

In chapter 6, our brother Paul closes. *Brethren, even if a man should be caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual are to restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burden, thus fulfilling the law of Christ. And what is the law of Christ? Love one another. So, bear one another's burdens, and you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own works, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another, for each of you shall bear his own load.*

I love Paul. The guy doesn't have any theological sense whatsoever. In verse two, he says, "Bear one another's burdens," and in verse five, he says, "Bear your own burden." Is this not true? I wonder if this brother ever reread some of the letters he wrote. *And let the one who has taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.* That means those who preach should be reimbursed, but he himself refused to live that way. Isn't that interesting? Fascinating that he took up for something that he himself did not do. Everybody always points out that we should do this, but they never point out that brother Paul served the churches he raised up without reimbursement.

Do not be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption. This has nothing to do with the law; it has to do with the flesh. But the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And that is not talking about someday in the future, you will have eternal life. That means you will daily be able to draw from and live by a life not your own. A life form higher than your own. *Then let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap, if we do not grow weary.* Would you read that verse with me? I would appreciate it. *And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are the household of faith.* And the word "the" is not in there.

In the next verse, Paul says, "See what large letters I am writing you." That may be that the letter was dictated, but it also may be that it was a custom in that day to end letters in large words; it just happened to be one of the styles of that day, though, and he must have made his bigger. *Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.* I'm going to skip verse 13. We covered it this morning. *But may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through that cross, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.*

Verse 16. *And those who will walk by this rule that you are a new creature and a new creation, peace and mercy be upon you and upon the God of Israel.* You who are a new creation walk by this rule, the rule of a new creation, and that you are crucified and that the world is crucified. Grace and peace and mercy will be upon you and upon the God, the Israel of God, the prince of God. *From now on, let no one cause me any more trouble, for I bear in my body the brand marks of Jesus Christ.* And now he closes as he began. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

Well, I have a little that I would like to go through with you on this passage, and it mainly deals with things that have to do with the church. Now, I think that even as I look at this passage of scripture, I have a real problem seeing the church in it because I'm so used to reading it as a theological discourse. It is not. It was written to a church. I am so used to having studied it from a theological viewpoint. We have read it either theologically or personally. We have a really bad habit of taking things into ourselves very personally as we read the scripture. Have you ever read Matthew and gotten into the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount? Have you ever gotten outside of that thing without feeling very, very guilty? All the things demanded of you?

Well, I want to lift this out of the context of you and me doing this, and that and this and that, and I would like for us to look at this closing passage as written to a body of believers. Now, many of you cannot possibly know what I'm talking about contextually. Some of you do. The rest of you, would you please use your imagination? So, I want to talk to you a little bit now about church life in Galatia, and let's say specifically in Pisidian Antioch, because we have chosen that as the church we belong to. I always feel at a loss here to communicate because what I'm going to communicate, if you have never lived in church life or in community, you will not understand this. No matter how hard I speak, no matter how many illustrations I give you, you cannot possibly comprehend how many problems Christians have living together. Would someone back that up? And not problems so much of conflict. I mean persons having problems and you really get the impression that the church and church life is causing the problems, and you can say amen to that, too, and it is not true.

If I could speak to a professional minister, I would say to you, "You live in an unreal world, and you can come and visit us and say, 'My, you people, y'all need to stop. You're just killing one another. You have so many problems here.' You live in an insulated situation. You climb up into your pulpit. Your people look as neat as a pen. They all have come in smiling. They have sung the songs that you have told them to sing in the bulletin, and now they all hear you preach a message that is aimed at nothing and hits it. They walk out, and everybody shakes your hands, and I'm telling you, you don't know the world and life. You have no idea what's really going on. Your people are sitting out there in the pew, dying of problems on top of problems on top of problems. Still, they really feel that in a way, you are the last person on earth who should know that, because obviously that person feels that because they have the problem, they're not a good Christian. You, the minister, would be terribly disappointed to discover the problems they have."

I'm going to use an illustration that came to me the other day. You may hear me tell this story 50 times because it is the best one I know to make my point. I know the man who said this. He does not live in the United States of America. He lives in Quebec. God bless his heart. He is so legalistic, and he is so narrow-minded that his ears touch. A Christian counseling conference was held in Quebec City. Many of the churches came. A brother spoke; he spoke on the needs of people, their enormous damage, and how needy they are. This man didn't show up. His people came in droves. When they left, they didn't dare say anything to him about it. But later, he was in conversation with a dear friend of mine, a very good friend, who was one of those who made sure the conference

came to Quebec City and was sponsored there. He was standing there with someone else, and there was the pastor and the associate pastor, and they were discussing the conference. My friend was telling the pastor what was covered and how people responded. Depression, homosexuality, suicidalness, help me with some words here I can't pronounce. When you starve yourself to death...anorexia, bulimia, schizophrenia, let's go down the road here. I'd said depression. I'm going to get to a bunch of more things, but just everything there is. And this pastor turned to his associate pastor and said, "I'm so grateful that we don't have problems like that in our church."

And you know, he's right. They're not in the church. They're under the rug, and those people wouldn't dare to bring these problems to their minister. They are there, nationwide, and I assume worldwide based on what I've observed. I've never been to South America, and I've never been to Africa, and I've never been to the Arctic or the Antarctic. Still, I have been to a large part of the rest of this world, and I can pretty well verify that everywhere I've been, these problems are universal. But they are never known or seen except in some sort of community, and that's why church life so often cracks up and doesn't go very far. The Christian faith simply is not prepared, does not have the mental attitude to handle these things. Christians are not supposed to have these problems. When we get saved, these things go away. Or if they don't go away, then you are not saved. You need to get saved, or you are a very peculiar person for whom there's just no hope. You're very exceptional.

The truth of the matter is that it's universal, and it crops up in the house of God when you have community, and the church usually is not prepared to handle it. I am 55 years old, and I can tell you unequivocally. I can tell you without qualification. I can say to you unreservedly. I still don't know how to deal with many of these things, and I am a student. I have been a student, and I will continue to be a student. In fact, I am literally going to school on this subject and will continue to. And I mean, take me literally. I'm going to school on these very things, how to handle them in the church. What really wrinkles me is that whenever I bring up this subject, almost without fail, I hear someone offer a simplistic theory.

I brought this up one day. A brother walked up to me. He said, "Gene, I'll tell you what's wrong with all these people. They all need, every one of them, they need to have faith. The problem they have is fear, and they need to have faith." Well, you know, I looked at him, and I thought, "Yeah, you're right. They're all afraid, and they all need faith. In the meantime, what am I going to do with these 200 people out here?" It's a great theory. I have a notion. I don't know, but I have a notion that young men right now are shipwrecked spiritually. His theory is great. It's probably correct. Well, it just doesn't work, saints. I have to deal with things practically every day—really practical things.

Now then, there is a very practical cure for all of your eccentricities and your peculiarities and your psychopathic tendencies, and we have discussed it this week, and that is - the law. We will simply outlaw your problem. You cannot cry anymore. You are an emotional sister. There will be no more crying. You will praise God instead of crying. You understand? And the whole

community turns on that woman. They will not let her cry. They rebuke her. They grab her. They make her praise the Lord. Maybe that's what will heal her for a while, but I'm telling you this: there used to be a song. I know none of you could possibly remember the song. It came out right after World War II. I don't remember any more of the words, but it was the cutest, funniest song in the world. 'We're saving up coupons to get one of those.' The coupons were very, very popular on that day, and this song was about "we wanted a baby, so we're saving up coupons to get one of those." And they wanted something else, so they're saving up coupons to get one of those. Well, that dear little sister will be saving up coupons to get a nervous breakdown.

You cannot outlaw human weakness. You cannot pass laws against it; it will seep out somewhere. There is no way under heaven for you or me ever to imagine how weak and how needy we all are until you see us in community. This is the first piece of Christian literature that was ever written, and the other day I stepped back, and I said to that piece of literature, and I said to myself, this is the first one that these churches are four years old. Paul is not blind, nor is he a fool. Is it in there? Did he address these things practically? If so, what did he say to these churches? There are only a few verses here, but I believe they reflect a large part of his ministry. Chapter six, as is most of Paul's writings, his last chapter or his last couple of chapters, he will almost invariably get very, very practical. Here, he is very, very spiritual. Very, very spiritual. Giving us all the spiritual, theological, heavenly principles, but boy, man, listen. We're down here still. We're still ordinary human beings. These things help, but he does not neglect the ordinary everyday challenges of life. Yes. Praise the Lord for that. And I have to sit here, and I have to look at these, and I have to say, Paul, what'd you say, and how did you deal with them? Now, I don't know about Paul of Tarsus, and I don't know about the church in Pisidia, Antioch, but I know about people.

Let's imagine that we are that church or that we are a modern-day church. We all live in this city. Let's take it out of Memphis entirely. Give me the name of another town. Don't say Atlanta. Don't say Portland. Brownsville is perfect. We all fellowship in the town of Brownsville. Poor Mr. Brown. Now, I'm going to tell you what we have here, and I was hoping you could help me. Those of you who have lived in church life, I want you to help me. I want you to be open. I want you to stand up. Please tell me. I'm going to repeat it because it needs to be on tape. I will start, but I always fizzle out. I can't seem to hold these things in my mind. Now, I want you to hear me, and I ask you to believe me. We are a fellowship; how many are we? About 120. Is that it? That's a good number. 120. Is that about right? That's a good number. In fact, that's the perfect size for a church.

There is a minimum of 20% of you, maybe 25%, and I trust you won't feel embarrassed or misunderstand me. I want you to understand these things, and I don't know any other way than to be realistic. There is a minimum of 20 to 25% of you who are on one level or another, dealing with problems of sexual perversion. Latent homosexuality or homosexuality. That's where my mind always goes blank. Incest. Scars from incest. What is it when you dress up in the clothes of another person? A transvestite. A voyeur? A peeping Tom. People addicted to pornography are fighting that battle. Not the normal biological drives, but they have turned. Now, how many can you help? Are there anymore that go into that? That's good enough, huh? Alright, that's enough of that

seeming subject. That's at least 20% of the people in this room. Bet the family farm owns it. Bet the family farm owns it, but you will not seek help. Because, as a Christian, Christians don't have these problems. When God saves us, he delivers us from these, and besides that, we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. We have spoken in other tongues with signs following. Therefore, we could not possibly have these problems. Sometimes it's practicing, sometimes it's latent. They are all there. There are brothers and sisters in the church in Brownsville who are fighting this battle daily, and my question is: Is the church of the living God armed to minister to such needy folk? And the answer is generally speaking, NO. And those of us in the community are about 200 years behind in this challenge. The church...the typical organized church, is 2,000 years behind in this matter. We will not admit it exists. And these are not problems that go away overnight.

Now you may be feeling very uncomfortable, and you may say I'm very disappointed the conference is going to end on this note. The book ends on this note. I didn't write this book, but I have experienced the church in Galatia. I've been there. I have lived in the church of the Lord, and more of it has come to me than any other human being in the fellowship. I know from whence I speak. There are sisters and brothers in their private lives who are having real problems with biological things. There are deep scars from childhood in the biological realm.

Now, we leave that subject and move on to other things. And again, I always draw a blank. I wish I didn't. Alcoholism. Help me. Thank you. Can we have some more? We have alcoholics or those who tend toward it in the church. Drug addicts and those who fight the battle of it. Child abuse in the church. And I'm glad you said spouse abuse because it is not wife abuse. It is often the husband who is abused, something that is rarely mentioned. Yes, violent, even physical violence between...this is us; this is us, saints, and these are the things we face, these are why churches sink, because they don't have men or women of the stature to handle these things, to minister to them, or even to admit that they are there. These are the kinds of things that sink your fellowship: an inability to handle them. And coming in and having a great, glorious meeting isn't going to make them go away. I want to say to you now, and I want to say it for the rest of my life, that a meeting should be one of the lesser things of the house of God. You go to give, not to get. It's not ... the big thing we're going to do as a Christian is get help in a meeting. No, a Christian gathering is where, out of the fullness and abundance of life, you go to share what you have gotten through the week. That totally changes the meaning of church life and gatherings.

Now, the church of the living God among laymen, for it is a lay movement, must be in some way armed, and you start by being forewarned. You ought to be able to come into the church of the living God expecting to at least get help, if not eventual healing, from virtually anything. And I'm not talking about this kind of healing. The kind of things I'm speaking of run so deep that it takes years, sometimes decades, but the church is still the church, and you're still a brother or sister in it. Now, I'm seeking to give you a new dimension here, but I've lived long enough in church life that I can speak of not today and tomorrow or yesterday, but over long periods of time. I've learned a great deal by watching God's people... kleptomaniacs, a domineering wife, a domineering husband, passive aggression. Some of you don't even know what that is. It's so intangible that you

cannot even keep up with it. Not suicide, but threats of suicide. It's depressing—enormous depression.

Single brothers who consistently string along single sisters. An obsessive thing. We've seen it again and again and again. Going from one to another, making that sister think that he's about to marry her, and going to another, and another. Oh, I kill those people. I have their hides tacked to my wall. I will not tolerate it. That's one of the things I will not tolerate in church. You will meet me, brother. You will meet me. You will not get away with that in the house of the Lord. That will not be tolerated. That's just...you're not going to do it. And if that's law, forgive me, but you're not going to do that to our single sisters. We see this again. It is a pattern that is everywhere you go. There are young Casanova brothers like this, and there are sisters who will carry the damage of it throughout their lives. Sisters, you're partly to blame because sometimes we come to you and say to you that this is happening, and you deny it, and you have to take part of the responsibility.

Saints who cannot handle money. Absolutely cannot. Oh, an enormous amount of theft. Wouldn't we like to tell some of our funny stories? You ought to tell one. Would you like me to tell the tweezers story? No, it wasn't funny. It still kind of hurts. Well, we made this really deep box so people couldn't get into it because we'd had theft problems. Well, a brother, at 3:00 in the morning, was down there doing some laundry, and he walked in and here was a guy, and I've forgotten his name, but I think it was John, somebody, and this kid had a pair of tweezers. Tweezers this long, and he was down there with the money box, bringing that money up. There is no end to the stories we could tell you. I want to tell you the same boy who did that... we were being robbed in another building at a totally different time, and we had this black filing cabinet. He came in one night, broke in, and stole. We didn't know who it was at the time. So, I said to a brother, "David, do something about that." Well, Gene, he won't do it again." The very next night, he broke into it again and took the money. I said, "David, do something about that." And David said, "Gene, he couldn't possibly ever do it again. He hadn't done anything yet."

So, the next night he did it again. He stole the church's money three nights in a row. I came back to David. I said, "David, do something about this." So, David welded two doohickeys of some kind on the side of that filing cabinet on the theory that by doing that, this kid could not get his crowbar and open the thing. And, for the fourth night in a row, the kid broke in and stole our money. I said, "David, put a lock on that thing." And finally, David put a lock on it, but that young man continued to come. He came the next night. He was caught and, of course, arrested. I don't remember any more about the story than that. A lot of theft in community, Christians stealing from you. Are you sure you want church life? Are you really sure you want church life? It sounded so beautiful tonight when everybody got up and testified.

There are other things you learn about Christians in situations like this. Manipulators. Oh, I'm here to...what's going on back there? He locked our door. Tonight? I don't blame you. (laughter) You have people who are so skilled at manipulating you that you find out you have blamers. I think this one is one of them, where, if I've got scars, this is one of the places I really feel scars, and that's

the person who is always making someone else feel guilty for their problem, and because I'm a large target, I catch that more than anyone else. Not the only one, but I do catch it more than anyone else. Getting blamed. There's the person who always has their version of the story, and they tell it to everyone, and everyone believes it because they tell it to everyone. The truth is never known. The truth is never known, but the story spreads, and then it spreads throughout America, and it is only after that that it becomes reality and truth, and you have to live with it all the days of your life.

Had a sister in the church who lived in rage. She threw things. She had fits. She screamed. She dissolved three houses made up of nothing but single sisters. And they could not live with her. We readjust and put somebody somewhere else. On one or two occasions, I got really, really brave and I talked to her, just a little bit, and here suddenly was sweetness and light. Her voice cooed like a dog's. Her face got angelic. I'm telling you, this is the way it happened. She would retell that story, make it sound so simple and uncomplicated, and say that everything was fine now and it would never happen again. And that's the unreal world that she probably lives in today. One day, I finally got another brother to confront her, but I was sitting there. We sat at a table. This was after four years of this going on daily. When finally confronted, that's something I hate to do. I rarely do it. I'd rather be horsewhipped. On that day, she packed her bags and left us. That was how deep her commitment to the Lord was.

Now, I really am sorry that I'm not a Christian counselor, and I cannot list for you more of the things that take place, but let me talk to you about some more general things. And that is just some sister who's got a baby, and she's just at home all day, and she's just sad and heartbroken, and her self-image is going through the floor. A brother who's gone into four dry meetings in a row, and he wants to leave here; he can't handle this anymore. A couple who are out of a job can't find a better one, and they're looking everywhere, and day by day, they get more and more discouraged. Those are real things that happen to every one of us, and you don't know what to do. You do not know how to conduct yourself. You do not know how to relate to that person when you walk up to the door. You don't know what to say to them. Last week, you encouraged them. This week, they still don't have a job. This week, you encourage them. Next week, they still don't have a job. About the fifth or sixth week, you don't know anything to say, but they are in the church, and they are your brothers and sisters, and you love them, and you are hurting with them, and what do you do? What does the church of Jesus Christ do? These are real things, and we live with them.

Now, can you help me with some more chronic liars and people who exaggerate all the time? What's that, Babs? The eternal complainer. Critical people. Gossips keep coming. Then, one day, suddenly, a divorce. You never knew the gun was loaded, just like that. Help me some more. Come on. You deal with problems every week. You can't figure out how to classify them, and most of them are unclassifiable. The death of a spouse or child. Okay. A death can be terribly devastating to everybody, and then there's at least a year of ministry to that soul or to the...Boy, oh boy. Somebody really gets sick, and it stays and stays and stays. That's right. And every once in a while, somebody goes bonkers. Just plain old goes off the deep end. Well, Gene, Jiminy Crickets, is that

what church life is like? Well, no, my dear friend, that is not what church life is like. That's what life is like. That's right, and it is, and you ask any secular counselor or any Christian counselor who has people streaming through their offices constantly, and they'll tell you that life is not what it looks like on the streets of Memphis, Tennessee. It's not like that.

Now, *you* will not be in the church. Therefore, all you will have are three other families who are your friends, and you will not see the world. You do not see a microcosm of it. You only have three or four friends. All you know is that they are the most plagued people in the world, cursed with bad luck, and you think you have three friends with more bad luck than anybody else on earth. But when you get into the church, you have a microcosm of the entire planet. We're not having one out of three divorces because people are easy to get along with one another. We are complex creatures, and church life should be able to address all our needs. Maybe not resolve them all, but we ought to be able to address them.

And if you're thinking about coming to Atlanta, I can tell you one thing for sure above all else: don't come if you're unwilling to be counseled by a professional Christian counselor. But Gene, we don't believe in that. We are 50 in Portland, and I think, without counting, we have four people with master's degrees in counseling. We are 50 people, and we keep all four of them hopping. I don't mean I do. I play no role in this whatsoever. We got three or four people, two others excellently trained, equivalent in their abilities to men who are well-trained counselors. They're not out there with their shingle out. These are Christians who need to go to someone for help, and they're not there as Christian counselors. They are brothers and sisters who have a little more wisdom than the rest of us do, and it is upon that basis that they are approached. But they stay busy. They are the most tired people in the church. They come home, and almost every evening they do something and reach out to a needy person.

Now, I don't know what your impression is, but I'm telling you that this isn't a sign of something terrible. That is a sign of something wonderful. We are seeking to reach out. I am a little slow and a little thick when I give this as a personal confession. My own feeling has always been that...I'll take Jamie. He's the first person I saw. Here's Jamie. Jamie's got a problem. Jamie comes to me. We talk, or I go to him. We sat down. We talk. We work through Jaime's problem, and praise God, the Lord has a victory in Jaime. Wonderful. That's great. Now I have to...I'm going to have time for Drew if Drew ever has a problem. Then I wake up to the fact that this isn't really true with Jamie; we didn't just finish something. We may have just started it, but the truth is, Jamie will need care in the church of God for the rest of his life. Oh, he's sort of weak. Yeah, that's true. He's sort of needy.

Yeah, that's true. But so is everybody else in the church, and it's taken me a long time to realize that a caring atmosphere and a caring ministry are not seasonal, and they're not for one person some of the time. It's for all of us, all of the time. It's taken me 20 years, and I've always been...I've leaned toward this way in my ministry all this time. I've been far more interested in meeting the needs of God's people, in every way possible, than most people are, but I am slowly, slowly coming

to understand that this must be 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I have come to realize that there are some people, not all of us, but there are some of God's people in the house of God, who need almost every week to sit down with two or three friends and tell their friends where they are. I've always thought that was kind of dumb and that that person needed to get over that.

This is a true confession for me. I have come to realize that that ought to be part of the house of God, and that there are, especially sisters. I don't want to do this with my sisters because brothers are this way, too. Still, sisters have to stay home more than brothers do, generally speaking. Sometimes sisters really need to meet with a small group of people every week who hold them up and hold one another up, and there are brothers...I want you to know I've never been sympathetic to that. I've always looked at that as some sort of illness. There are brothers and their wives who need to talk through, almost by the week, about where they are and have the care of a few other people. I apologize to you. I apologize for not having experienced that need, so I haven't been able to identify with it. That doesn't make it go away. And I want to say to you brothers who don't have that need, don't look down on brothers and sisters who do; they may be smarter than we are. They may be a lot smarter than we are.

That's my introduction to this message. It may not be the most edifying thing you ever heard, but brother, it's as real as grass and dirt and air and sunshine. It's real, and it is in the church in Galatia. Now, how do you address that? With a great deal of wisdom. I'm going to stop for a second. ...not people I personally know or have had the experience of living in common together, which I'm never going to do again. How many of the rest of you have lived in common? Will you raise your hand? In fact, would you do me a favor? Stand up, would you? You've had a long experience living in common with many people. Okay? Do you witness to what I am saying about the enormous needs of God's people? Yes or no? Do you? Without a doubt. Was it bigger than you ever dreamed? Was it, Babs? Definitely bigger than you ever dreamed. Thank you, and it's not because you're a Christian, nor is it because you're living in common. It's because you begin to see it. What did Paul do? What did Paul say? What's in chapter six? And this is the first piece of Christian literature ever written. Was it there? May I go on? I'll do it very briefly, but we got a word here.

Audience: Something that happened to me. When my wife had our first baby, Justin was born prematurely, and I don't know what effect it had on my wife because I'm not a physician, but my wife had more problems than you can imagine. She just had her whole system broken down, and it caused thousands of dollars' worth of tests to run on her, and no doctor ever figured out what was wrong with her. But she had every bone in her body ache. She was bleeding up until the 13th week after she had the baby. I can't tell you, it was just unbelievable, the things that would go on. She couldn't eat. She couldn't hold food down. Everything was terrible. The baby wasn't taking the breast correctly, and he had to be fed at all hours of the night; he was restless, as if he didn't want to sleep. And of course, because my wife was in such pain, she couldn't take care of the baby, so I had to stay up every single night and take care of that little guy. After about five weeks of that, one night I got up, it was like 3:30 in the morning, and the baby was crying. All I wanted to do was stop that baby crying so I could get back to sleep, so I could get up at 5:30 and go to work.

I looked at that child, and I turned to the Lord, and something had to happen. I was ready to strangle that kid, and something in me broke when I gave that to the Lord. The Lord, I tell you what He made me understand, that the Lord's nature is to love not from someone's strength but to love their very weaknesses. There's something about the frailty of my firstborn lying there crying and helpless and defenseless and hungry. He couldn't sleep, which made me love him for the fact that he was crying. I don't know how to put it any simpler than that. When that happened, it broke me, and I picked him up, put him in my arms. We just walked around the living room until he fell asleep, one hour later or so, and every night from that moment, I loved that boy because of his weaknesses. I loved my wife because of her weaknesses, not because of her strengths. That turned my life around for my family.

Praise the Lord. Alright, I will start there. That is verse one of chapter 6. *Brethren, even if a man is called in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted.* And this is the matter of the weaker and the stronger. Now, he said that to a church. He starts with the word "brethren," which covers brothers and sisters; it was everyone there. He has just been talking about grace as opposed to rules and regulations. He has confined the flesh to a totally different place. Now he says you're totally free. But in case there is one who goes into the flesh, you who are spiritual, restore. I'm simply going to say that the church should be in the ministry or in the business of being able to restore. Now, it is so difficult to do that. I can tell you what we will do instead. We will watch that brother go do that thing, then sit around and talk about it. Did you know what happened? No, I didn't. I don't mean gossip, talk about it. I mean, talk about it like what on earth do we do? And often we do nothing.

I would urge you in the body of Christ, if you are a little more mature, and I thank God, I started with a bunch of teenagers, hippie teenagers. You can't stay that way forever. The Vietnam War has been over for nearly 15 years now. There is no more rioting in Santa Barbara. We haven't burned down a bank in a decade. You are becoming more mature, probably more than you realize. If you realize how much less mature others are, you may feel a real sense of weakness yourself, but if you compare where you are with where some other people are, you, brother or sister, need to consider a question being asked of you now. What do you do in restoring someone when he falls into sin? I think the first thing I have to ask myself is, God, Lord, give me the strength to go talk to him. I hate doing that. I hate to get into a problem. And you know something, most of you in this room despise it more than I do, to the point you will rationalize everything on earth to keep from doing it. I think that most of you cannot and never will. So that means it falls on a few people to do so.

Do it, don't sit there with your hands in your pocket, brother. Go do it. Now, this is not Paul of Tarsus speaking tonight. This is Gene Edwards speaking, and hear me. When you go, do it according to this verse, verse one, go to that person as though it were you who had done it, and that you were the one to be restored. Go to that person as if they were you. Now, the first question you have to ask is, if I'd pull that kind of a stunt, what would I want said to me? And boy, that changes everything. I would beg you to never go to anyone harshly, never to go to anyone self-

righteously, but don't *not* go. It's not good English, but say it again. Don't *not* go. Now, I have something else to tell you who don't ever go. This is personal. It's out of my heart. It's off the top of the stove. This is my personal experience. I am one of those who often have to go. I appreciate doing it just about like you do. Castor oil would look great compared to this... most of you have never had this stuff. It's the most hideous taste in the whole world.

Those who go invariably...hear me carefully...lose their image as a caring person. I'm going to run that again. Those who go lose their reputation as caring people. The rest of you remain totally compassionate, loving, caring, and judgmental at your core about how those who did go handled it. Every once in a while...usually, these things work out very beautifully, but every once in a while, that person you're talking to goes out. They talk from one end of the church to the other, and all of you caring people believe everything...you mistreated him...how in the world could you have done that? I'm so disappointed in you for going to that brother, that sister. You have no right to talk that way until you get out of your "caring" mode and into a "going" mode. You get involved with an adulterous...you get involved in a situation where someone has committed some sort of immorality. You won't do it. You're delighted for us to go, me to go, and then judge the very daylights out of those of us who do.

Now, I'm sorry, I'm off subject. That's not in the Bible. That's in my experience, but I am learning this. As much as I hate to go, if I really care, I have to go talk to that person. It is debilitating. It is emotionally draining. It sometimes takes weeks to recover from it. Therefore, it should be shared with many people. But brothers, go to those who are weak and restore and restore and restore and do it as though you were going to yourself. Judge nobody, judge nothing. Be patient, be gracious, be so liberal, but don't sit at home; if it hasn't worked last time, or the time before, or the time before, go again anyway. Now, I know that's a pretty heavy dose to put on you. Sometimes I just stop going. I get discouraged, and I always end up regretting it. I wished I had gone one more time.

We had a situation where this brother was just bound and determined to pull a dumb stunt. He was going to marry somebody that everybody knew he ought not to marry. I'm not like I used to be with some people. Some people, I let him do it. Dog on it. I just let him do it. I don't care. I cared about this kid. I stopped him once. I stopped him twice. I had the church behind me in this. I had stopped him three times. I stopped him four times. I asked some other brothers to go talk to him. They spoke to him once. They stopped him. He started it again. I went to them. I said, "Go talk to him again." They said, "No, let him go do it," and they told me, "Don't bother." And by the way, this is the only good story I've got to tell myself in the whole world. I went to him when I was... this is not legal...I'm not talking about legal things. I'm talking about sitting down with a brother, crying with him, asking him questions to understand, asking him to consider what he's doing, and talking to the sister, which went over like you wouldn't believe.

He's one of the dearest brothers I know in this world, and today he is married to one of the most precious sisters I've ever met. I'm glad I went the sixth time, but there are hundreds of brothers and sisters to whom I never went the first time, and for sure I never went the second. This is about the

only one I ever went to again and again. Now, he was open to it. He was receptive. He was also his own man. He was not intimidated by what I said. Boy, was he not intimidated. I believe it was kept on a spiritual plane, and that is not easy to do; it has taken me 50 years to get to this point. You who are spiritual, restore. We don't have any spiritual people other than the most spiritual among you. Go do it. Restore them. Don't just let it go on, saints. Go care and help. That's number one. That's what Paul was telling these people. I am interpreting it based on my own experience. Verse two, bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. I could never have known what that meant if I had not observed the sisters in the church. Brothers watch the sisters care for one another. They really care for one another, and they bear one another's burdens. I don't think it's natural for brothers to do that.

You know, when the sisters in our fellowship get together, they get together, and they talk about their needs and their problems. They're so open, and then they all pray, and they all cry. They go out of their way to encourage. Their brothers get together, and not one of them mentions a problem he's got. But he prays, is challenged, puts arms around one another, and sings, "Give me some men who are stout-hearted men..." And we wrestle with the problems of a building or something that broke, and the finances, and we go out of there, and we feel great. That's how we care for one another.

Well, I would never recommend that the sisters be ministered to in the brotherly fashion, but brothers, you need to learn to care for other brothers in the sisterly fashion. To sit down and talk with one another about your personal limitations and your needs and your problems and bear one another's burdens, and in so doing, fulfill the only law Jesus Christ ever left on this earth, and that is: bear one another's burdens; to love one another; to love one another is to bear one another's burdens. Brothers, bear one another's burdens. Memphis brothers, be more compassionate. Why are you picking on us, Gene? Why? Why do you figure? What do you...What have you heard? But I know you, brothers, and I know men. There needs to be more openness among men to bear one another's burdens.

I can tell you how much every brother in the church is making. I know whether he's in debt. I know how badly off he is financially. I know whether they can buy food and pay their rent, and I know that almost on a monthly basis. I generally keep up with nearly everybody in the church. And yet with all of that, I still miss so much. I am shocked. I think I know where everybody is, and suddenly I realize there's been something going on for six months or a year that I've been totally insensitive and uncaring about, not noticing, and often right under my nose...and I'm working at it. Brothers, open your eyes and care for one another. Bear one another's burdens. Sisters show the brothers how to care.

Do you notice how often your wife takes something to someone? Do you know you? I know they do. They bring something to someone's house and show a little token of care. Brother, you ought to do that. That does your old masculine soul good. You have nights when you can take someone out to dinner. You have nights when you can invite somebody over. I don't care how well you

know them. There are people whose burdens you can shoulder. The church must be a place that is constantly caring because there is a constant need. It is everywhere. We are weak people who need love. Demonstrated caring love.

Having said that, I'm going to turn around and show a little wrath here. There is also...I'm going to change to the next one...this is the other one. There's also that soul who, "This is not a loving church. Where were you when I needed you? You didn't hear what Gene said that night. You're a callous, caring bunch of people. I was really needy, and you didn't come help me, and I don't care what happens to y'all. I just don't care because you weren't there when I needed you." Well, rain on you. That's how I feel about you. That's childish. That's immature, and I'll tell you what else. If you get off the periphery and get in the middle, we might be able to find you. That is almost always some peripheral Christian who's literally asking you to come over and find out what's wrong with them. Get in the middle. Care a little bit, yourself. Let it be known. Do it in a mature way...and there'll be someone to care for you. You spoiled brat.

By the way, you're listening to a man speak who has earned the right to speak. And that's what this other verse is: Bear your own burden. Each one of you should carry your own load. Now that's part of it. The other part is to take responsibility for your own decisions and stop blaming others for your problems. Stop being a blamer. Let the bathtub sit on its own feet. Is that the way that old saying goes? How does that thing go? Let every tub sit on its own bottom: a chronic whiner and a chronic blamer. You do not need care; you need counsel. You need someone far, far wiser than I am to sit down and discuss with you your willingness to blame everybody on earth for your problems except yourself. That is caring for you, my dear child of God, and if you resent it...If you resent it, it only highlights your problem.

Now then, I am so wary of this being done by someone in the church and turning into something legal that I tell you, without hesitation, that when we have such a person in our fellowship. Someone goes and says to them, "Would you please seek some counsel?" I always ask that it be done outside the fellowship of the church, and by a real professional, because this person has problems so deep-seated that all the love and care won't help them. And there are a lot of folk like that. Fortunately, at this moment, we are armed with people who are so well trained and so experienced that it can be done in the church, and those people are very independent of the church. They don't treat them as someone who...they don't say to them, "Now you go get and submit to elders." It's not as though this were a church matter. They deal with them on a personal matter. Am I making any sense at all? I would never have a deeply damaged person counseled within the church in fear that somebody is going to make it a church matter and put them under some kind of that...that's never happened in my ministry that I know of. But I am so anti-law that I don't ever want to see it happen, even in the slightest. I've always recommended a professional outside counselor. I don't have to do that anymore because of some incredibly well-trained people.

Now, I'm going to tell you something. You're going to lose your image of me totally. I am not ashamed of the fact that I am becoming a Christian. I am not ashamed of the fact that I am weak.

I am learning how to deal with the fact that I make lots of mistakes, and that in the very position that I am in, I hurt people, which just almost kills me. In fact, it is a problem for me. I so hate to hurt another Christian that I sought help on this very matter. Now, you would think that a person would not seek help on such a matter, would you? You would think that you'd really need to be so sensitive to hurting other people. But I take it so hard, and it goes so deep that a very wise brother, by the way, no one that any of you know, pointed out to me that I needed some help in this matter. Let's see, honey, how long ago was it? Two or three months ago? Do you remember? I don't have any recollection. I went to one of the best Christian counselors in America, one of these guys who, except for the fact that he was a friend, you know, these \$80 an hour type. By the way, that's the cheapest money you'll ever spend.

I spent about seven hours with that brother while he took me apart and put me back together again, and made me face things that I have never faced in my life. Then I came home, sat down with four other brothers, and reported to them in detail. This is a personal choice of mine. This is not something we preach or do. I chose to do this. I sat down with those brothers and talked to them in detail about some things this brother had found in me that I wasn't aware of. And let me stop here parenthetically. All of our major problems - your major problem, my major problem - we're never in touch with it. I heard a Christian counselor make a very wise statement. He said, "When we finally find out what a person's real problem is, I make them repeat it over and over and over again because usually they cannot keep it in their mind for over two or three seconds. They are totally blind to it, utterly cut off from it. Until this hour, I have sat down and struggled to articulate the root of this problem in my life.

One thing I'd like you to notice as I go along is that I'm talking to 120 people, and I am not hiding anything. I have nothing to hide. I'm a Christian. I'm a sinner saved by grace. I'm a needy person. That's why God gave me grace instead of putting me under the law. He figured I was just about like this. Say it and say it and say it and say it again. There's only one way I can tell who's really got a heart for the Lord and who hasn't. It's not how much you pray. It's not how much you witness. It's not how much you read your Bible. It's not how loud you shout in a meeting or how good you look. But I can tell you're in trouble spiritually when you will not seek help, when you are too proud to go to someone else and seek help. Friend, you are in trouble. You're hiding. Call it anything you want to say, you don't believe in that. That's not scriptural. Do anything you wish to do, but I'm telling you, you're in trouble spiritually because you're afraid of light.

Maybe you can't do what I did. Perhaps you have to do something else, but there's not a man or woman in this room, but there comes a point in your life and mine when we need someone else to help us see those things we cannot see. Bear your own burden too. Find out and discover one of the most important things. By the way, this all has to do with grace. All of this has to do with grace. What is the discovery of grace? That you're weak. Law says you are strong. Grace says you are weak. There's nothing wrong with that. It's not sinful. It's just weak, and the church is a place for caring and for healing. Verses three and four essentially say, "Don't think you can pull these things off on your own." You're deceiving yourself. Look at yourself. See what's going on in your life.

Don't be so boastful. Or, another way to put it: you need to be a little humble in this area, saint. You know, and all my life I've been accused of a lot of things. You can't imagine, but I have never, never had the accusation laid at my feet that I am humble. That's one condemnation I have never had to live with. Well, I'm going to tell you, I don't see humility till I see a brother or a sister recognizing he's weak and willing to reach out for help, without excuse and without hesitation.

Hidden in chapter six is the ministry of the church in caring. I've lost my verse, but somewhere in here there is, well, I'll skip that one. Man, I'm making this a lot more personal than I thought I was going to. Maybe I should stop. Am I disturbing you? I am disturbing you. Okay. Am I upsetting you? Am I undermining your faith here? Yeah. We have visitors coming to us from different parts of America. They've read all my books and all these other books. I think they expect to meet a monk who sits over in his corner and prays...a (Watchman) Nee who mysteriously appears in the room. This was Nee's style. Sits down. You meet in front of him. You ask him a question. He gives you a profound spiritual answer. You're awestruck. Your life has changed. You look up, and he's gone. That was the image Nee projected.

Every time anybody comes to visit us, they always say the same thing. You people are so normal-looking, and generally, some people are turned off by that. Now, other than the fact that they are grossly ugly, did you catch a sense of normality with these brothers who were standing up here a few minutes ago? Did you, or am I fooling myself? Did you hear the theological vocabulary? Did you hear an affected speech? Did you hear one theme being beaten to death as though they had had something drilled into their heads? I listened. I heard six, seven, eight, nine men. Every one of them is different. Every one of them has something different to say. And brothers who really do spend a lot of time disagreeing with one another. Amen. Brothers. Amen. Amen. Well, I am not a profoundly transformed human being, but I will tell you what I am. I'm ordinary. I was picked from the same peapod you were. And perhaps you don't know it yet, but you're needy. You're a very needy saint if you came out of the same peapod I came out of.

Verses 7, 8, and 9 are where I am right now. No, it's verse 8. No, it's not. It's verse 9. *Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.* I've never been one of those people who had a verse, but this one walked up and attached itself to me about three weeks ago, and this verse and I have been living together ever since. The verse moved in with me and has become part of my life. Sleeps with me, eats with me, sits by me, we talk to one another, we argue. Sometimes the verse talks, sometimes I talk, sometimes I sit there, and I argue. And every once in a while, I get a little discouraged looking at this verse, and my prayer is, "Lord, amen."

You know, I said this the first time when I was 30 years old. I think you'll find it in *Our Mission (now entitled Climb the Highest Mountain)* that I have never feared particularly...Well, I fear falling in sin, yes, but I don't fear any one cataclysmic disaster like a church split destroying me. But since I recognized how big this job was, how much stress it would cause, and how much damage it could do, I knew that time would wear me down. And in the last few years, I've seen

some of the finest men I've ever known throw in the towel. A woman whom I have known and respected just gave it up. Her last words to me were, "Gene, I don't see any hope for the church being restored, and I'm quitting." She was exactly my age. I'm going to read this verse, and I want to say this to you sisters, and I don't know why I'm saying this to you sisters in Memphis. I don't know a more loving group of women in this world, caring for other people's needs, and you have been that way since the day I met you. It has only grown and deepened in Christ; it is beautiful and an aroma. It is an encouragement to me.

Listen, y'all, all of you, you are my letter, and you keep me on my feet. You exist, and that keeps me going. You're very real people, and you fuss with one another, and you fight with one another. You don't mind telling one another how you feel, and you don't mind telling me what your problems are, and you exist, and you're not ugly, and you've never been in a split. You've never had a split, and you've never been...you never did that in your whole life, not once. And I'm proud, and when I go before the Lord, you're going to be what I bring.

You get discouraged sometimes, don't you? I do too. *I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet it is not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* And he closes here in this beautiful ending; he closes again by saying, "...let me not boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world," which means literally the world cannot find you, and you cannot find the world. This wonderful instrument of God, death, has separated us. Everything down here...everything down here...*has already passed.* Everything down here has already passed. I *have been* crucified with Christ. I have been crucified to the world and the world to me. Everything down here is already over. That's why you have no business going around with the law. It's over. You're over. I'm over. It's done with. The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, and the word I want to pick out of that and close with is the word "now."

Now, a hallmark of Christians is that they are always praying for something in the future. Lord, open our eyes and show us these things. I hate that prayer. And now, Lord, may you be merciful and show us these things. Baloney. My spirit already knows these things. I heard it, and it is now. Dear Christian friend, will you stop living in the future with your prayers and expectations? And will you also understand that everything down here has already passed, and that you live in the eternal now? Stop saying, "Lord give us; Lord let us; Lord show us; Lord, reveal to us," and take now, "Lord, *I am* crucified with you. Lord, *I am* raised from the dead. Lord, *I am* in you. The life now at this moment being lived is Christ."

Listen, I'm going to say a word. Train yourself to say, "*Now, right now, it is Christ, not me.*" I'm sitting here right now, and it is not me. Now it is Christ. Tomorrow you will be washing dishes. Now it is Christ. Tomorrow you will be changing dirty diapers. Now it is Christ that lives. Tomorrow you will be working as a carpenter. Everything around you is messy, but everything down here is over with. Now it is Christ. I don't feel spiritual; I don't feel God's presence. *Now it is Christ.* Right now, it is Christ who lives in me. Right now, it is Christ. Right now, it is

Christ...right now. It is Christ. Now it is Christ. Not tomorrow. Not some better day. Not some golden day. Now it is Christ. I'm going to go eat. I'm going to go drink. Now it is Christ. It is no longer me, but now it is Christ. Now, right now, it is Christ. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet it is not I, but it is Christ living in me. The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Right now - *it is Christ*.

Will you do me this little goodbye favor? Will you repeat it with me? Now it is Christ. Now it is Christ. Right now. Right now, it is Christ who lives. We're going to do it again. Right now, it is Christ who lives. No skyrocket, no great glorious thing, no enormous spiritual encounter, no mountaintop experience, no great forgiveness of sin, no new release into a new world, but it is now, and the past is all over with. And right now, it is Christ that lives in me. Repeat it. Right now, it is Christ who lives in me. You'll never get any further than that. You'll never get a word better than that. Go live on it. When you come to the scripture, be there when you pray. Be there when you're with your husband. Be there when you're with your wife. Be there in a crisis. In dry times, in high times, in low times now. It is not I, but Christ who lives right in this mundane moment.