away will be plagued by feelings of worthlessness – They may feel the church has passed them by & there's no longer a place for them. They may feel like they no longer have anything to offer. We must show them otherwise!
3. To help restore those who are fallen, we need to emphasize to them the power of God's grace and the cleansing of Jesus' blood (**Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 4:12-14**)
4. If we want to restore those who are fallen, we must reestablish our love for them and remind them of God's unending love for them (**1 Peter 4:8; Romans 5:8-10**)
5. When we try to restore a fallen one, there may be sinful practices or relationships to be changed, we must show them that strength for repentance is found in the Lord! (**2 Cor 12:9; Eph 6:10**)

C. Our Mistakes: Some practical things we need to avoid as we seek to restore others

1. We must be careful not to ignore or minimize the sins that have been committed (**2 Cor 7:8-11**)
 - a. In our desire to get them back to church, we may make having them back at church be our ultimate goal instead of them correcting their relationship with God being our goal
 - b. Just getting someone to show back up to church isn't restoring the soul – We must make sure they are bringing their life in stride with what it means to walk in the light!
 - c. This may mean just coming back to church, but for most there is something more to be corrected, something given up, forgiveness sought from another – It must be done!
2. On the flip side, when someone does return to the Lord, we must make sure we provide them with comfort and forgiveness and not add to their sorrow (**2 Corinthians 2:6-11**)
 - a. Paul had commanded the Corinthians to withdraw from the brother who was practicing sexual immorality? He gave them this instruction to preserve the purity of the church, stop the spread of sin, & to shake up the brother to the point of repentance
 - b. Their actions worked... Even withdrawing fellowship is an effort to restore fellowship! But some had evidently continued to give him grief about it after his repentance! So Paul basically writes this letter and says, "Enough is enough! Forgive and move on!"

- c. When a person repents & returns to the Lord they are in a spiritually weakened and more vulnerable position... They need reaffirmed, strengthened, and lifted, not torn apart!
- d. Vs. 11 – “Satan’s devices” - Satan uses the occasion of a person’s restoration as a tool to accomplish his work by surrounding him with an unloving spiritual atmosphere
- 3. We must avoid self-righteousness, pride, and hypocrisy in how we approach them (**Gal 6:1-2**)
 - a. Notice that Paul says restoring the fallen is about fulfilling the law of Christ... What is the law of Christ? It’d have to refer to the pursuit of the two greatest commands... love!
 - b. Since seeking to restore those who have fallen away is about love, there is no room in our hearts or our actions for self-righteousness or pride in how we approach them
 - c. We must approach in gentleness, considering their situation, in a forbearing manner, being patient with their struggles, and in humility, considering our own weaknesses

CONCLUSION: We must never forget that those we are discussing are souls. They are people for whom Christ died! They are people who will spend eternity in either heaven or hell... the difference may be what we may or may not do.