

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

- a. "The best motive of forbearance toward others is the sense of our own weakness." (P. Schaff)
- b. "In Christian morality self-esteem is vanity, and vanity is nothingness." (Lightfoot)
- c. Paul here makes reference to the vainglorying which must have characterized some of the Galatian Christians. It is easy to overestimate ourselves. A thorough inspection of ourselves in the light of God's Word will quickly dispell any exalted thoughts of our own attributes and abilities. When we see ourselves in proper perspective we will be better able to help our brother.

2. Individual Responsibility (verses 4-5)

"Let every man prove his own work..."

- a. "Prove" here means "test." The word in the classics referred to testing metals and money. It is used in this sense in I Peter 1:7 where the testing of faith is compared to the testing of gold. In I Corinthians 3:13 the word is used in regard to the testing of every man's work at the judgement seat of Christ. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

As steel is carefully tested under every kind of stress and strain to be sure it will hold up in the more important tests in the future as a part of a ship, boiler or other mechanism, so Christians should carefully test their own work now, that it might be work that will endure the great final test. Such a careful examination will usually lead to the conclusion that there is room for improvement, causing the vainglorying to be done away with. Of course, if the Lord has enabled us to do a solid piece of work, we can rejoice in it. But we should not evaluate our work in comparison with that of others. The rule that must be used is God's standard, the Bible.

"For every man shall bear his own burden."

- a. This seems to be a contradiction to verse 2. Paul uses two different words which are translated by the English word "burden." The two are synonyms, but have a different shade of meaning and are used in a different sense in the two verses.

(1) *βουρην* - emphasizes the weight of the burden. In verse 2 it refers to an burden which is imposed, not one taken on voluntarily.

(2) *φορτιον* - refers to a burden that is borne, but voluntarily borne. Used of "cargo" on a ship or a "pack" that a soldier must carry on his back.

- b. Every man has his own responsibilities to bear. A responsible person realizes this and cheerfully fulfills his duties. The burden that comes to the fallen brother is an additional weight which becomes oppressive and may drag him to the ground. We are all responsible for our own burdens of responsibility, but when someone of our Christian brothers becomes burdened down with faults and cares, we must rush to his aid.
- c. Individual responsibility is emphasized in the Bible. God loves us as individuals and holds us accountable as individuals. We are living in a day when "collectivism" is being emphasized and individualism de-emphasized. Collectivism can result in the shunning of individual responsibility. We must not be taken in by this error.

3. Pedagogical Responsibility (verse 6)

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

- a. "communicate" - means literally "to go shares with." The one being taught is to go shares with his teacher in all good things. In Romans 12:13 and Philippians 4:15 it refers to sharing financially. It probably has a wider meaning than that in this context.
- b. The teacher probably refers to the ordained teaching elder or the pastor of the church. Undoubtedly Paul includes this admonition here because the full-time Christian worker is in a different situation than most people in regard to the supplying of his needs. Paul has just admonished Christians to be individually responsible, which would include working and providing for himself and his dependents.