

MBC – 7/31/2022 – Pastor Doug Thompson
 PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS – GOSPEL FREEDOM
“Bear One Another’s Burdens”
 Galatians 5:26-6:1-5

Last Sunday we looked at what it means to walk in step with the Holy Spirit. We saw the fruit that walking in step with the Spirit produces. This morning we’re going to see how walking in the Spirit affects our relationships with our brothers in sisters in Christ – isn’t the very first fruit of the Spirit, love? What we’re going to see this morning will affect the future of MBC.

- Galatians 5:25–6:5 ²⁵If we live by the Spirit – zoe_ - if we have eternal life through the Spirit – let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Then Paul warns of the bad fruit when we don’t) ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. ¹Brothers, 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. ²Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

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I. Your opinion of yourself determines the way you treat others.

One of my wife’s hobbies is researching strange illnesses – I think she got it from watching too many episodes of “House.” But her current favorite is *Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (NPD), which has been labeled as a bona fide mental health disorder in the prestigious Diagnostic and Statistics Manual (DSM). Here are some of the traits of the person with NPD:

- Feels grandiose and self-importance, exaggerates achievements and talents to the point of lying, demands to be recognized as superior.
- Firmly convinced that he or she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, should only be treated by, or associate with, other special or unique, or high-status people.
- Requires excessive admiration, adulation, attention and affirmation – or, failing that, wishes to be feared and to be notorious.
- Feels entitled. Expects unreasonable or special and favorable priority treatment. Demands automatic and full compliance with his or her expectations;
- Is "interpersonally exploitative", i.e., uses others to achieve his or her own ends;
- Devoid of empathy. Is unable or unwilling to identify with or acknowledge the feelings and needs of others;
- Arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes coupled with rage when frustrated, contradicted, or confronted.

I read recently that narcissists are terrible listeners because they only care about what *they* have to say!

Now maybe you have seen these symptoms in people you know. NPD is also known by another title: SPS = “Selfish Pig Syndrome!” The biblical title is “the fruit of the flesh.” It’s not a mental disorder, it’s all of us to one degree or another when we are controlled by our flesh, not by the Holy Spirit – can I get an amen? The article I read went on to say: “Treatment can help, but this condition can’t be cured.”

Well that's not true. And our passage for this morning might just be what the doctor ordered! Look at 5:26 again—

A. A conceited attitude.

- ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The key word in this verse is the word "*conceited*," the Gk. word means "empty glory," "vain-glory." It's having a puffed-up, over-inflated view of yourself. You think more highly of yourself than you should, considering the facts (!), and you think more *about* yourself and your feelings, and what *you* want – than you think about other people and their feelings and their desires. Selfish Pig Syndrome. Paul warns us against this attitude. If you have this view of yourself, Paul says, you will *provoke* other people and *envy* other people. It works like this—

- When you think you really are superior to other people, you want to prove it – so you challenge people to arguments – you want to debate the facts on some issue – to have an opportunity to show off your superior intellect. Have you been involved in a debate like that recently? And who did the most talking? The one who thinks he/she is the smartest.
- Or, if you see yourself as superior to others, in the rare instance that you run into someone whom you think *is* smarter or more attractive, or has more success than you – you envy them. You are jealous of them. You want what they have, because after all, *you* deserve it – not them!

Look at what Paul says to this person – he's blunt—

- Galatians 6:3 ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

"You think you are superior to others? Too *good* to help others with their burdens and weaknesses? In your mind!"

But Paul is pointing out something that we need to drill into our minds and hearts: *the way we treat others is determined by our opinion of ourselves.* (repeat) You might think, "No, the way I treat others is because of my opinion of them," but actually, it has more to do with your opinion of yourself – do you see yourself as better than them? More important than them? That has everything to do with how you treat them, and whether or not you desire to help them.

B. The Christ attitude.

This same word for *conceit* or empty glory is found in another passage that some of you are already thinking of, so let's turn to—

- Philippians 2:3–4 ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or *conceit*, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Do you see here that your opinion of yourself will determine how you treat others, and this is why Paul say, don't do anything out of a puffed up, exaggerated view of yourself. Guard yourself from this sin! Beloved, at the root of *every conflict* is self-centered pride. Someone, or more than one, is saying, "I want

what I want, and I deserve to have what I want. I'm going to *get* what I want!" We saw it in our study of James—

- James 3:16 ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Call it *narcissism* if you like, but it's behind every church fight and church split. It's behind every divorce. Think about the last conflict or fight you had with another person: prideful selfishness was at the root of it – guaranteed. Now maybe you think it was selfishness on the part of the other person – but it still takes two selfish people to have a fight. *The moment someone dies to self, the fight is over because you can't fight with a dead person!*

And what is the solution? *To allow the Spirit of God to change your opinion of yourself!* Look at it in v.3: "*But in humility,*" the word means *lowliness of mind*. The Greeks used this word as a term of derision. Lowliness of mind was the mark of a loser. But it's the mark of greatness in the kingdom of God.

- This is the opinion you should have of yourself: Lowliness of mind doesn't mean an inferiority complex! It doesn't mean that you hang your head and feel sorry for yourself. No, it means that you see yourself in your proper relationship to God. Look at how He has had mercy on you – a sinner – and how He rescued you, and lifted you up to the heavenly places in Christ, and made you His child, all out of His mercy and grace – now shouldn't that make you a humble, gracious person toward others? In the sight of God are you really better than any other image-bearer? Do you deserve His grace and mercy, but they don't?

So if this is your opinion of yourself, it will show up in your relationships with others: "*in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*" It doesn't mean that you think everyone else is better than you or smarter than you – it means that you voluntarily choose to put them before yourself. You choose to put their needs ahead of your own.

- Romans 12:10 ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.

I *choose* to put you before me. Phil.2:4 explains v.3—

- ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Instead of just asking, "But what about *my* needs? What about *my* side of the argument?" We ask, "What about my brother, what about my sister? What about their point of view, and their feelings? What do they need, and how can I help them?" Do you ask those questions?

It's as simple as this: We will get along in our families, in our marriages, and here at MBC to the extent that we are *humble*. We will argue and fight and be petty and divisive to the extent that we are *proud* and *self-centered*. Someone has to die. And it needs to be "self."

- You just can't get a good fight going with a bunch of dead people! And of course, this is all illustrated by our Lord Jesus, the sinless Son of God, who is worthy of all praise and honor and worship because He shares the glory of God! But He chose to treat us as more important than Himself – isn't that the Gospel?

Our Lord Jesus is the most sensitive, caring, giving Man who ever lived. Do you ever read about Him pouting because His feelings were hurt? “Peter, you were being mean to Me!” Never. He is the flesh and blood example of what Phil.2:3-4 is teaching. Let’s read on—

- ⁵Have this mind (this attitude) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled (that word for *lowliness of mind*) humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus wasn’t thinking about His own comfort when He went to the cross. He was thinking of your salvation. Even though He is God – let that sink in – He counted your soul as more important than His earthly life. He was looking to your interests, not His own.

Now let’s go back to Galatians and look at the heart of this passage which is in—

II. Bear one another’s burdens

- Galatians 6:2 ²Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This is the way your Christ-attitude will show itself in your marriage, in your home and in our church. We will bear one another’s burdens. Paul assumes we all have burdens. I think he’s right, don’t you? And the other assumption is that God doesn’t expect us to carry them alone, but He expects His children to help each other. Yes, we cast all our cares on Him (1Pet.5.7), but it’s God’s design to lighten our loads through others in the church family – we are to be His mouth to encourage, His arms to carry, His shoulder to cry on. It’s the way He builds up His body. I think Rudi shared that last Sunday – it’s through every part helping, loving, and lifting.

Paul and Titus

There was a time in Paul’s life when he hit the bottom emotionally. He had written a hard letter to the church at Corinth and he was worried sick that it had put a rift between him and them. He said in—

- 2 Corinthians 7:5–6 . . . our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

God sent Paul a friend! Paul had no doubt prayed, cast all his cares on the Lord, but God answered through a person. A brother in Christ. Sometimes, sometimes, God answers immediately, directly – we get an overwhelming feeling of peace, a surge of inner strength – but beloved, He usually answers through you – or me – another member of the family—

- I always think of that story about the guy who was caught in a flood. The water was rising in his house until he had to climb out on the roof, but he prayed for God to save him. A boat came by and they said, “Get in!” The guy said, “Nope, God will save me!” Another boat came by, same thing. The water kept rising and the guy drowned. He shows up in heaven and first thing, he says to God, “God what’s up, I prayed that You would save me, and look, here I am!” God said, “That’s funny. I sent two boats for you. . . .”

Maybe God has sent you someone to bear your burden, have you accepted the help? And do you bear the burdens of others? Do you *know* of the needs in the body? Are your antennae up – listening – trying to pick up the signals? None of us like to ask for help – which goes back to point one: we think more highly of ourselves than we ought – we can bear our own burdens – and our pride won't allow us to ask for help, or even to ask for prayer – are you listening? Especially us men: we will break our backs trying to solve some problem before we ask for help, and all that does is give us a sore back and rob someone else the blessing of bearing our burden.

- So burden-bearing in the body of Christ is a **two-way deal**: we have to let our needs be made known and be willing to ask for help. And then we need to be ready and available to help. I think we have more trouble with the first part than the second, don't you?

What kind of burdens does Paul have in mind here?

1.) It can be **physical burdens**: they need help with something that heavy; something that is broken; they need something moved – like a trailer! They need wood split. These are kinds of things that our men are so good at.

But it can also be things that the gals are good at: helping to clean, cook meals, sewing, send cards (Dede has such beautiful handwriting!) babysit, and you can think of other physical needs.

2.) Then there are the **emotional and spiritual burdens**. And these burdens can feel even heavier than physical burdens: People are sad, lonely, struggling with their faith, struggling in their marriage, struggling with their kids. These burdens can be overwhelming. Will you help bear their burden – by giving a call, sending a text with some Scripture? Taking out a couple hours to have coffee? What can you do to show that you care, and that God cares for them?

- And of course, you bear another's burden when you pray for them – if someone shares a burden, pray for them, right then, in the lobby after church – on the phone – at the coffee shop. And let them know that you will keep praying. I have a friend who emails a list of things he and his family is praying about for our family, every night! And he wants to know how God is answering! Recently when I told him I needed encouragement, he sent this list back to me to remind me how God has been answering! What a load lifted!

*If you need a jump start here, just ask yourself : “What have others done that have lifted my load, physically, emotionally, or spiritually?” When have you felt *lighter* because someone helped you? Now go and do that for someone else!

God puts burdens in our church family to knit us together in love: the one bearing the burden is showing love. The one whose burden is lifted, loves back. And everyone watching sees the love of Jesus expressed by His people – “*yet not I, but through Christ in me.*” And this spreads and becomes contagious, until everyone is looking out for each other, and people don't need to be concerned about themselves:

- **Another person died and went to heaven** – not the dumb guy on the rooftop – and when he sat down at the big banquet table he notice that the spoons and forks had handles that were 10' long! He said to the person next to him, “How in the world am I supposed to eat with these when I can't reach my mouth?” The person said, “Oh, in heaven, we all feed each other!”

Let's try that at the next church potluck . . . In v.1, Paul gives us one particular burden that weighs all of us down, often. And it's a burden that we need to help others with—

III. One particular burden.

- Galatians 6:1 ¹Brothers, 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.

1.) What happened?

A brother or sister was “caught in a transgression,” the word has the idea that they were caught red-handed – overtaken by surprise. You think of the woman caught in adultery in John 9. I remember years ago when my best friend at the time – a solid Christian – went out on a job and had the customer make the check out to him instead of the company he worked for. But he was “caught in his transgression.” And everyone was surprised. But it can happen to any of us when we aren't walking in step with the Spirit.

- But Paul is so gracious here, isn't he? Wasn't Jesus gracious with that woman? Just as He was so gracious with the woman at the well in Samaria, who was surprised that Jesus knew about her immorality.

*How do you respond when you discover some sin in a brother or sister – what's your first reaction? Is it anger? Do you want them to pay for what they have done? Or do you treat them as one sinner to another? It might be you who is caught the next time.

2.) Who is to help?

“You who are spiritual.” Some people think this is the super-spiritual elite in the church. I don't buy that! He's just been talking about the Holy Spirit in every believer. I think he's saying, “You Spirit-people – all of you Christians –help your fellow Spirit-people when they stumble.” All of us could say, “Oh, but who am I to confront so-and-so, I'm not perfect either.” That's just a cop out. If you saw that person struggling to lift a sofa, you would get on one end and help. This is the same thing: Get the log out of your own eye and go, help your brother or sister—

Brethren, see poor sinners round you
slumbering on the brink of woe;
Death is coming, hell is moving
can you bear to let them go?
See our fathers and our mothers
and our children sinking down;
Brethren, pray, and holy manna
will be showered all around.

It's interesting that Paul doesn't say, “Go and admonish them!” Some places he does – and sometimes we do. This seems like a case when someone has stumbled, they know it, and they are sorry – and they need help to get on their feet again. So—

3.) *What is to be done?*

- you who are spiritual should *restore him* in a spirit of gentleness.

Restore was a word used for mending fishing nets, or setting a bone. It means “to restore to its former condition.” Isn’t that what we want to see when a brother or sister falls? Luther said, “Run to him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.” Isn’t that how you want others to treat you when you fall?

He says “*In a spirit of gentleness*” – the way you treat a person who is already hurting. What an impact it can have on a person who is expecting you to come down with thunder and judgment – but instead you are gentle and soft. Parents: that can have a life-changing impact on your children.

- Plus, it’s fun to see the surprised look on their faces.

Most of you know Matthew 18– the “church discipline” passage, but what is Jesus’ tone and what is the goal? Do you remember? Listen—

- Matthew 18:15 ¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone (keep it on the down-low, for the sake of love). If he listens to you, you have *gained* your brother. (and that is the goal!)

Paul was just repeating our Lord here: “When a brother or sister stumbles – even when it is against you, *you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.*”

Now someone is in danger in this passage – and it’s not who we would think!

4.) *What is the danger?*

- “Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

Paul could mean here that you might fall into the same temptation that tripped up your brother or sister. Be very careful! I know a pastor who wanted to help a teenager who was hooked on cocaine so they took this girl into their home. Within a year, that teen led their own teenage daughter into a heroin addiction, and she ran away from home.

- I know some Christians have a ministry of reaching out to sex-workers and those in the porn industry. That’s not for everyone! If you have to get into the dirt to help rescue someone, wear rubber gloves! Even listening to them talk about their sin might stir up temptations.

But “*watch yourself, lest you too be tempted,*” can also mean, “Be aware of the pride that can come from helping someone overcome their sin or their problem.” You might see yourself as some spiritual hero. You are a counselor – ooooh. And pride comes before, what? A fall. And it’s ironic but it’s a spiritual principle: you will tend to fall into the same sin you judge others for—

- Some of us remember back in the 80’s when Jim Bakker was exposed as a fraud and a rapist – Jimmy Swaggart was leading the pack to see him punished for his sin – and a few months later that Swaggart was exposed for being a fraud, and visiting prostitutes.

- When you go to help your brother caught in sin, “*Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*”

Again, our Lord Jesus gives us just the right advice—

- Matthew 7:4–5 ⁴How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! *First* get rid of the log in your own eye; *then* you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

It gets back to our question: What is your opinion of yourself? Do you say, “That would never be me,” or, “There but for the grace of God, go I.”?

Then in v.4, Paul tells us, “Instead of judging others, here is where you should be looking—

IV. Where judging belongs.

- Galatians 6:4–5 ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.

We aren’t God, we can’t see inside the heart of another person. We don’t know what secret burdens they are carrying: We might think they should be doing more, they should be doing better. But God sees that they are doing as much as they can – and maybe if you were in their shoes, you wouldn’t handle it half as well. Amen?

So instead of judging them, help them! If you want to judge someone, start with yourself. And this explains the next verse—

- ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

It sounds like Paul is contradicting himself: Bear one another’s burdens – each will bear his own load. But he is uses two different words here, one for burden and one for load. And he’s talking about two different things—

- In v.3, we are to be on the look out for brothers and sisters who need our help with their burden: physical, emotional, or spiritual – or helping to load a moving truck on Wed. Aug.24th, 9:00 – lunch will be provided!

But there is a load that we will each have to bear alone and that is our accountability before God on the day of judgment. So examine your *own* heart, and your *own* motives. Let’s listen to Paul in—

- 1 Corinthians 4:3–5 ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment (on others) before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Examine yourself, don't judge others. He says it again in—

- Romans 14:4 ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.
- Romans 14:10 ¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
- Romans 14:12 ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Let me sum the precious counsel in this passage—

- 1.) The way we treat others is determined by our opinion of ourselves.
- 2.) Have the attitude of our Lord Jesus and count others as more important than yourself.
- 3.) Help others with their burdens, especially the burden of their sins.
- 4.) Judge yourself, not others.

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Back in Exodus 17, the Israelites were minding their own business, wandering in the desert, when they came up against the Amalekites, a group of nomadic raiders that attacked them. Joshua led the troops into battle while Moses, along with Aaron and Hur, watched the battle from a nearby hill. And God's plan for victory had as much to do with Moses, Aaron, and Hur, as it did with Joshua. Listen to this—

- Exodus 17:11–12 ¹¹Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹²But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Who's holding up your arms? Do you have people in your life who come along and stay with you and pray with you and put their shoulder to your burdens? What God is showing us this morning is that He gives us burdens that we can't bear alone, so that we have to lean on our brothers and sisters. That is His divine plan for knitting us together in love.

- Many years ago Phil and Rhonda needed their arms held up when their young son Josh took a 30' fall and was in the hospital with a serious brain injury. They didn't want to leave Josh's side so the church family took care of things at home and prayed and prayed. And *their hands were steady until the going down of the sun.*

*This church family has held up the arms of brothers and sisters going through cancer, kidney transplants, wayward kids and just the hard stuff of life, for over 40 years – and beloved, that is what makes us a family, even more than what comes from this pulpit.

So do you need an Aaron and Hur right now? They aren't mind-readers! Ask for their help. And you are someone else's Aaron or Hur! Who needs you to come alongside them and help to hold up their arms?