

Sermon – July 3, 2022  
“Reap Eternal Life from the Spirit”  
The Rev. John C. Wright

Text: Galatians 6:1-16

*Pray with me: Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Come, Holy Spirit, come, visit, fill and anoint the sharing of these word. Make them a blessing for your people that transforms us into Christ's image and guides us to fruitful labor as we join Jesus on this mission field. Amen*

Good morning! Let me continue to encourage us to pray the two short prayers in the bulletin and listen for Holy Spirit speaking to us. As followers of Christ, we should experience fruit and gifts of the Spirit. Let me encourage us to pray, listen, and share what we receive during our times of listening. Take risks, and share what Holy Spirit may be speaking. We may find a prophetic word we receive has no meaning when we share it, but keep praying and listening for Holy Spirit to speak. Pray for those who Holy Spirit places on our minds during our times of listening and take the risk to call them and talk to them if you are still in contact with them.

Let's look now at our Scripture for today. We are still in Paul's letter to the Galatians and are learning from his words sent to those in Galatia in response to the “new” teaching where Jewish teachers insisted that to be a Christian one must keep the Law. Paul's letter to the Galatians has already given us many of Holy Spirit's roles in the life of a believer including leading us into all truth, helping us remember God's Word, empowering us to live as Jesus would have us live, bringing forth fruit and gifts of the Spirit in our lives, and setting us free from the Law as we are guided into fulfillment of the Law by Holy Spirit.

This morning we see more of Holy Spirit's roles in a believer's life. Paul tells believers, the church, they are, with Holy Spirit's help, to detect transgressions among the members of the church. This is an aspect of life lived in a community of believers we should experience. As we join together as a community of believers we are to discern when a brother or sister in Christ has been caught up in sin. That Paul gives this guidance tells us we as Christ followers will fall and will need help from each other; to get up when we fall, to set aside sin that has entrapped us, to look again to Christ and to be led again by Holy Spirit into all righteousness. Please don't hear what I am saying as the church is to judge others and discipline them. I am also not saying that a

community of believers is to separate itself from those detected in a sin. A community of believers is also not directed to talk about those struggling with sin. What the community is to do is to detect when another in our community is found in a transgression. When this occurs, we as an individual with the Spirit, led and guided by Holy Spirit, are to restore our fallen brother or sister into a life in Jesus Christ with gentleness or forbearance. Individuals do not go and beat them over the head with a Bible, speak harshly to them, or gossip about them. Those with the Spirit are with forbearance to help them in a manner that is loving to them and leads them out of their fallen state back to a life with Christ.

Let me remind us again this morning of the definition of the word forbearance. I think this is a very important idea that we need to understand. Forbearance is a fruit of the Spirit, sometimes translated as gentleness or meekness. Forbearance is proper restraint of our anger or power, not because of our control, but out of consideration for another person. Paul uses this word when he speaks of having a spirit of forbearance rather than having a spirit of harsh judgmental nature when confronting difficult issues. Forbearance allows us to confront difficult, tense issues while expressing love, care, and commitment to the other party. We need to have forbearance when we seek to restore those struggling with sin. This is why Paul limits those helping with restoration of a fallen brother or sister to those with the Spirit. Our interactions with our brother or sister in Christ must be done with forbearance. The fruit of forbearance is not limited to restoration in the church; this fruit should be present in our daily interactions, especially those that are tense. Don't stop and count to ten before we respond when we have a disagreement. Instead, stop and pray for the fruit of forbearance before we respond.

We also should notice Paul gives other guidance for those who seek to participate in restoration ministry. They must watch out that they are not tempted. The temptation here is of at least two types. The first type is that we must be on guard and not allow ourselves to be tempted by the same sin detected in our brother or sister. We are not to enter into their sin to help them but are to be with them in a manner consistent with the holiness of Christ, and so must be alert and guided by Holy Spirit during our interactions. The other type of temptation that may become present for us is the temptation to think that just because we are not currently transgressing, we are somehow better than our brother or sister. Paul cautions us that if we think we are better than our brother or sister we are deceiving ourselves. We are all sinners saved by Jesus' actions on the cross. The sister or brother you seek to restore today may well be the one who comes to you in

the same manner of restoration tomorrow. We must be guided by Holy Spirit to live as Jesus would have us live. Left to our own, we would fall again into sin and would also need restoration. So, we must guard against this temptation and realize that we are also sinners who have received grace from Jesus and are also in the process of growing into the image of Christ and are subject to temptation and sin. The waters of restoration are waters we must tread in with great caution and only step into them if we are those who have the Spirit as our guide.

A fair question we might ask is, “How do we restore our brother or sister?” The simple answer is for us to love them as Christ loves us. We do not ignore, accept, or set aside a sin we detect in our brother or sister. God’s Word is the standard we have and are to apply as we discern the state of ourselves and others in our congregation. We, the body of Christ, are to be those who help each other become aware of and bear the burdens of those who are found to be transgressors. Paul’s idea of a burden is not a physical heavy load or an over committed schedule. Paul’s idea of a burden is a reference to moral and personal failures we find ourselves caught up in and need help to be restored from. Burdens are the struggles we find we must confront when we are seeking to bear the weight of sin that comes with the works of the flesh. Burdens come from our giving into those “self-centered and self-gratifying impulse[s] of the flesh.”<sup>1</sup> We do not leave our brother and sister alone to struggle with these burdens. We dare, under the guidance of Holy Spirit, to step into their lives with forbearance and help lift those burdens. We are not to be those only willing to point out sin to those who sit with us in the pews, but are to be those ready to help carry the burdens of those with sin, to help restore them into a life that fulfills the law of Christ. We are to be those who will go the distance with our brother and sister until they are freed from the sin that has entangled them.

Paul tells us that when we bear each other’s burdens we fulfill the “law of Christ.” What is the “law of Christ?” Paul uses two things to define the “law of Christ.” The first is submission to what Jesus taught and what was taught by the Apostles—those who knew Jesus and were taught by him. The second is living a life guided by the Spirit, a life that loves others as Christ loved us and that through this Holy Spirit-inspired-love, fulfills the Law given through Moses.

To help us develop a better understanding of restoration ministry, let’s look at an example of Jesus gently restoring one who came to him. We may recall the story, found in Luke 7, of Jesus being invited to dinner at a Pharisee’s house. When Jesus arrives, he is not given water to wash his feet or greeted with a kiss by his host. When Jesus reclines at the Pharisee’s

table, his host criticizes Jesus for allowing a woman, a prostitute, to touch him, wash his feet with her tears, dry his feet with her hair, put ointment on his feet, and kiss them. The Pharisee is certain Jesus is no prophet as Jesus cannot even tell what kind of a woman he is allowing to touch him. Jesus teaches the Pharisee that those for whom much is forgiven will love much, and then points out how the host has not provided for Jesus' needs, but this woman has through her actions. Jesus lifts the woman up from an unclean sinner to one whose love is great, by asking his host, "Do you see this woman?" The host had only seen her as someone whose sin made her unclean. Jesus sees her as one loved by God and extends forgiveness to her. Jesus goes beyond just forgiving her of her sin. He completes the restoration of the woman in great gentleness as he tells her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." I hope we can catch the forbearance in the restoring actions of Jesus found in this passage in Luke. As we seek to restore a member of our congregation, we should ask ourselves the question Jesus asks the Pharisee, "Do we see this woman?" or "Do we see this man?" If we see them as Jesus sees them, we can seek to restore them as Jesus did.

So how do we bear each other's burdens? How do we as an individual go to those who have transgressed and help lift their burden? Do we go and knock on their door and say I am here to help you with your sin burden? No, I don't think that works. The best answer I have found is to be part of a band, three to five people who commit to hold each other accountable in love and have invested the time with each other to develop a trust relationship. In a band, when a member confesses their sin to the other band members, the other members have only one response, "In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven." Just as Jesus forgave sin, those who follow Jesus and are empowered by the Holy Spirit, do what Jesus did and in the love of Jesus forgive their band member's sin. Band members will then walk with each other, gently, lovingly, helping each other until the fallen band member is restored to the fullness of life in Christ. Band members seek to carry each other's burdens as Christ's representatives, burdens that are too difficult for a person to carry alone. Let me again encourage us to risk banding together with two to four other members of the same sex and help one another grow into Christ. I am ready and willing to help any who are interested in banding to learn more and to give it a try.

Let me close this morning by pointing out that Paul speaks to two aspects of life in a church in this passage that we should grasp. First, we have a responsibility to each other to help guard the body of Christ and to detect transgressions that are active in the members of that body.

The body's response is through an individual led by Holy Spirit. The second aspect is that we each have a personal responsibility to live a life that fulfills the law of Christ. There is a balance between these two aspects of life. The community of believers is to do all it can to aid individuals to live within the boundaries identified in God's Word for those seeking a fruitful life in the freedom we have as a Christian. As members of a community of believers, we should be prepared to help each other bear difficult burdens as long as we are alive, but each of us has the ultimate responsibility for our own life. That responsibility is not shareable. We will each stand before the judgment seat of God, not as a community, but as an individual. As the body of Christ in this place, we are to love each other enough to detect burdens and with forbearance lift burdens and restore each other into a life that is growing into the image of Christ. Christ died on the cross for our sin. Through the cross and his shed blood, he restored us to a life with the Father through the empowering of Holy Spirit. This great love for us is reflected in our willingness in the power of the Holy Spirit to restore each other who are now or might become crushed to the ground by a burden of sin.

*Pray with me: Jesus, thank you for showing us what it means to be those who restore each other when we have fallen. Jesus, awaken us as a church that we might love each other enough to see the sin burdens among us. Holy Spirit, guide us and bring forth in us the fruit of forbearance that we might love each other enough to share the burdens we are striving to carry alone. We pray in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> deSilva, David A. The Letter to the Galatians (New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)) (p. 47x). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition p. 482.