

When Someone Falls

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of gently restoring fellow Christians who have fallen into sin, guided by the Holy Spirit and rooted in love and forgiveness.

Duration: 22:25

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11, Romans 8:37, Galatians 6:1-5

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of Christians supporting and restoring one another when they fall into sin. He highlights that Christians are not immune to temptation and can make mistakes. The preacher encourages believers to be gentle and loving when approaching someone caught in sin, rather than gossiping or judging them. He also emphasizes the need for spiritual maturity in order to effectively restore others. The sermon is based on the biblical principle of carrying each other's burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ.

Transcript

Most people do well when things are going right, but it's when it goes off the tracks that all kinds of problems arise. That's with yourself, that's in sports, that's in anything. When things go wrong, what do you do? You know Murphy's Law, don't you? How many know Murphy's Law? If it can go wrong, I met a pastor who told me Murphy was a deacon in his church, that's how things were going.

So I wanna talk to you about what happens when things go wrong with a person in the church. What happens when a brother or sister in Christ, and if you're not a believer here, I hope to weave in the gospel here so you'll know how to become a Christian. What happens when someone goes overboard? What do you do? Are they no longer Christians? So let's look at a very direct, helpful passage that not many people read and memorize, but it's very important.

Let's look at it, Galatians 6. Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit, capital S, 100 times better than King James and some other translations that have you that are spiritual with a small s. That doesn't really have much meaning. But Paul would use spirit there with a capital S. You who live by the Spirit, the Holy 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. So let's look at that, analyze it a little bit before I speak to it. Brothers and sisters, this was written to the whole church, not just to men in the church.

Brothers and sisters here was the collective term. This applies to all men and women who are Christians in a local church. And Paul was writing to several churches.

The Galatian letters are not to one church, but to an area of Galatia. Brothers and sisters, not to the pastors. The pastors have to get involved.

They can get involved. Not leadership. Leadership can get involved if someone stubs their toe and gets caught in a bad situation.

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, notice what Christ came to do, save us from our sins. Victorious Christian life is to live above sin. What's sin? Not defined by me, not defined by you, defined by the Bible.

The Bible tells us in there what is against God's will and purpose for our lives, and all of it is destructive to us, no matter how good it looks. It's like a fish swimming, and there's the bait. He doesn't see the hook in the bait.

And he bites, thinking this is good, but he doesn't know he's getting hooked as it happens. So anyone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit, the spiritually-minded people who are not just born again, but who are mature enough that they live controlled by the Holy Spirit. You, notice he's separating people, you who live by the Spirit.

I'm not sure if all believers in every church live by the Spirit. Certainly the one who was caught in a sin is not living by the Spirit. But those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, what should you do? Don't judge the person.

Restore the person, and how should you restore them? Gently, but watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. No, I got the victory. I am more than a conqueror.

That's okay, watch yourself. No, I've been serving God for 30 years. I know most of the New Testament.

That's very good, praise God for that. Now watch yourself. Are you with me? Watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Obviously, if Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness three times, he's not afraid to approach you or me. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you'll fulfill the law of Christ. Isn't that a definition of Christianity with a different twist to it? How do you make Christ happy? How do you fulfill the law of Christ? Carry each other's burdens, because we all have something that's not good for us.

So let's look at this. Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in a sin, you that are guided by the Holy Spirit, restore them. So that brings us to the first premise.

Christians can sin. It's not God's plan for our life. It is not good for us at all, and some of it has life-altering repercussions.

But the thing every day that we should pray is, Lord, lead us not into, but deliver us. Deliver us from the evil one. Deliver us from sin.

Sin offends God. Sin hurts me. And sin sometimes can have ongoing reaping that is horrible.

This is in God's word for us, because he loves us. So Christians can sin. Now what happens when Christians sin? This obviously is talking about someone who is repentant.

It isn't somebody who is, no, I don't wanna hear about it. Don't tell me what I do wrong. Who are you to judge me? I know what I need to do.

Those people are very hard to deal with, and that's when a pastor, sometimes in church leadership, has to be called into it. But the general rule in scripture is that if you see or you learn that a brother or sister has fallen in a trap, the thing is not to go and run and tell 10 people what you saw or what you heard, but to be mature enough to be able to go to the person to restore them. Let's say a person's background is they drank a lot.

They just partied, and they were drunk half their lives. But now they found Jesus, and he's changed their life. And you're walking down the street, and I'm walking down the street, and the door to the bar opens, and who comes out and looking a little tipsy but Brother Jones, Sister Williams.

Now, what do you do with that? To go and tell somebody else without trying to help them would be a very nasty thing, would it not? Because love covers a... Would you or I like all our sins to be broadcast to everybody? No. So the Bible here is giving us measures to restore people who have gone off the track. And it says that if you're spiritual, you should go to that person to try to restore them.

Listen, Bobby, you don't look so good today. Come on, let's talk. What were you doing in there, Bobby? That's not a good place.

I know your background. I've heard your testimony. Man, I'm just, you don't know what happened to me, and my kid I just found out is smoking weed or been playing hooky from school, or I just lost my job.

You know, it takes very little entrance for Satan to come in and try to tempt us. Am I correct? And what he usually tries to pull us back into is the junk we were in before we found Jesus Christ. Drug addicts, I've learned over the years, dealing with so many of them, seeing God restore them, if they backslide and get away from the Lord, they don't usually just drift into overeating and abuse their bodies that way.

There's a call, that crack, that Oxycontin, whatever it is, it has a voice and it calls them, and they revert to that habit. So now you see Bobby there, and Bobby's been, obviously, Satan got the best of him. Now what are you gonna do? Notice it takes a spiritual person to restore.

Anybody can gossip. Anybody can judge. My late father-in-law told me that back in the early 50s, he was in the Midwest preaching, and he went to a hotel away from any big city, and he went in out of nowhere to the coffee shop, and there sitting was a fairly well-known minister in that area with a woman who wasn't his wife.

Never dreamt anyone could walk in on him, and there was my father-in-law. My father-in-law was gracious, didn't want to make a scene, went back to his room, but within an hour, the guy called him. Oh, Brother Hutchins, I can't believe what you saw today.

Would you come to my room and pray with me? He went, opened his heart. My father-in-law never went into it. He restored him.

He repented. He told the lady, bye-bye. Whenever you have to be restored, you have to say bye-bye to something, right? If you don't want to say bye-bye, you can't be restored.

And my father-in-law told me, he told me just this twice, once on an airplane. He said, you know, Jim, I'll die before I'll ever tell anyone the name of that man, because I told him, I'll die with that secret. I restored you.

God loves you. God wants you back. Aren't you, how many are happy that when we mess up, God doesn't throw us away? Can we say amen to that? The passage here, brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit show you're mature.

Restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you may also be tempted. There are some restorations which involve stories and things which can inflame you depending on your background.

In other words, there's certain things to talk about and go over. It's not edifying. Don't talk about it.

Remember, Christians are not Freudians. We don't have to hear everything that went on. It's not edifying all the time.

Sometimes you have to talk about things and go back and confess and all that, but sometimes to go back into some of it and all of that, I've had people tell me, I'll tell some of my testimony, but part of my testimony I never go back to because if I even mention it and remember it, it can stir up things inside of me that are not good for me. How many follow what I'm saying? So the Bible tells us that the sign of spirituality is not to judge people and pound on people and to say, I gotcha, or as I grew up around, always knew there was something about that brother, always knew that sister was a little bit weak, never thought she was all that. That's not what they need because you gotta remember this now.

The restoration process is you're dealing against one of the main tools of Satan when people are caught in a sin, and this must be something more than just gossiping or being selfish or losing your temper and saying something like that. He must be referring to things that are not more sinful, but more damaging to character, to reputation. You are now coming against Satan's, one of his main tools.

In fact, one of his names is Accuser. He's the accuser. So let me just tell you about that.

Even the best of us, when we sin and we confess our sins, remember what 1 John tells us. If anyone says he doesn't have sin, he's a liar and the truth is not in him. That's written to Christians, not to unbelievers on the street.

But if we sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us if we confess our sins. If we sin and confess them, God is faithful and just to forgive us. How many believe that with all your heart, confess sin, God puts away, cleanses, brings back peace, clouds disappear.

Mm, but that is Satan's stronghold. When you and I fall into a secret sin, any kind of sin, Satan comes in and says, not so fast, buddy. Don't give me this quick confession stuff.

What are you gonna do, open your Bible now and you're gonna read after what you just did last week? But he'll go further than that. Last year, last decade, depending on what it is, he's the condemner, the accuser.

So always remember, if you and I don't restore and we accuse people and condemn them, we're taking the place of the enemy.

He's the accuser, he's the condemner. I'm not gonna ask for a show of hands, but all of us who are Christians here, when we have slipped and fallen, does not the devil come in with accusations? God has forgiven, God has fulfilled his word. You confessed it, I don't even remember it anymore, but Satan is gonna try to use it to compromise us, weaken us, discourage us.

So when we restore someone, we gotta have the wisdom of God. You that are led by the Spirit, restore them gently. Be very kind to people, it's hard out there.

I see more people than most of you or a lot of you put together. It's a hard world out there. I ministered years ago to a woman who had been a Christian for decades, and one day she burst out crying in my office and said, Pastor, how will God ever forgive me for the four abortions I had? Another lady, out of nowhere, being a Christian even longer than that, said, I have five children and four are from different men.

How will he ever forgive me? I said, but you weren't a Christian then. You weren't a Christian. I know, but what kind of life was I living? I'm good for, that's the devil, because God loved her, and I could tell her, God loves you, and there's no sin so strong that God can't wash it away.

Do I get an amen? And there's no pit so deep. Listen, if you fall in that pit, God'll get you out. I said, God'll get you out of any pit.

Can we say amen to that? God'll get you out of any pit. And many times, as some of the Puritan writers say, God uses our mistakes and our sins and our disobediences to work together for good. Ooh, that's a hard one.

You know, all things work together for good. How about, yeah. It's like when you break a bone.

Did you know that when you break a bone and it heals, they say that that bone is stronger than before you broke it? And when people fall down and God gets them up and uses maybe us gently, spiritually, kind, and we bring them up, they can be stronger for the Lord because you know what happens when you fall and you get up? You have more mercy with people. Self-righteous people are usually not kind to people who have fallen. But those of us who know what it is to be restored by God in something just small, it can be small.

It just depends how God is working in your life. It can be small, it can be large. But I'll tell you what, unconfessed sin, you can't even enjoy a good meal.

When you lose the peace of God, how many know what I'm talking about? And God's dealing with you. It's like, where am I gonna go? I can't enjoy anything because this thing is inside of me. But when that thing is restored and forgiven and you get that person back up and you help them have victory over the enemy's accusations and condemnation, they can be so much gentler and kinder with other people who have fallen because then they can go to someone and say, no, don't give up.

Come on, get up. You can get up. I got up.

He helped me up. He'll help you up. I'm so glad that Jesus doesn't bury people who trip and fall.

I'm so glad that he tells the body of Christ. Now look, if anyone's caught in a mess, don't judge them and tell everybody. Go to them privately.

Now, if they won't hear you, take another Christian with you and go back to them and say, Bobby, we know you have a problem. And come on, you blew me off last time. No, no, no.

Maybe that second person will win. Then if you don't, you know, they won't listen to two and you see a person hurting themselves, then you can go to a pastor and say, Bobby's got a problem. Listen, my own application to this in my life, my dad started drinking when I was 12.

Bourbon, bottles of it downstairs in the basement of my house on Parkside Avenue between Bedford and Flatbush. I was younger than my brother and my brother was more cautious and fearful but I didn't care about nothing. I went up there and said, what do you mean? He said, don't you notice how he beat you last time? I said, yeah, he has a fury in that.

He said, it's because something's going on. He comes down and I hear stuff in the back near where my brother used to study in the basement. And I went there and I saw it and I just poured it out.

I'd never held a bottle of whiskey in my life. I poured it right out and I knew my dad couldn't say anything because he was hiding the fact that it was there. What is he gonna say, a dinner table who poured out my whiskey? So for like a year, I was just pouring out whiskey, left and right, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dollars I'm sure, he never could say a word.

But it got out of hand. He started pounding my mother. So I went and we had a family meeting and I was just little and I went, we gotta tell it to the people in the church, we gotta get to the pastor.

Oh no, shh, you can't, you don't tell business. You don't put your family business out on the street. I said, I don't go on the street.

I don't wanna go on Flatbush Avenue. I wanna go to, someone gotta go to the pastor, maybe the pastor, it was Carol's dad at that time. Maybe he could help him, nobody went.

Nobody took proper biblical steps to restore someone. My mother couldn't, we were too little. No one went to anyone and 22 years later, my dad was still drinking.

Never made it to my wedding, lost his job. Who knows if someone would have called him. Then I found out later that somebody went to the pastor and said, you know what, my dad was a deacon.

When they're counting the offering, I'm sure I smell something on Brother Simbala's breath. What'd he do about it, the man? Nothing, probably just went home and told his wife, I'm sure Nick Simbala's drinking because I smell something on his breath. See, that's the way we do things.

We gossip or we do nothing at all. I don't wanna do that. If God lets me run into someone who's fallen, God's been so good to me.

Has God been good to you like he's been to me? Clap your hands over your head if you feel the way I'm talking about, right? I wanna restore them and I wanna be gentle. And the next verse, which I didn't put on there, and if anybody thinks they're somebody when they're nothing, wake up. That's my paraphrase.

You ain't all that, no matter who you are. How many say amen? I don't care if you're a minister, who you are. We're all susceptible to the ploys of the devil.

That's why the Bible says, as long as it's called today, encourage each other. Join hands with the person next to you right now. Right now, this moment.

Start praying for the person on your right, out loud. Go ahead, start praying right now for the person on your right. God, hold them.

God, keep them. God, bless them. God, bless her.

God, help her. God, watch over her. God, strengthen her.

Lord, let her be the woman that you want her to be. You're gonna restore her, Lord, and encourage her. And what the devil meant for evil, you're gonna work for good, Lord.

You're gonna work for good. In Jesus' name, in Jesus' name. Now, pray for the one on your left right now.

Pray, pray for the one who you're holding on the left. Help him, help him, Lord. Satan, you're a liar in the name of Jesus.

Satan, you're a liar in the name of Jesus. Satan, you're a liar. Say that with me.

Satan, you're a liar in the name of Jesus. God loves us. God loves us.

Every eye closed. Everybody repeat after me. Dear God, thank you for your love.

Forgive me of my sin, for I believe in Jesus, your Son, who you sent to die for me. I receive his mercy. I receive his pardon.

Heal me, strengthen me, make me strong in the Lord, so that I can shine for you. Thank you for your word today. Make me spiritual, led by the Spirit, so that I can help others who might fall down.

Thank you for picking me up a thousand times because of your great love. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Well, there was one sister here that needed to hear that and God's touched her and helped her and blessed her, but I needed to hear that again.

Anybody else been blessed by the word of God here? Remember, Galatians 6. Maybe you want to read that chapter through. Good chapter. Before you go to bed tonight, check out Galatians 6, the whole chapter.

Amen, God is good. Everybody arise, stand. I now pronounce you man and wife by the authority vested in me by the state of New York.

Hug one another. Give somebody a hug and a handshake. God bless you.

Love you.

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