

Practical Love & Right Boasting

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[0 : 00] Father, thanks for your word. Please help me to be clear and smooth and faithful. Please help us to be good listeners. In Jesus' name. Amen. And so as we finish this series in Galatians, today will either challenge or encourage you, depending on the people sitting around you.

So in chapter 6, it gives practical ways to live out chapters 1 to 5. It's not about making Christians. It's about how Christians should live. Chapter 6 today will either encourage or challenge you, depending on how you feel about the people sitting around you.

Challenging and encouraging are good words to summarize the series so far. So Paul has challenged the Galatians not to get circumcised. A false teacher said being right with God is about getting circumcised, keeping Jewish laws.

That's what makes you kosher. This mature church, they fell for it, hook, line and sinker. And so Paul repeatedly challenged them. In chapter 2, he said, By works of the law will no one be justified.

That path only leads to curses. And maybe you too found that challenging as you realized that you as well were trusting in religious works and your own performance like the Galatians.

[1 : 20] Instead, Paul encouraged them that the path to God has always been by the cross. He said in chapter 3, That is where Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Paul encouraged them that nothing they do counts towards their salvation. He said, In Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. And maybe that encouraged you that unlike the rest of the world, we are free from having to earn our way to God.

Last week, Paul challenged them not to use their freedom to indulge their flesh. He said, Rather, walk by the Spirit. Serve one another in love. And maybe that challenged you to think about your freedom for the sake of others, in service of others.

There are many reasons to be challenged or encouraged by chapters 1 to 5. Today, it will depend on how you feel about the people sitting around you.

So today, some challenges, some encouragements, and some practical examples. And of course, a question time a little bit later. We're at point one. So as you look around at the people sitting around you, maybe don't do that actually, but just in your mind's eye, think about the people sitting around you.

[2 : 41] You may have many names for them. So, stranger or acquaintance, polite names that is. Irritating or friend. Annoying or funny.

Rude or polite. Different or the same. Australian or foreigner. As fellow children of God, through Jesus, as co-heirs of Abraham by faith, the only names are brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters. Verse 1. Brothers and sisters. If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

But watch yourself. Or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. Paul's challenge is that we look after one another like brothers and sisters do in a family.

And that will challenge us. Because maybe we think Christianity is a solo project. Maybe we think our walk with the Spirit is between me and God.

[3 : 46] Maybe we like to keep people at church at arm's length. Maybe you look at these people and think, brothers and sisters. Oh my, yikes. The commands in verse 1 and 2 are really clear.

The commands are, restore other people gently. Carry each other's burdens. Paul says, we need each other. This doesn't just mean practical help during the week, although we should be doing that.

Verse 1 gives us the context. It says, if someone is caught in sin. You see, as we battle the desires of our flesh, Paul says, we need each other to help carry that burden.

The psalm which Kate read for us, it talked about, or it spoke of a person who was so weighed down by the burden of their own sin. Jesus carries our burdens on the cross, but we also have to carry a burden for one another to help one another shoulder the load.

And so that means carrying the burden is investing time. It's emotional energy. It's patience. It's listening. It's the chasing after someone.

[5 : 00] It's the accountability groups. It's the gentle challenge or encouragement to help restore a brother or sister who's fallen into sin. But all of that sounds like human effort.

How does that fit with walking by the Spirit? That doesn't sound very spiritual. We said that nothing we do counts towards our salvation. But if you look in verse 1, have a look at the echoes back to walking by the Spirit from last week.

So verse 1 says, Brothers and sisters, If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit, that means someone who has the Holy Spirit inside them, a Christian, someone in step with the Spirit.

Verse 1 says, Restore that person gently. That is a fruit of the Spirit from last week. So what I want to do now is a quick case study.

What to do when a brother or sister is caught in sin. And here are a couple of options for us. So, Do we walk the way of the world? That is, Do we judge them?

[6 : 07] Do we judge them in our minds? Do we think that they are less Christian because of what they've done? Do we gossip about it? Or as it's politely called, mention it in passing to a friend?

Do we apply the peer pressure model, which produces despair and guilt and pride? Do we feel relief that we're not as bad as them?

Do we ignore it and hope that someone else, maybe the pastor, deals with it? Maybe if we're bold, we might rebuke them with some self-righteousness that crushes them.

Do you think they are good models? No. Do we, do we instead, walk alongside them by the spirit in gentleness? A way to do that is to encourage them of who they are in Christ, to encourage them to prefer their new identity rather than their fleshly self, to challenge them to leave their sinful self back up on the cross.

Not so they can become a real Christian again. They're already a real Christian. That is the spirit of gentleness, I think. Depending on how you feel about the people sitting around you, that will be a challenge, I think.

[7 : 25] Carrying the burdens of others will challenge how you involve yourself here at the 1030 family. It will challenge your investment of time and emotional energy in others.

It will certainly challenge our understandings of privacy and politeness. It will challenge how much you pray for other people and what you pray for other people.

It will challenge getting on top of sins in your own life first. It will challenge whether you join a Bible study group or a prayer triplet or some accountability partnership.

It will be very challenging. To help others carry the burden of sin. But also very encouraging. You see, it's encouraging to know that we are not in this battle alone.

Last week we said that the Christian life was a running race. It's encouraging to know you have running buddies who can help carry that burden to get you to that finish line. It's encouraging to know here at 1030 you will be gently restored rather than peer pressured or judged.

[8 : 31] if you're caught in sin. And so, permission to help you in the battle? I give you permission to help me in the battle. That is how brothers and sisters live in a family.

The 1030 family. We need to watch out for each other. You see, our sinful flesh would love it if Holy Trinity was a place where no one cared enough to bear each other's sins or to carry each other's burdens.

Where sins ran unchecked. The flesh loves the consumer church model where everyone turns up, gets what they want, and goes home without any interest to look after other people.

That is indulging the flesh. That is not walking by the Spirit. Paul says that that will happen if people think like verse 3.

Have a look down at verse 3. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. You see, if I think I am something when obviously, it's obvious that I'm not, if I think that, I will think I'm too good to help you.

[9 : 39] If my ego can't take some gentle restoration, then I won't have brothers and sisters invading my personal life. If I look down on others who need help, I'll assume it's their problem and it's probably their fault.

Paul says, we deceive ourselves. In verse 1, it's watching out for others, but by the end of verse 1, it's watching out for yourself. Verse 2, carry each other's burden, but verse 5, carry your own load.

These are not a contradiction because verse 5 is about giving that final account before God. The reason to watch ourselves is verse 4.

Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone without comparing themselves to someone else. See, as we, in this 1030 family, as we watch out for one another's battles with sin, the temptation will be to compare ourselves to other people.

Paul says, to stop that happening, he says, don't be proud of yourself in comparison to someone else. Because in the final analysis, it's just between me and God.

[10 : 54] You see, on that final day of judgment, I won't be able to bring in those Christians who are struggling and say, see God, I'm better than them. Can I come in? Point one, we need to watch out for each other as we watch out for ourselves.

Point number two, we need Bible teachers. Verse 6, nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

And I think this is the really random command this week. It seems to come out of nowhere, but I think it ties to verse 7 and 8. Have a look at verse 7 and 8. Do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

And it seems to come out of nowhere, but being taught the Word of God is how we sow to the Spirit of God. Bible teaching in that way, it nourishes our Christian roots in a way, the way fertilizer nourishes the roots of plants.

[12 : 05] It nourishes us to fight against the flesh. The Bible is the seed in that way. As we're taught the Bible, the Spirit works through His book to produce that godly fruit, which Warwick mentioned.

And I love how practical verse 6 is. Verse 6 says basically, get your wallets out, in a way. You see, if we know we are in a battle, if we want the Spirit to win, what should we do?

Paul says, get your wallets out. Support Bible teachers. Now, lots of people will find that challenging. Challenging because maybe they're not financially supporting, ministry here.

Challenging because maybe they're not supporting it sacrificially. For some, the challenge will be to think about money in spiritual terms. We're used to getting our wallets out at Woolies to pay for food, to feed ourselves.

We're used to paying for gas and electricity to heat and keep the lights on. We're used to contributing into our pensions to fund our retirement. Why wouldn't we support Bible teachers with the same conviction and clarity?

[13 : 19] Some people might find it challenging that we here at church are not giving more to the poor. The reason why is we believe Galatians. We believe that poverty is not mankind's biggest problem, but getting right with God is.

We think the gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified is the only thing that can save rich and poor people alike. Where else would you hear about walking in the spirit if not for your Bible teachers?

Which TV program this week challenged you to fight the flesh? Which magazine or radio program this past two months has encouraged you to stick with Christ crucified?

Money and church together is always going to feel like a challenge. But be encouraged that our money, mine too, is for the spiritual health of the people sitting around you.

It's for the nurturing of souls, of sowing to the spirit. And just like point one, it's possible to be deceived here also.

[14 : 34] So in point one, verse three, it was the proud believer who thinks he's something when he's not. In verse seven, it's the complacent believer who doesn't nurture his soul.

Last week, we said that the flesh and the spirit were like two corners of a boxing match. Today, they're two different fields. Which one are you going to sow into? We know what happens when we neglect our garden over time.

Why do we assume our soul will survive a bit of neglect? Sowing to the spirit will make church and Bible times, things like kingdom growth, it will make them a priority.

In our life, they won't be easily bumped by work and social and family sport. Maybe it's because we're free in Christ that people think, well, why can't I be free to prioritize what everyone out there prioritizes?

Why can't I sow a bit of gossip or a bit of anger or a bit of impurity? The challenge is verse 7. Do not be deceived.

[15 : 41] God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Verse 9 and 10 speak about doing good. So it's not just listening to the Bible or listening to Bible teachers.

It's actually living it out that sows to the spirit. All of these priorities might challenge our physical and emotional energy. No one said spiritual farming was easy.

But be encouraged because the harvest is eternal life. Point one, we need each other. Point two, we need Bible teachers.

These don't make us more Christian. These are the nuts and bolts, the basics of Christian living. What I want to do now is some case studies to show how this works in practice.

So a couple of the case studies I've put down, church and Bible group attendance. So church attendance. Sometimes coming here to church is a real challenge. The religion of works, everything out there, says you must attend.

[16 : 45] And if you don't come to church, you should feel guilty. But that is not Galatians. Remember, we are free in Christ from having to earn our way via things like church attendance.

And so if you're finding church attendance particularly difficult for one reason or another, you might decide to stay away. Thankful that you are free in Christ.

Encouraged that ours is not a religion of works. That would be okay. For other people here, Galatians 6 says we need each other. It says we need to be fed by Bible teachers.

And so it challenges laziness. It challenges a lack of priority. Many times, I'm sure you've had this as well, many times in our lives, for me anyway, I feel lazy, a bit selfish.

I sort of um and ah about whether to come to church. And then I go anyway, and it's been such an encouraging time. And I was so glad I bothered to come that day. And I'm sure you've had that same experience.

[17 : 48] That's church attendance. Small group attendance, Bible group attendance, sometimes Bible groups are a real challenge because of the times they are in the week. They're not that regular Sunday morning which we've already carved off in our diaries.

They're really a tricky thing to get to. I understand that. In my group on Tuesday night, we go around the group and we pray for one another individually. And there's a couple in my group who are adults older than me and they've got adult children and their adult children have really terrible health issues.

And every week the couple they seem sort of exhausted and I think they feel a bit shy for having to ask for the same prayer request but the rest of the group loves hearing from them.

We love praying for them even if it's for the hundredth time in a row. We carry each other's burdens you see and of attendance.

The other thing I wanted to talk about as a case study is holidays so it's holiday time now some of us might be going away sometimes church and the Bible feel like a chore don't they and when you go on holidays you say well I'm free from my chores free from my vacuuming I'm free from the chore of church and the Bible and so we leave the Bible and the church till we come back home and we might feel guilty about that but remember we are free in Christ it is not Galatians be encouraged that these things don't earn our place with God but they are a privilege of being in his family and so if you can why wouldn't you feed yourself even down at the beach by visiting the local church or packing your Bible in your suitcase listening to a podcast of a sermon you've missed perhaps why wouldn't you nurture yourself why should the beach be an excuse not to nurture and sow to the spirit now just to clarify with these case studies we are not talking about a roll call in church we are not talking about a standard and if you don't reach that standard we're going to set up a witch hunt that is the legalism of

[20 : 31] Galatians we are free in Christ I want to encourage you with that but I do need to challenge laziness and a lack of priority if we leave our gardens unchecked as it were untended they could make the battle harder a lack of priority and laziness could actually eventually lead to a harvest of corruption and so there are Paul's examples and his challenges and what I want to do is finish the letter now with point three and I think this sort of wraps it up verse 11 have a look over the page to verse 11 in verse 11 Paul says he's going to start writing with really big letters you see Paul has got something really big to say about boasting verse 13 not even those who are circumcised keep the law yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh but Paul may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything what counts is a new creation you see this is the bottom line in Galatians it's what mature churches like us need to hear where is your boast is it conformity to religious works such as circumcision and moral performance religious trappings church attendance or is my boast with Paul solely in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ when we test our work before the Lord can we confidently say verse 14 that we are never boasting in anything except the cross you see to the proud to the religious to the self righteous the cross will always be a challenge because it says that nothing they do will earn their way to God but to the humble to the broken to the moral losers to the self confessed failures to the law breakers to the people exhausted by their own sinful flesh the cross is gloriously encouraging news because that's where Jesus takes our curse that is where we are made right with God that is where we are made totally new creations by the spirit so verse 18 the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brothers and sisters amen let me pray for us our father God we thank you for this gem of a letter and father we thank you that we are free in Christ from having to earn our way to God father we declare that we are trusting only in the blood of Jesus that nothing else no religion is good enough to solve the problem of our flesh of getting right with you may we use this freedom to serve one another as brothers and sisters please help us prioritize our family times here prioritize your word we need your help our flesh is so strong and so overwhelming sometimes in Jesus name amen