

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRIST-LIKE LIFE

5 ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in line with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited—provoking each other, envying each other. **6** Brothers, even if a man is caught in the act of committing any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a spirit of humility, being on guard so that you also are not tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and by doing so you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³If a man has a high regard for himself when he has no reason for such an opinion, he is deceiving himself. ⁴But let each one examine his own work; then he will find a reason for confidence in himself alone, and not in [comparison to] someone else—⁵for each one must bear his own load. ⁶He who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with the one who instructs him. ⁷Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked: whatever a man sows, he will also reap. ⁸The man who sows to please his sinful nature, shall reap destruction from the sinful nature; but the man who sows to please the Spirit, shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹Let us not become discouraged in doing good, for at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good works for all men, but especially for those who belong to the family of believers. (Gal. 5:25-6:10)

Introduction

Suppose your company approached you one day and informed you that you were being transferred to a foreign country, perhaps Japan. You accept the offer and together with your family you make the move to Tokyo.

You soon discover that adjusting to life in another culture means learning to do things their way—you need to familiarize yourself with at least the rudiments of a new language; you need to become accustomed to new foods; you must acquaint yourself with the customs and etiquette of the new culture; and you need to appreciate and respect the values they hold in high regard. If you are going to have a successful and profitable experience it is imperative that you adjust to life in that culture and that means learning to do things their way.

What pertains to a transfer from one earthly culture to another all the more holds true with regard to your transfer into the life and kingdom of God. If the Holy Spirit has brought you into the life of Christ, your attitude and conduct need to come into accord with that divine life.

Because we as Christians have entered into the life of Christ, we must now exhibit the characteristics of that divine life: *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in line with the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:25.)

I. Exhibit a Christ-like Humility (5:26)

In verse 26 the apostle exhorts us, *"Let us not become conceited."* To be conceited means to have an excessive appreciation of our own worth or virtue; to have an

excessively high opinion of one's self; to hold one's self above others in one's own mind as being better or more important than them and being proud of it.

How is this attitude of conceit communicated to others? It can be communicated by the way we speak to others. Do we address others with courtesy and politeness? Or do we tend to bark orders at them and issue commands? It can be communicated the way we treat others. Do we treat others with respect and dignity? Or do we treat them as though they were inferiors whose sole function is to fulfill our personal desires?

What are the results of possessing and exhibiting a conceited spirit? Some brothers will react to such a spirit by becoming provoked, angry and challenged. Their reaction will be that of indignantly inquiring, "Who does he think he is? I'm as good as he is! I'm not going to cooperate with him and I'm certainly not going to serve him!" Other brothers will react to such a spirit by becoming envious. Their reaction will be that of silently musing, "I wish I could be like him, aggressive, arrogant, in control, getting my own way!"

Whenever we exhibit a spirit of conceit we make it extremely difficult for our brothers to remember that they **are** our servants—just as we are called to be their servants, note Galatians 5:13, *"You were called for freedom, brothers, only do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the sinful nature [to express itself]; rather, serve one another with love."* Furthermore, we offer a very bad role model for our brothers and our own children; one that is diametrically opposed to the character and example of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"the Son of man came not to receive ministry, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mk. 10:45.) We also make it extremely tempting for our brothers to concentrate on our faults. By way of illustration: There once was a T.V. commercial for a particular paint company that, in order to demonstrate the superiority of its own paint, painted a balloon with its competitor's paint. When the balloon was inflated all the faults of the competitor's paint became evident—so, too, whenever we become inflated with pride and self-importance, all our faults will become evident and be held up for display. Finally, when we exhibit a spirit of conceit we make it extremely difficult for our brothers to practice the admonition of Scripture that exhort us, *"above all, love each other fervently"* (1 Pet. 4:8.) The Book of Proverbs warns, *"Pride only breeds contention"* (Prov. 13:10.)

What are some preventatives or antidotes for a spirit of conceit? First, rather than entertain an intoxicated and inflated opinion of ourselves, we are to think soberly of ourselves:

... by the grace given to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member

belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (Rom. 12:3-6a)

To think soberly means to think realistically; it means having things in perspective, recognizing the source of every good and perfect gift. Paul calls the Corinthians to such a perspective when he inquires, *"What makes you superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you received it, why do you boast as if it had not been given to you?"* (1 Cor. 4:7.) Again, according to Romans 12:4-5, think soberly means to think spiritually; to view ourselves as being a part of the body of Christ, responsible to contribute to the well-being of the whole body, not just to think of ourselves and our own needs and desires.

Secondly, rather than be occupied with ourselves and our "glory," we are to be oriented to the glory of God. Let us glorify God as the Author of our salvation: *"It is because of him [God the Father] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—righteousness and sanctification and redemption; ³¹in order that it may be just as it has been written, "He who boasts, let him boast in the LORD" (1 Cor. 1:30-31.) Let us glorify God who is the Giver of every blessing: *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (Jas.1:17.) Let us glorify God who is the Creator of all things: "You are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and to exercise the power; for you did create all things, and because of your will they were brought into being, indeed, they were created" (Rev. 4:11.)**

II. Exhibit a Genuine Concern for Fellow Believers (6:1-2)

According to Galatians chapter six, verse one, genuine concern for fellow believers means restoring a brother who has fallen into sin.

The case is that of a Christian brother who has been caught in the act of sin; it is analogous to the situation found in John 8:3-4,

Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought to him a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand before them; ⁴and they said to [Jesus], Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery—caught in the very act. (Jn. 8:3-4)

The command given here in Galatians 6:1 is to restore such a brother. The first step towards restoration and reconciliation does not depend upon the sinner himself, it resides with God—it is the LORD who takes the initiative in calling us to repentance, He does not wait for us to take the initiative, note Luke 15:3-4,

Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? (Lk. 15:3-4)

The invitation to be reconciled to God is not limited to those who have been tempted but have not yielded to sin—it is extended to sinners while they are still in their sin, and to Christians who have temporarily reverted back to their sin. Following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus sought out Peter, who had denied his Lord three times: *“The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon”* (Lk. 24:34,) such was the testimony of the disciples.

No matter what the sin may be—even if a man is caught in *“any trespass”*—the command is to restore him, note 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

The Lord entrusts this task of restoring and reclaiming a sinning brother to those who are *“spiritual.”* To be *“spiritual”* certainly does not mean to be Pharisaical. The Pharisaical is expressed in Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector: *“The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself, ‘God, I thank you, that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector’”* (Lk. 18:11.) To be *“spiritual”* means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit; note Galatians 5:25, *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in line with the Spirit.”* To be *“spiritual”* means to exhibit a spirit of gentleness like the Lord Jesus: *“we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin”* (Heb. 4:15.) To be *“spiritual”* means to possess a spirit of self-watchfulness, as opposed to self-confidence by which one thinks himself to be no longer susceptible to certain sins: *“let the one who thinks he is standing [secure], be careful not to fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12.)

According to Galatians 6:2, genuine concern for fellow believers means bearing one another’s burdens. In verse 2 we are commanded to *“bear one another’s burdens;”* in verse 5 we are informed, *“each one must bear his own load.”* An illustration may help serve to clarify and explain these two statements: The Christian life may be viewed as a journey we make in the company of fellow believers, a journey that sometimes takes us along some rocky and hazardous pathways. Strapped to our backs are our “back packs”—the *“load”* each one is required to personally carry, (this would be the *“load”* referred to in verse 5.) But sometimes, as the company of believers wends its way along a rugged piece of terrain, a boulder breaks loose from the mountainside and comes crashing down upon a fellow believer—becoming an unexpected and excessive *“burden”* to him, (this is the type of *“burden”* referred to in verse 2.) When such an incident occurs, we as brothers and sisters in Christ must come to his aid, helping to lift the excessive weight from off his shoulders, so that he may once again carry his normal load and continue his journey in the company of his fellow believers. By way of application: the *“load”* referred to in verse 5 is the normal weight of the Christian life: the daily effort to live for Christ and become like Christ in the midst of this present world. The *“burden”* referred to in verse 2 includes the excessive and unexpected trials that come into the lives of each

believer at some time: a crisis in the family, an excessive assault by the devil, a debilitating illness, a loss of job, etc.

The Word of God instructs us to come to the aid of our brothers when they encounter such occasions in their lives—*“bear one another’s burdens, and by doing so you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* Let us take to heart the instruction given in Philippians 2:3-4,

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit; but with a humble mind let each one consider others as occupying a higher position than himself. ⁴Let each one be concerned not only about his own interests, but also about the interests of others. (Phil. 2:3-4)

May the Lord grant each of us to be like Timothy as he is described in Philippians 2:20-22,

I have no one else with a heart like him; he will have a genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹All [the others] seek their own interests, not the interests of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know his proven worth; that he served with me for the gospel as a son [serves] his father. (Phil. 2:20-22)

May we bear in mind and be motivated by the words of our Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew 25:40,45,

The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me ... ⁴⁵... I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. (Matt. 25:40,45)

III. Exhibit a Healthy Self-Assessment (6:3-5)

In verse 3 the Apostle Paul describes the problem of a man who *“has a high regard for himself when he has no reason [for such an opinion.]”* Here is the case of a man who considers himself to be very righteous, very much sanctified, very far advanced in the Christian faith and life; when in fact he has no adequate grounds or reasons for entertaining such an evaluation of himself.

The apostle comes to the root of the problem when in verse 4a he admonishes us: *“let each one examine his own work.”* The man’s false evaluation has resulted from wrongly comparing his life with the lives of weaker or younger brothers: those who are young or immature in the faith; those who are careless and less than spiritual, (that is to say, less than Spirit-filled); or those who have succumbed to temptation and are living in blatant sin. In comparing himself to such lives this man has come away with a high evaluation of his own spiritual life—but such an evaluation may not have any real basis. The root of the problem lies in the fact that he has used a false standard of measurement; he has used the lives of young or careless Christians, rather than the life of our

Lord Himself as his standard. Such a false self-evaluation can also have harmful consequences: it can create in the man a sense of self-righteousness and spiritual pride, (the conceit warned against in Galatians 5:26); or it can tempt the man to hold his brothers in contempt, rather than have a genuine concern for them.

In verse 4 Paul supplies the remedy and safeguard to this problem: *“let each one examine his own work; then he will find a reason for confidence in himself alone, and not in [comparison to] someone else.”* Rather than evaluating and criticizing the spiritual lives of our fellow believers, we are to evaluate and examine our own spiritual life. We are to do so bearing in mind that we will give an account of ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ:

... we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it; ¹⁰for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

What exactly is the true standard of measurement for our self-evaluation? It is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul teaches that God’s purpose is for us to become transformed into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior: *“those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers”* (Rom. 8:29.) The Lord Jesus Himself declares, *“The disciple is not above his teacher; but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher”* (Lk. 6:40.)

In making a self-evaluation, what questions should we ask ourselves? Am I making progress in holiness? This is in accordance with the admonition of the Book of Hebrews: *“Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb. 12:14.) Am I growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ? This is in accordance with the instructions of the Apostle Peter: *“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 3:18.) Do I see the Holy Spirit changing me into the likeness of Christ? This is the very purpose of our redemption: *“we all ... beholding ... the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory ... by the Lord the Spirit”* (2 Cor. 3:18.)

If one can look at his life and see it being changed into the likeness of Christ, then he has just cause for *“confidence”* (or, *“glory.”*) Then there is legitimate reason for rejoicing and for confidence that the Holy Spirit is working in us. In your life, do you see love replacing bitterness, faith replacing fear, concern for others replacing selfishness, meekness replacing arrogance, purity replacing unholiness. Do you see the fruit of the Spirit replacing the works of the old sinful nature?

IV. Exhibit the Practice of Generosity (6:6-10)

Verse 6 is specifically speaking about the relationship between the Christian teacher and those whom he instructs.

The teacher's responsibility is to be a workman laboring in the Scriptures, as the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15.) The responsibility of those who receive the teaching is to support their teachers financially. Referring to those whom He was sending out to bring the message of the gospel, the Lord Jesus declares, *"the worker deserves his wages"* (Lk. 10:7.) The Apostle Paul informs the church of the Lord's command with regard to this matter of His ministers receiving financial support for their ministry: *"the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by [their] gospel [ministry]"* (1 Cor. 9:14.)

Throughout this passage (verses 6-10) the apostle is emphasizing the spirit of generosity. Whether, as in verse 6, it is generosity shown towards those whom God has called to labor full time in the ministry, or, as in verse 10, where it is generosity shown towards those who are in need.

We are to be like Christ our Savior who is described as the One who *"went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38.) We as Christians are called to reflect the character of Christ in this matter of generosity, *"as we have opportunity."* That is to say, when we are confronted with a brother or neighbor in need—and when we have the means of ministering to him—we are obligated to do so.

Conclusion

When we are transferred to another country and culture we discover that it is imperative that we adjust to life in that new culture by learning to do things their way. What pertains to a transfer from one earthly culture to another all the more holds true with regard to our transfer into the life and kingdom of God.

Since the Holy Spirit has brought us into the life of Christ, our attitude and conduct must be in accord with that divine life. By the grace of God, let us heed the warning of Galatians 6:7-8 and live accordingly,

Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked: whatever a man sows, he will also reap. ⁸The man who sows to please his sinful nature, shall reap destruction from the sinful nature; but the man who sows [to please] the Spirit, shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. (Gal. 6:7-8)