

• The “easy” yoke of Jesus not the heavy “yoke” of the Mosaic Law

• Bearing the burdens of others in the spirit of love

1. We have spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit

• The Holy Spirit enables us to obey

2. Paul asks us to do something

• Keeping in step with the Spirit is something we must attend to

3. We must attend to our attitudes

• Conceit, rivalry and envy – the Spirit will show them to us

4. We help others in the same fight

Paul is now getting into the finer details of what it means to live a godly life. We are not under the Mosaic law. We are free and yet we fulfil the law by being controlled by love. We follow the Spirit and not the impulses of the flesh. Now Paul lets us know that what is involved in the godly life is really different kinds of ‘burden-bearing’. The Mosaic law was famous for being heavy and burdensome. The Christian’s lifestyle is high and supernatural. It also involves burden-bearing, but it is bearing of others’ burdens in the spirit of love, not the burden of the Mosaic law. Jesus says, ‘Take my yoke upon you’ – not the yoke of the Mosaic law – ‘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 is light’.¹ Paul puts the same teaching in his own way.

1. First there is an assumption: we have spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit. ‘*Since we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit*’.¹ He is speaking only to Christians. No one except the Christian is able to live in the way God requires, and it is not automatic even for them! All Christians are ‘born again’ (to use the language of the apostle John). They are alive by the Holy Spirit. This life of the Holy Spirit enables us to ‘keep in step’ with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not force us to be obedient, but He enables us to be obedient. The Spirit ‘leads’ us in the direct of obedience to God.

2. Next, Paul asks us to do something. ‘Let us also keep in step with the Spirit’. The implication is that not all Christians do this. There would be no point in his asking us to do this if it was something that happened automatically! We are ‘born again’. We are ‘justified’. We have the Holy Spirit. We are eternally secure. But none of this **forces** obedience. Let us obey God, says Paul. It is not automatic. It is something we have to attend to. We set ourselves up for chastening if we neglect to do so. The word ‘walk’ in 5:25 is different from the word in 5:16. Here the Greek speaks of a very careful kind of walking. It means ‘keep in step’ or ‘toe the line’ or ‘be careful not to deviate’. We put ourselves exactly where God wants us. We do exactly what He says. We go exactly where He leads. Although we no longer need the Mosaic law to guide us, yet we still have a quite definite leading by the Holy Spirit. We are not doing anything we like!

3. Next we must attend to our attitudes. One of the first things the Spirit will attend to is our attitudes. Paul says, ‘*Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another*’.¹ It is interesting that he feels the need to mention these precise matters. The Galatians were becoming legalistic, but the Mosaic law had not given them any help in the matter of conceit or rivalry or envy. Many of us tend to admire ourselves too much and want the praise of others more than we should. Then we start boasting. Next comes a competitive spirit in which we try to outclass other people. If others are ahead of us in some way we tend to envy them. The law of Moses will give us no help in these things, but the Holy Spirit will. We must see these tendencies; the Spirit will show them to us. Then we resist them.

4. We help others in the same fight. ‘*My friends, if anyone is trapped in some sin, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted*’.¹ One of the most important aspects of life in the Holy Spirit is the way in which we handle sin when we come across it in other Christians.

¹ Matthew 11:29–30

¹ 5:25

¹ 5:26

• *We are called to restore those who have fallen*

We need to help each other. Others will find sin in us. We shall find sin in others. Sometimes a fellow Christian will fall badly and we have to help him or her. What I find amazing about this verse is the way Paul takes it for granted that we can do it. 'Restore the other person', he says. He does not say 'Try' or 'Attempt to restore such a one'. He says 'Do it! Restore the fallen Christian.' He takes it for granted that a spiritually-minded Christian can restore other people. This is very challenging. One of the greatest tests of our spirituality is whether we are able to restore someone who has fallen. Pharisees certainly cannot do it! They can throw you out of the church but they cannot restore you!

6:1

• *Those who are trapped in some particular sin*

Paul asks us to consider the case of a person who is overtaken by some sin. The words 'If anyone is caught ...' (as it is sometimes translated) do not mean that the person is hiding, but then is discovered! Rather it means that he or she did not intend to sin but somehow sin got into his or her life and now it seems it has got a hold on him. I translate: *'if anyone is trapped in some sin ...'* Anyone could get trapped in some sin. Satan can come as an angel of light. Anyone might fall, even the greatest saint. It might be me; it might be you! We tend to think mostly about sexual sin, but of course there are dozens of other kinds of sin. Some people are inclined to fall in one way. Others have no temptations in that direction, but they could fall in another way.

• *It takes humility, graciousness, tact and sympathy to restore someone*

Paul talks to those who are 'spiritual', 'those who really have the Holy Spirit'. He is referring to the other Christians who are not in so bad a state as the fallen Christian. They reckon they are more spiritual! Well, let them show their spirituality in restoring the fallen brother or sister. It actually takes a lot of grace to restore a fallen Christian. We need humility, graciousness, tact, a sense of God's leading. Think of the way Nathan restored David! We need great sympathy and an ability to communicate sympathy.

• *We need to be careful about ourselves!*

Then we need to be careful about ourselves. The fallen Christian might drag us into sin! Or we might get to be self-righteous and proud as we try to help another. Nothing will show how much we are walking in the Spirit than whether we can truly help another brother or sister to recover spiritually. The law is of no help at all. Only the marvellous working of the Holy Spirit can give us grace to restore another person to spirituality and godliness. Please God, may we learn to do it. And may others learn to help us! This is what keeping in step with the Spirit is all about.



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