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Seek Restoration, Not Judgment

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

There is a perception in the world today that Christians think they are better people than non-believers. So, when a Believer falls into sin, the world cries, “See, you’re nothing special!” This idea that Christians are better people has also been perpetuated by the Church itself, to the end that some Christians have more in common with the Pharisee who prayed, “*God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector*” (Lk. 18:11b). Many of us have also thought this. But this “sinful” tax collector prayed, “*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*” (Lk. 18:13b), and Jesus said, “*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other*” (Lk. 18:14a).

In reality, the only good thing about us is that Christ’s righteousness has been credited to us—we weren’t born that way, we didn’t develop it, and we didn’t earn it by good deeds. Through God’s power alone, we have been justified by our faith that Jesus’ substitution of Himself in our place of judgment has restored us to God. By God’s power, we have been adopted and made His children, and the Holy Spirit indwelt us to convict, manage, discipline, comfort, and teach us—producing HIS fruit in our lives. None of this is of ourselves. “*Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things*” (Rom. 2:1), i.e. you also break God’s Law in your struggle with sin and are worthy of death on your own merits.

And yet, Christians judge unsaved sinners and Believers caught in sin because, “we’re not like them.” But before God, the true judge, we are all “like them,” for “*there is none righteous*” (Rom. 3:10b). Holy God sees us all for the wretches we are, and He STILL desires restoration. God desires to reconcile lost sinners into His household through Jesus. He also seeks to restore His adopted children, called by His name, from His discipline: “*He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake*” (Ps. 23:3). The Church cannot insulate itself from sin. Nor should it judge Believers caught in a sin. To do so, is to ignore the FACT that we all sin, even if it isn’t seen openly—and all sin is worthy of death (Thank God our sin has been paid for by the blood of Christ!). Just like natural children, God’s Children misbehave, and like children, we need to be corrected gently in love, not judged and rejected. **However, Repentance is required:** “*your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended... Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret... See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done*” (2 Cor. 7:9b-11). “*For such a one, this punishment [Gr. The fitting response necessary to turn someone in the right direction, i.e. discipline] by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him*” (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

To “reaffirm” and “restore” is to return to where you were before—just as a father’s desire is not to judge his children but to restore them from discipline after they have repented from a tantrum. May all God’s children “*aim for restoration*” (2 Cor. 13:11b). Amen.

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