

# When You Are the Problem

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## Key Scripture

Galatians 6:1 (ESV) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

## Sermon in One Sentence

When we are confronted with our own failures and sins, the path to restoration lies in humble confession, repentance, and leaning into the gentle corrective love of our spiritual community, while also exercising grace toward others.

## Introduction

Have you ever been in a conversation where someone is passionately describing a problem, detailing every angle, every contributing factor, and then, slowly, a dawning realization creeps over you? As they speak, all the signs point to one uncomfortable truth: *they* are the very problem they are describing. Or perhaps, more personally, you've been in a situation where you've poured over a conflict, trying to pinpoint blame, only to have the Holy Spirit gently, yet firmly, whisper, "You are a part of this. Perhaps *you* are the problem." This is an incredibly challenging, even humbling, moment. Our human nature inclines us to deflect, to blame others, to rationalize our shortcomings. But true spiritual growth often begins when we courageously confront the uncomfortable truth that sometimes, the source of discord, the root of a struggle, or the obstacle to progress lies within ourselves.

Today, we're going to bravely stare into that mirror. We're going to explore what it means when we discover we are "the problem" – not in an accusatory or shaming way, but in a redemptive, grace-filled way. The Bible, in its raw honesty, doesn't shy away from human fallibility, even among believers. It offers profound wisdom not just on identifying the problem, but on the path to healing and restoration, both for ourselves and for those we impact. Our passage today from Galatians 6:1 calls us to a posture of both self-awareness and gentle, redemptive watchfulness.

## Historical & Biblical Context

The Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the churches in Galatia primarily to address a serious theological drift. False teachers, often referred to as Judaizers, were infiltrating these congregations, asserting that Gentile believers needed to observe aspects of the Mosaic Law, such as circumcision, in addition to faith in Christ for salvation. This undermined the core gospel message of salvation by grace through faith alone. However, amidst his fervent defense of justification by faith, Paul also included practical exhortations for godly living, what we call sanctification. Galatians 5 and 6 deal extensively with the fruit of the Spirit and how believers should treat one another as they live out their faith in community. Our specific verse, Galatians 6:1, comes at

the climax of these practical instructions, emphasizing the spirit of restoration and self-examination necessary for a healthy, grace-filled church body. It's written with the understanding that even faithful believers will stumble, and the community's response must be rooted in love, humility, and a keen awareness of our own susceptibility to sin.

## **Main Point I — The Uncomfortable Mirror: Acknowledging Our Transgressions**

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:1a: "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression..."

The first hurdle to restoration, when we are the problem, is simply admitting it. Paul's phrase, "caught in any transgression" (or "overtaken in any fault" in KJV), uses the Greek word *paraptoma*, which signifies a false step, a lapse, a trespass, or a deviation from the right path. It doesn't necessarily imply malicious intent, but rather a stumble. Imagine someone walking along, perhaps not paying full attention, and suddenly they've stepped off the path into a ditch. That's the imagery here. This isn't about being perfectly righteous; it's about the reality that in our fallen state, we all take false steps. To deny these transgressions, to immediately defend ourselves or blame others, is to halt our spiritual growth before it even begins.

Acknowledging our transgression requires humility and a reliance on the Holy Spirit to convict us. It means being willing to listen to feedback, even if it's painful, from trusted brothers and sisters in Christ. It means searching our own hearts when things go wrong and asking the difficult question: "Was I, in some way, the problem here?" This is not self-condemnation, but rather a healthy spiritual self-awareness that recognizes our inherent fallibility and our constant need for God's grace. Before we can be restored, we must first recognize that we have indeed taken a false step and that healing is needed.

## **Main Point II — The Gentle Hand: Receiving Restoration with Humility**

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:1b: "...you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness."

Once we acknowledge our transgression, the next step is to receive restoration. Paul instructs those who are "spiritual" – meaning those walking in the Spirit, exhibiting fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) – to initiate this process. The word "restore" (Greek: *katartizo*) is a powerful one. It was used in ancient Greek for mending nets, setting a broken bone, or equipping a ship for sea. It speaks of bringing something back to its proper, functional state of wholeness. When we are "the problem," we are in a broken, dysfunctional state relative to God's will and our relationships.

Receiving this restoration requires a spirit of humility. It means dropping our defenses, accepting the wise counsel, and allowing ourselves to be ministered to. This is not always easy; our pride often fights against it. Yet, it is through the gentle, loving, and firm hand of spiritual brothers and sisters that God often brings us back into alignment. This gentleness is crucial, as it cultivates an environment where confession can occur without fear of condemnation. When we are caught in sin, we need to lean into the community, trust their spirit-led guidance, and allow ourselves to be "mended" and brought back into full fellowship and usefulness, not despite our failures, but through the grace that follows them.

## Main Point III — The Watchful Heart: Guarding Against Future Stumbles

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:1c: "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."

Finally, having acknowledged our transgression and received restoration, Paul pivots to a critical caution for everyone involved: "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." This command is not just for the restorer, but for the restored and, truly, for all believers. It highlights a universal truth: we are all susceptible to sin and temptation. When we discover that we were the problem, it should be a humbling reminder of our own ongoing need for vigilance and dependence on God. This is not a once-and-done event; restoration is a process, and maintaining that restored state requires continual self-examination and reliance on God's grace.

"Keep watch" (Greek: *skopeo*) means to look intently, to take heed, to observe carefully. It's an active, ongoing effort. This involves introspection, prayer, accountability, and regular engagement with God's Word. When we've been "the problem," it often exposes a weakness, a pattern, or a blind spot in our lives. This awareness becomes an opportunity for greater intentionality in guarding our hearts and minds against similar temptations in the future. It calls us to learn from our mistakes, not just to move past them, but to use them as catalysts for deeper spiritual maturity and greater dependence on Christ's empowering presence.

### Illustration

Consider the story of Peter and Jesus by the Sea of Galilee after Jesus' resurrection. Peter had just famously, and devastatingly, denied Christ three times. He was undoubtedly "the problem" in the discipleship narrative, having fallen spectacularly short. His transgression was public and painful. But Jesus, in His infinite wisdom and grace, didn't condemn Peter. Instead, He meticulously brought Peter through a process of restoration. Three times, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" In doing so, Jesus didn't shame Peter but gently challenged his heart, giving him the opportunity to acknowledge his true feelings and commitment. Each time Peter affirmed his love, Jesus gave him a commission: "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep," "Feed my sheep." Jesus wasn't merely forgiving Peter; He was restoring him to full ministry, demonstrating that even after being "the problem," God's grace is sufficient to mend, equip, and re-commission us for His purposes. Peter, in humility, received this restoration and ultimately became a cornerstone of the early church, always remembering his fallibility and dependence on Christ.

### Practical Application

- 1. Conduct a "Humility Check":** This week, intentionally reflect on any unresolved conflicts or frustrations in your relationships or areas where you feel stagnant. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if *you* are contributing to the problem, either through action or inaction, and be open to His gentle conviction.
- 2. Confess and Repent:** If the Holy Spirit reveals a specific area where you've been "the problem," confess it honestly to God. If appropriate and biblical, confess to the person you've wronged and genuinely seek their forgiveness.
- 3. Seek Wise Counsel:** If you're struggling to identify your own blind spots or to truly own your part in a problem, seek out a trusted, spiritual mentor, pastor, or friend. Ask them to speak truth into your life, even if it's uncomfortable.

**4. Embrace Accountability:** Once you've acknowledged and begun to mend where you were the problem, invite accountability into your life. Share your struggles and growth areas with a trusted individual or small group, asking them to pray for you and gently speak into your life when needed.

**5. Practice Gratitude for Grace:** Regularly thank God for His boundless grace that does not condemn us when we are the problem, but lovingly offers restoration and a path to holiness. Let this gratitude cultivate gentleness and patience towards others.

## Discussion Questions

1. When has "being the problem" led to a significant moment of spiritual growth in your life? How did you respond?
2. What makes it so difficult for us to acknowledge our own transgressions and failures? What role does pride play?
3. Describe a time when you received "gentle restoration" from another believer. What made it effective?
4. In what specific areas might you need to "keep watch on yourself" this week to prevent future stumbles?

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You in humility, acknowledging our fallen nature and our frequent tendency to miss the mark. Forgive us for the times we have been the problem, for our pride, our blind spots, and our transgressions. We thank You for the grace You extend through Your Son, Jesus Christ, and for the gentle hand of Your Spirit and Your church in leading us to restoration. Strengthen us to seek healing, to forgive generously, and to always rely on You.

## Benediction

And now, may the God of all grace, who called you into His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Amen.