

Practical Love & Right Boasting

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Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 0 0] Father God, thank you for your word. Thank you for another opportunity this morning to sit at your feet and listen. Father, please help me to be clear and smooth and faithful.

Please would you help us to listen. We need your help in Jesus' name. Amen. And as we finish this series in Galatians, today we'll either challenge or encourage you, depending on the people sitting around you.

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

Don't look at the people sitting around you, by the way. Actually, I think the words challenging and encouraging, I think those two themes summarise the whole book so far.

So Paul challenged the Galatians not to get circumcised. False teachers were saying that being right with God is about keeping Jewish laws. Circumcision makes you kosher.

[1 : 1 4] And this mature church fell for it, hook, line and sinker. And so Paul challenged. In chapter 2 he said, He said, And maybe you too found that a challenge, because maybe you realised that you too were trusting in religious works and moral performance, like the Galatians.

Instead, Paul encouraged them that the path to God is always via the cross. Because in chapter 3 he said, That's 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 that 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, Don't use your freedom, however, to indulge the flesh. Rather, walk by the Spirit. Serve one another humbly in love.

And maybe that challenged you, to think about your freedom in terms of other people rather than yourself. There are many reasons to be challenged or encouraged by chapters 1 to 5.

[2 : 3 0] Today as we finish, it will depend on how you feel about the people sitting around you. And so today, some challenges and some encouragements and some practical examples.

And if you've got your handout, that's really going to help you today. And so point 1. As you look at the people sitting around you, and again, don't look at them, just in your mind's eye, picture them.

As you look around at the people sitting around you, you may have many names for them. Stranger or acquaintance. Irritating or friend. Annoying or funny.

Rude or polite. Different or the same. 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. If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves.

[3 : 35] Or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burden. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. Paul's challenge is that we watch out for one another, like brothers and sisters do in a family.

Because that will be a challenge to you. Because you may think that your Christianity is a solo project. You may think that your walking with the Spirit is between you and God.

You may like to keep the people at church at arm's length. And you may look at these people around you and think, brothers and sisters. Yikes. The commands of verse 1 and 2 are really clear.

Restore other people gently. Carry each other's burdens. They're the two commands there. Paul says we need each other. This doesn't mean that practical help.

Sorry. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't help people practically. Of course we should do that. But verse 1 gives us the context. It says if someone is caught in sin.

[4 : 38] You see, as we battle the desires of our flesh, Paul says we need help. We need each other's help to carry the burden. In the psalm which Barry read for us, the psalmist speaks of the burden and the pain of carrying their own sin before God.

We don't carry each other's burdens the way Jesus does on the cross. Carrying each other's burdens is about investing time, patience and emotional energy. It's the listening.

It's the chasing after. It's the accountability groups. It's the gentle challenge or encouragement that could restore a brother or sister who has fallen into sin.

But how does that fit with walking by the Spirit? See, that all sounds like human effort. Didn't we say that all human effort has no value?

But in verse 1, have a look at the echoes of walking by the Spirit from last week. So it 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 in them, a Christian, you who live by the Spirit, who is in step with the Spirit in their own lives.

[5 : 52] Verse 1 says, Restore that person gently. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. We heard that last week. So what I want to do is a case study or an example of what to do if a brother or sister is caught in sin.

So a couple of options. Do we walk the way of the world? Do we judge them in our minds? Do we think they're 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 only produces guilt and despair?

Do we feel relief that we're not as bad as them? Do we ignore it and hope that someone else deals with it? Maybe if we're bold, we rebuke them with self-righteousness and superiority that crushes them.

Would that be a good model? Or do we 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 one, to challenge them to keep their old self nailed to the cross, not so they can become a real Christian again.

[7 : 11] They're already children of God. I think that's the spirit of gentleness. Depending on how you feel about the people around you, that will be a challenge.

See, carrying others' burdens will challenge the way you involve yourself here at church. It will challenge your investment of time and emotional energy in others. It will certainly challenge our understanding of privacy and politeness.

It will challenge how much you pray for other people. Challenge what you pray for other people. It will challenge getting on top of sins in your own life. It will challenge whether you join a small group or prayer triplet or accountability partnership.

It will be very challenging to help others carry their burden for sin. But it will be very encouraging too. You see, it's encouraging to know that we are not alone in the battle with sin.

Last week we said that the Christian life was a running race. It's encouraging to know you have running buddies to help you carry your burden, to get you to that finish line. It's encouraging to know that if you fall in sin, you will be gently restored here, not peer pressured or judged.

[8 : 30] And so permission to help you in the battle, to help carry your burden. I give you permission to help me as well. That's how brothers and sisters live in a family.

Paul says we need to watch out for one another. Our sinful flesh would love it if Holy Trinity was a place where no one cared for carrying others' burdens, where sins ran unchecked, where it's every man for himself.

The flesh loves the consumer church model, where you turn up to church, you get what you want, and then you go home. That is indulging the flesh from last week.

Not walking by the Spirit. Paul thinks that will happen if people think like verse 3. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.

You see, if I think I am something when I'm obviously not, I will think I'm too good to help you. If my ego can't handle some gentle restoration, then I won't have you, brothers and sisters, butting into my personal life.

[9 : 39] If I look down on brothers and sisters who need help, then I'll assume it's their sin to deal with, that it's their own fault in the first place. Paul says, I deceive myself. In verse 1, it's watching out for others, but the end of verse 1, it's watching out for yourself.

Verse 2, carry each other's burdens, but verse 5, carry your own. This is not a contradiction, because verse 5 is about giving that final account before God.

You see, the reason to watch ourselves is verse 4. It says, each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.

See, as we watch out for one another, as we help one another in the battle with sin, the temptation will be to compare ourselves to other people.

Paul says, to stop that happening, don't be proud of yourself in comparison to someone else. the reason why, in the final analysis, it will just be me and God.

[10 : 48] You see, I won't be able to bring those struggling brothers and sisters to the day of judgment and say, see God, I'm better than them. Can I come in now? Point one, we need to watch out for others as we watch out for ourselves.

Point number two, we need Bible teaching. Look at verse 6. Nevertheless, the one who receives instructions in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

This command about Bible teaching, it comes out of nowhere, or so it seems, but I think it fits with verse 7 to 8. Verse 7 to 8 says, 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.

It seems to come out of nowhere, this passage about Bible teaching, but being taught the word of God is how we sow to the Spirit. That's the language in verse 8.

[11 : 50] Bible teaching nourishes and feeds our Christian roots, if you like. It helps us to fight against the flesh from last week. The Bible is the seed, if you like.

As we're taught the Bible, the Spirit works through this seed to produce godly fruit in us, loving others, for example. And I love how practical verse 6 is.

He says, Get your wallets out. You see, if we know we're in a battle against the flesh, if we want the Spirit to win, what do we do? Paul says, Get your wallets out and support your Bible teachers.

Lots of people will find that a challenge because perhaps they're not giving financially to support ministry, or maybe they're not giving sacrificially enough. Clearly, lots of you already do, and so we thank the Lord for you.

For some, the challenge will be thinking about money in spiritual terms. See, we're used to thinking about our money at Woolies. We're used to getting our wallets out at Woolies to pay for food. We're used to paying for gas and electricity for heat and light.

[12 : 59] We're used to putting money into our pension to fund our retirement. But why don't we think about supporting Bible teachers with the same conviction and clarity?

Some people will find it a challenge that we don't give more money to the poor. The reason why is because we believe Galatians. See, we believe that poverty isn't humanity's biggest problem.

It's getting right with God, that is. We think the gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified is the only thing that saves rich and poor people alike.

See, where else would you hear about walking with the Spirit if not for our Bible teachers? Which TV program this past week encouraged you or challenged you to fight the flesh?

Which magazine or radio program encouraged you to stick with the cross alone, that you're free in Christ? Money and church together are always going to feel like a challenge.

[14 : 03] but be encouraged that our money, mine too, is for the spiritual health of the people sitting around you.

It nurtures souls or it sows to the Spirit is the language in verse 8. And just like point 1, it is possible to be deceived here also.

You see, in verse 3, it was the proud believer who thinks they're something when they're not. In verse 7, it's the complacent believer who doesn't nurture his soul.

Remember last week, flesh and spirit were two corners in a boxing match. Today, they're two fields. And the question is, which one are you going to sow to? Sowing to the Spirit will make church and Bible times, Kingdom Growth Night on Wednesday, it will make them priorities in our diary so they don't get bumped by social or work or maybe leisure activities.

You see, we know what happens to a garden over time after years of neglect. Why do we assume that our souls will cope with the same sorts of neglect?

[15 : 16] Maybe it's because we overdo freedom in Christ. Maybe we wonder, why can't we prioritize what everyone out there does? Why can't we sow a bit of gossip or just a little bit of anger, a little bit of impurity to our soul?

The challenge is verse 7. Do not be deceived. A man reaps what he sows. God cannot be mocked.

Verse 9 and 10 speak about doing good. It's not just listening to the Bible, listening to your teachers, but living it out, doing good that sows to the Spirit.

All of these priorities challenge our emotional and physical energy. No one said spiritual farming was easy, but be encouraged when the harvest is eternal life.

Point one, we need each other. Point two, we need Bible teachers. These things don't make us more Christian. These are just the nuts and bolts of living out Christian life.

[16 : 21] What I want to do is look at some case studies to show you what this might look like in practice. So, the first case study, church attendance. Sometimes attending church is a real challenge.

The religion of work says you must attend every week. And if you don't attend, you should feel guilty. That is Galatians. We are free in Christ.

Remember, we don't earn our way to God. So, if you're finding church attendance particularly difficult, maybe it was the flu that pretty much got everyone this season.

Maybe, for another reason, you're finding church particularly hard, then please feel encouraged to stay home. That's fine. Feel encouraged that you are free in Christ.

Be encouraged that ours is not a religion of works. But for other people, Galatians 6 says we need each other and we need Bible teaching.

[17 : 22] And so, it challenges our laziness or lack of priority. I'm sure you've experienced this, but many times in my life I've felt lazy or selfish or a bit umming and ahing about going to church and then I make the effort anyway and I go and I found it was so worth the while.

What I learnt that day or how I encouraged someone was so worth my effort. I'm sure you've felt the same way too. That's church attendance.

The other one I want to talk about is small group attendance. Sometimes it's a challenge to get along to a small group or a prayer group or to be part of one because they're at tricky times not the reserved sort of Sunday morning which we all have blocked out.

In my group, I'm in a few groups, but in my groups we go around the circle and we ask each other for prayer points. There's a couple in my group who have in their 70s they've got adult children and both of their adult children have terrible life-threatening health issues and every week they seem sort of exhausted by this as you would expect and they feel sort of shy for asking for the same things to be prayed for every week but everyone else in the group loves hearing from them.

We love to pray for them we love to help them carry their burdens even if it's for the hundredth time praying the same thing and of course in a small group we feed one another with the word.

[18 : 54] See don't come to church or small group or kingdom growth night on Wednesday don't come to look good come because it will do you good because it will nurture your soul in other words it sows to the spirit a church and bible priority expects or reaps a harvest of eternal life the final case study I want to do is holidays sometimes church and bible feel like a chore we can all admit that and we think that holiday time is my free time free from I'm free from chores like the vacuuming and the dishes and so we leave the bible and the church at home till we come back from the beach and we might feel guilty about it but remember that is not galatians we are free in christ these things don't earn our place with god but they are a privilege of being in his family you see you're you me we are children of god brothers and sisters we have his spirit living inside us if you can why wouldn't you nurture your soul why wouldn't you sow to the spirit why wouldn't you visit the local church down at the beach or pack your bibles in your suitcase as well listen to a podcast while you're away why should the beach be an excuse not to nurture your soul now just to clarify with all these case studies we're not talking about a roll call we're not talking about a witch hunt to achieve some sort of standard that is the legalism of

Galatians we are free in Christ but I do want to challenge laziness and a lack of priority in a gentle way because a laziness and a lack of priority maybe a bit of selfishness it will only make the battle against the flesh harder if left unchecked if left untended your garden will end up in corruption so there are Paul's challenges and some encouragements and some examples and I want to finish with point three which wraps up the whole letter of Galatians have a look over the page in verse 11 so so in verse 11 Paul talks about writing in big letters so clearly Paul has a big point to make about boasting and now look at verse 13 halfway through he says not oh sorry at the start 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

Paul on the other hand verse 14 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 the new creation this is the bottom line of Galatians it's what mature churches like ours who are running well need to hear and here it is where is your boasting is it in conformity to religious works and moral performance such as circumcision and church attendance religious trappings or is my boast with Paul solely in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ do we understand how dangerous our sinful fleshly selves are that they need to be battled do we realize that getting right with God needs a better solution than religion can offer that we need to be a totally new creation born again by the spirit from inside when we test our work before the

Lord can we confidently say verse 14 that we are never boasting in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ you see to the proud to the self righteous to the religious the cross will always be a challenge because it says nothing they do can 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 sin and their own battle with the flesh the cross is encouragingly glorious news because that is where Jesus takes the curse that we deserve to redeem us back that's where he makes us right with God that is where we are made totally new creations verse 18 the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with your spirit brothers and sisters amen let me pray father god we thank you for this gem of a letter and father we confess that our trust is only in the blood of Jesus we thank you that we are free in Christ from having to earn our way to you father please help us not use this freedom to indulge our flesh but rather to fight to serve one another in love father please give us our priority of nurturing our soul of church and bible teaching please would you help us father our flesh is always raging against us we ask these things in Jesus name amen