

Led By the Spirit to One Another! – Part 2

Galatians 6:1-5

Series: No Other Gospel #25

Congregational Prayer:

Introduction: Take your copy of the Scriptures and join me in Galatians 6 – Galatians chapter 6.

I assume by your being here today that you have some level of interest in being a spiritual person. You know the great difficulties of a life without some kind of spiritual foundation and hope, and so you want to be spiritual. Being spiritual is obviously a very vague way of speaking about things isn't it? What exactly is meant by someone being spiritual? Well, in our cultural context there is great interest in being spiritual, and it is defined in almost any and every way you can imagine. In fact, over the last 20 years we have created a new category of people identified as "spiritual, but not religious." These are those people who say they want to be spiritual, but who don't want anything to do with organized religion. A simple walk into a secular book store to browse their burgeoning "spirituality/self-help" section will show you that most people would like to define their spiritual journey in their own terms, often absent of any other authority. This individualistic and self-defined approach is fairly prevalent in the church at large as well. So, we may still be a part of "organized religion" as it were, but we still think the truly spiritual people are defined by their individual experiences, even within the experience of church life.

So, many would think that the truly spiritual person is the one who finds the secret to dynamically practice the disciplines of the spiritual life – Bible reading, prayer, fasting, personal spiritual retreats – all as pathways to a deeper personal spiritual journey. This has led many Christians to pursue the dangerous paths of mystical meditation where they empty their minds and wait to hear from "God" – all in pursuit of being more spiritual. Others would think of true spirituality as an exciting spiritual experience. They long for the next mountain top experience or they long for some supposed miraculous "power encounter" with the Holy Spirit. In their minds they divide the Church between the have's and the have not's based on whether or not they have some evidence of a great work of the Spirit in their lives, by which they mean some great and obvious experience of the Spirit's power. For still others, true spirituality is defined by going through the ritual of public worship. Having just the right liturgy or the right music or the perfect order of service gives some a feeling of increased spirituality and therefore causes them to think that this experience is what defines true spirituality.

Galatians has given us a different definition – an authoritative definition. True spirituality is not something we get to define, nor is it something we can produce through our own self-effort. True spiritual life is won for us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is life, and only in Him are we able to know and experience this true and abundant and eternal life. And the life of Jesus is given to us through the work of the Spirit applying His regenerating grace

in us to cause us to be born again to this new life. On our side of the equation this looks like hearing the Gospel and responding to that Gospel with repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God then takes residence within us and grows and nurtures this true life. His work in us produces His fruit, and what we have seen over the last few weeks is that this fruit is not meant for our private enjoyment. In other words, true spirituality is not shown in self-fulfilling personal and individualistic things. Rather, true spirituality – where the Spirit of God is growing us in Christ and producing His fruit in us – this kind of spirituality will show itself in how we relate to one another in the body of Christ. Being reconciled to God by grace, we will now live out that reconciliation in loving relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just like we saw last week – the truly spiritual one will be one who is led by the Spirit of God toward the church of God. Life in the Spirit is a community life – a life with and for one another. Life in the Spirit is not self-realized and self-actualized and self-serving and self-pleasing. Life in and by the Spirit of God is a life directed toward one another in the body of Christ.

John Stott in his commentary on this passage says that this paragraph is the New Testament answer to the age old question posed by Cain in Genesis 4 – Am I my brother's keeper? The Spirit of God's answer to your heart's question is – if he is your brother or if she is your sister then yes, you are their keeper. Truly spiritual people are empowered by and led by the Spirit of God toward one another. In verse 1 we saw what this meant in the specific context of the family of God and in light of sin within this family. We are not a perfect family, and when we fall into sin, we have been given specific Spirit-ordained ways to deal with it in order to restore one another. The lesson from verse 1 is that truly spiritual people restore their sinning brother or sister in gentle and humble ways. Verses 2-5 point us to 3 more truths about spiritual people. Truly spiritual people bear burdens and avoid conceit and test themselves. If the Spirit of God is at work in you and if you are being empowered by His grace and led by His truth, then these things will be true in you. You will bear burdens, you will avoid conceit and you will test yourself. As we read the passage this morning, I am going to start at 5:25 and read through 6:5.
Read.

If we are truly spiritual people in that we are in Christ by grace through faith, and we are being enabled, empowered, and directed by His Holy Spirit, then these things will be true in us. We will bear burdens, avoid conceit, and test ourselves.

I. Spiritual People Bear Burdens – vs. 2

- a. Verse 2 confronts us immediately with the ongoing responsibility of the spirit-led person. They are to be bearing the burdens of others. These others who are their concern are the “one-another's.” This is the same context of verse 1 which started with the term – brothers, or brethren. This is a family of God issue. This is a church issue. This Spirit of God always leads us into greater investment and care and concern for the local body of Christ. He never leads us away from one another. So, we saw last week that when someone sins in this family, and we will, then the Spirit-led people – the spiritual ones – are to restore them with a spirit of gentleness and humble awareness.

- b. Now, here in verse 2 those spiritual people are to be about the business of bearing the burdens of others. These burdens in verse 2 can have the idea of moral failure – of sin – and this makes good sense in this context. We have just been told what to do when a brother is caught in sin, and now we are commanded again to bear their burdens. You can be sure that the restoration process is going to be loaded with burdens which must be carefully and gently handled together. Restoration from sin is not a simple process of one confrontation and then you move on. No, restoration takes extended effort combined with labors of love to help your brother or sister walk in the grace and the righteousness of Christ. To truly restore someone takes fervent prayer, frequent times together, and constant care. In that way, we are to bear the burdens of one another – especially in this context of being caught in a sin.
- c. But the text is not restricted to only this idea of being caught in sin. It certainly means that, but that is just the launching point. The concern of the body of Christ for one another expands here into every possible burden they might carry which becomes too difficult for them to bear. Kind of like when you see someone carrying a box or a load that is obviously too much for them. You can't help but step in and help them out. Well, beloved, there are people all around you in the body of Christ who are carrying loads which are too heavy for them to carry by themselves. The Spirit of God has placed you in the same body with them because He intends to lead you and empower you to help them walk faithfully with this burden. These burdens are heavily pressing down upon those around you – there is the loneliness of the widow or the widower, the grief of the loss of a loved one, the hurt of a difficult marriage, the heartache of a close family member who is walking in open rebellion against the Lord, the fight against a besetting sin, the angst and pain of shattered dreams and an unknown future because of God's strange providence, the struggle to maintain hope in God through physical illness which threatens life and causes chronic pain, the darkness of despair, hopelessness, and spiritual depression, the fear of what might happen if I wholeheartedly pursue God . . . these and a hundred more burdens are being carried in our own church family. These are spiritually back-breaking realities. Like trying to climb Mt. Everest carrying a Sumo wrestler to the top – these brothers and sisters are being crushed under the weight of their burden. And they need help. And God has placed you and me together in this body for the purpose of bearing those burdens together.
- d. There is an assumption by God here in this text that there will be burdens which are too heavy to bear alone. In His good and gracious and sometimes difficult to understand Providence, God places upon His children burdens which require the help of others. This is because God is at work in us to create a true family where real spiritual community develops under the direction of His Spirit and through the transforming power of His grace. The fact is, the human heart is ruggedly individualistic. This is part of the essence of our sinfulness. Having rejected God we have renounced our need for God and for His help, and therefore, the help of others. Our pride tempts us to believe that we can handle it and we can overcome

it. But the beauty of the providential working of God in the Church is that he doesn't let us get away with that. And he corrects that in part by giving us things which bury us so deep that we cannot help but ask for help from others – or we can't help but receive it when they offer.

- e. It is impossible to exhaust all the ways in which you could bear the burdens of others in the body of Christ. The opportunities are endless. But I want to point you quickly to two Biblical ways in which we bear one another's burdens. I am assuming the obvious things – like if you see a physical need that someone in the body has, and you are able to meet it – then as 1 John so clearly says – you should love them and meet the need. So, sometimes, bearing one another's burden is as simple as raking someone's leaves, or mowing their lawn, or helping them move, or helping them paint so they can get their house on the market, or watching their kids so they can go to dinner with their spouse, or fill in the blank. I'm assuming those things because I think they are obvious. But I want to point you two less appreciated and yet super effective ways to bear the burdens of others.
 - i. Being There – 2 Cor. 7:5-6
 - 1. The first is simply being there. In 2 Corinthians 7 Paul writes of the deep affliction that he faced while in Macedonia.
 - a. ⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn-- fighting without and fear within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. (2 Cor. 7:5-7 ESV)
 - 2. God's providential rule of all things had led Paul into a deeply difficult and discouraging time in his ministry life. He saw nothing but conflict on the outside and he knew nothing but fear on the inside. And so, what does he say next? Well, in part you would expect him to say that he ran to God and found in God all the comfort he needed – right? We get that idea from so many of the Psalms which express a solitary trust in God alone. Like Psalm 55:22 which says, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” And texts like 1 Peter 5:7 where we are instructed to cast our cares upon the Lord because He cares for us. But what we see in Paul is that He did look to the Lord and He did cast his burden upon the Lord, and the Lord answered by comforting him through the coming of his brother Titus. Paul affirms that God comforts the downcast, and Paul makes clear that this work of God happened through the coming of his brother to him. This comforted Paul because Titus' presence helped him at just the right moment to bear the burden better. God has designed us to be strengthened by

one another and helped by one another, and sometimes this is simply by being there. Paul was comforted and his burden was made lighter by the fact that Titus was there with him.

3. When I was going through seminary I became very close friends with Jeremy Stephens. We were both part-time youth pastors trying to slog our way through the rigors of the seminary classroom. His church situation was not good, and one afternoon he called me to tell me of yet another difficult staff meeting. But this one was different than the others – he had been told by the Sr. Pastor to resign or be fired. What in the world do you say to your friend who just basically got fired from a ministry position? I had no idea. I don't know why I said this, but I was burdened to show Jeremy and Sarah that Julie and I loved them and wanted to walk through this with them. So, I told him that we were coming to their house and were bringing dinner with us. I have no idea what we talked about and I don't remember anything profound coming out of our mouths, but to this day Jeremy reminds me of that moment and you know what he says – you were there! You made a difference simply by being there with us. Beloved, sometimes the best way you can carry the burden of your brother or your sister is simply to be there with them. Listen to them. Cry with them. Empathize with them. Read Scripture with them. Pray with them. But be there. And we have so many ways to be there with people in this day and age. Nothing can replace actually being there in person, but sometimes you just can't be. But we are so unlimited in the ways we can express our concern for others and in that sense “be there” for them. So you can send them a text letting them know they are on your mind and you're praying for them as they carry this heavy load. Or you can send an email, or make a phone call, or write them on Facebook or Twitter – or actually send them an old-fashioned card in the mail! All of those are wonderful ways to bear burdens with others by being there with and for them in their time of need. Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus.

ii. Prayer – James 5:16

1. The second Biblical and effective way I want to point you to is prayer. James 5:16 says: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”
2. The bearing of one another's burdens is a spiritual issue which requires spiritual people seeking spiritual help from our Father in Heaven. Specifically in James 5 the issue is sin, and the prerequisite is confession of that sin to one another. We are often so unwilling to confess where we are sinful to one another because the response of our brother or sister is so often not to talk to God

about it, but to talk to everyone else about it. But the command in James 5 is to bear one another's burdens by talking to God about it because the frequent and fervent prayer of a spiritual person has great power to bring about the gracious working of God in a life. Don't be the brother or sister who whispers things spoken in secret and ruins someone else's life. Be the brother or sister who takes things spoken in secret to the very throne of grace and beseeches a good and kind Father to act on the behalf of one of his hurting children. Bear one another's burdens by being there and by praying for one another.

f. *And Love Like Christ*

- i. The result of this in verse 2 is that you will then fulfill the law of Christ. If you bear burdens you will love like Christ. This is the law of Christ – to love our neighbor as we love our own selves. We saw that explained back in 5:14 where instead of using our freedom in Christ as an opportunity for the flesh we are to serve one another in love because the whole law is fulfilled in this one word – love your neighbor as yourself. This is what Jesus Christ has done for us and this is the path he calls us to walk in as His Church. He saw our sin – he saw us caught in a trespass as sin violently took over our existence and became our evil taskmaster. And rather than condemn us and destroy us and start over, he became us – he took on our flesh, our existence, our struggle – and he became sin for us – he who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. This is the ultimate act of bearing the burdens of others – the cross work of Christ to free us from the eternally condemning burden of sin.
- ii. So, you and I have the privilege in the body of Christ to follow in that mold. We get to love like Christ by bearing one another's burdens. We have the joyous privilege of fulfilling His law – doing things His way – when we bear each other's burdens. So, your actions toward your burdened brother or sister are a Gospel issue. Having been shown such great love and having your heaviest burden removed by Christ are you now going to stand by on the sidelines of the church and watch as other people are crushed under the weight of their problems? Or, are you going to seize the moment by the empowering grace of God and give yourself to the work of bearing the burdens of others? What you choose to do here will reflect upon the Gospel we proclaim. Your love for one another in this way is a powerful witness to the reality of the burden-lifting Jesus who has saved us from our sin. This is where the Spirit desires to move you and lead you. He empowers you for such ministry, and he is calling you to follow Him and obey Him and engage in the burden bearing ministry within the family of God. When you do, you love like Christ. As Phil

Ryken has said – “Every believer is called to be one of God’s bellhops, always ready to pick up someone else’s baggage.”¹

II. Spiritual People Avoid Conceit – vs. 3

- a. This is coupled with the truth found in verse 3, which is – spiritual people avoid conceit. You will not bear burdens if you are filled with conceit in how you view others in the family. So, verse 3 says, “for if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” A self-deceived Christian is not a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Christian. They are dominated by their flesh and they are producing the works of the flesh. They presume themselves to be higher than others. They think themselves to be something special and unique and above others. This reminds us of what we already learned in 5:26 that how we view ourselves relates directly to how we treat others. If we are conceited – puffed up – thinking more of ourselves than is warranted – then we will provoke and envy and we will not bear one another’s burdens.
- b. Conceit can get along just fine with the outwardly moral person. The “Christian” who is concerned to simply present a good image of spirituality can be one of the most conceited persons in the world. But conceit cannot coexist with true spirituality. The Spirit of God will not direct you to a higher view of yourself and a lower view of others.
- c. This links directly to bearing the burdens of others. We think we are something when we refuse to bear one another’s burdens. This is an epidemic in the church in America. We are largely self-deceived into thinking that we don’t need one another or that we can’t really help or that we shouldn’t help others. So, this conceit shows up in our hearts when we refuse to help someone because we don’t want to get into the mess of the situation. We think the sinful mess is too fraught with danger to invite us diving in, and so we pass by on the other side like the priest and the Pharisee in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is evidence of thinking too highly of ourselves – thinking ourselves to be something when indeed we are nothing.
- d. We also think we are something when we view ourselves as unable to help. We see the burden someone is carrying and we are convinced of our inadequacy to help carry that burden and so we skirt by on the other side of the road. This is nothing more than a false humility which deceives us into thinking that we are small, when in actuality we are thinking way too much about ourselves, and way too little about the empowering and directing work of the Spirit of God within us. Paul knew this would be our tendency so he says this in Romans 15:14 – “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” In other words, Paul was convinced that God had equipped each believer in the church in Rome with what they needed to bear one another’s burdens – they had the goodness of Christ, the knowledge of His truth, and the power of the Spirit to admonish and instruct one another in their time of need.

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary, *Galatians*, pg. 248.

So, where inadequacy is keeping you from engaging in bearing the burdens of others most likely this is the product of a high view of yourself and a low view of God's work in you through His Spirit. If he has put someone in your life who needs your help to carry their burden, God will equip and help you to help them!

- e. We also think we are something when we view ourselves as not needing the help of others in the body. We think we are responsible enough and strong enough to carry our own load. I don't know if you have noticed, but we are big on personal responsibility around here. It is part of our cultural mindset as Americans, but it is especially strong in our unique background and our family upbringing and our church culture. Our business is our business and our need is our need. We are responsible for it and we need to work hard to take care of it. This is right and good in so many ways. We have avoided the victim mentality of our media driven culture which always looks for someone else to blame. But we have also been self-deceived in thinking ourselves to be something when in reality we were nothing. Listen, God has given you burdens, or will give you burdens, which are too heavy for you. This is the assumption of verse 2, and if you are self-deceived you will keep on trying to carry it by yourself. Beloved, sin grows in the dark. That burden of the besetting sin will not go away without bringing it into the light of confession to God and to a trusted brother or sister who can pray with you and for you to be freed from sin's power in that area. That burden of discouragement and depression will likely not go away simply by you pulling your emotional bootstraps up and slogging through the swamp of life. That overwhelming grief of loss or that pain of shattered dreams and an unknown future or that struggle to hope in God when illness and disease are ruining your life – these are burdens which others can and should help you carry. But our own high view of ourselves keeps us from entrusting those burdens to others.

f. *And Think Like Christ*

- i. The ultimate antithesis of our self-deceived puffed up view of ourselves is Jesus. So, if we are going to be the well-functioning family of God which the Spirit desires to make us then we must avoid conceit and think like Christ. This is the message of Philippians 2:5 and following:
 - 1. “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
- ii. So, Jesus was actually something – he was God very God – really and truly God. But he made himself nothing when he saw the burden we were being crushed by. He took human flesh upon himself, took the form of a servant and was obedient to the point of death – even a cross-kind of death. We, however, are nothing and we like to make ourselves something, and when we do we will not put on the mind of Christ and we will not fulfill the law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens.

III. **Spiritual People Test Themselves – vs. 4**

- a. Verses 4 and 5 give us a clear path to fight against our conceit. We must be those who test ourselves. So, the third mark of a spiritual person in our text is that spiritual people test themselves. So verse 4 begins with an adversative conjunction – “but”. Instead of thinking too highly of ourselves as we compare ourselves to others – we must rather test ourselves. This is a present tense command because it is the constant antithesis to conceit. We will not think too highly of ourselves and therefore take ourselves out of fulfilling the law of Christ if we are testing ourselves. This testing ourselves is the purifying test of the fire which gold goes through to determine its purity. This is different than self-oriented introspection which so quickly becomes filled with self-pity and self-loathing. This testing has an outside standard, and it is a testing of your own work. The outside standard is the law of Christ, and our own work to be tested is whether or not we are bearing the burdens of others. The whole point of verses 4-5 is to keep us from self-congratulation in the body which flows out of comparing ourselves with others. If we have the conceited view of thinking too highly of ourselves, then we can always find someone in the family who is doing worse off than we are. This conceited self-congratulation will never produce the humble and gentle and Christ-like attitude in us which will bear the burdens of others in the body. The Spirit of God does not lead us to this, but rather he leads us to be more and more in line with the Law of Christ, and He does this by helping us compare ourselves to Christ, not to one another.
- b. Notice that the command to test ourselves is in the present tense in verse 4, but then the boasting at the end of verse 4 and the bearing of our own load in verse 5 is in the future tense. We will have reason to boast in ourselves alone and not in someone else’s work, and we will have to bear our own load. So, we must test ourselves now so that we are ready for that future day when we will give an account to our Lord as stewards of His great grace.
- c. *And Evaluate Like Christ – vs. 5*
 - i. Verse 5 is the grounding truth of verse 4. Because we will have to bear our own load on some future day, then we should test ourselves now by the standard of Christ. In other words, spiritual people test themselves and therefore they evaluate like Christ is going to on that Day of accounting which is coming for all believers. The alternative is that we judge ourselves by one another, and this will lead to self-loathing introspection which will paralyze our expressions of love for one another, or this will lead to self-congratulating pride which will take away the need to love one another. Instead of this, we ought to take the standard of Christ and the example of Christ and we ought to hold it next to our lives and see how we are doing as a pre-cursor to how we will do on that day of accounting at the Bema seat of Christ. “This kind of honest scrutiny will issue in confession, not competition, in humility, not in vainglory.”²

² Timothy George, NAC, *Galatians*, pg. 418.

- ii. This kind of honest scrutiny will also keep us from excusing ourselves from personal stewardship because others didn't do enough for me. Instead of playing the victim and blaming others for their lack of help, this self-examination will produce a humble and fervent pursuit of loving like Christ as we seek to have the mind of Christ – knowing that one day we will be examined by Christ. That day of future reckoning before your Lord ought to compel humble and fervent pursuit of loving one another in the body by bearing one another's burdens. This is how the Spirit of God is at work in you. He has his eye on that day, and he is at work in you to sanctify and cleanse you and prepare you for that future day. He is leading you and empowering you to fulfill the law of Christ in this way.

Conclusion: So, the question for all of us is, are we spiritual? How would you know? Well, are you being empowered and led by the Spirit of God to bear burdens and therefore love like Christ, to avoid conceit and therefore think like Christ, and to test yourself and therefore evaluate like Christ? Brother or sister – what is the last burden you helped someone else carry? Think back over this past week – how did you help others walk in faithful trust in their Lord? Where there is genuine love flowing out of you for your brothers and sisters in the family of God, know that the Spirit of God is at work in you to produce that. Where there is a lack of this, will you allow God to help you kill conceit as you test yourself in comparison to Christ? Will you allow the Spirit of God to change you through the washing of the water of His Word? Let's pray.