

0330

Pride and prejudice

Galatians 5:25-6:5

Sunday, April 30, 2023

### Text

**<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

**Brothers, 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. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. <sup>5</sup> For each will have to bear his own load.**

### Prayer

### Introduction

Paul was writing Galatians in the first century, long before the dawn of social media.

But as I think about this passage and the problems he's addressing, I think a good analogy for Paul's situation in our modern world are the pitfalls of social media.

On social media, you control what you post.

Which makes it really easy for a person to curate a certain persona of themselves to the world.

You typically don't share pictures of yourself on Facebook where you've just woken up and you look like death warmed over.

If you have kids, you typically share stories about things they do that are sweet or funny. Not them misbehaving or you flipping out at them.

If you talk about your spouse on social media, it's probably their greatest hits. Most likely, it's not recounting the argument you had the other day.

Social media basically allows you to be your own PR person.

And so, one negative is that it allows you to project an image of yourself to the world as always happy, family is always doing good, buttoned up.

Certainly, I'm speaking in generalizations. Some people are more transparent.

But it allows you to project a certain image to the world.

Now for the people who live with you, they know who you really are. To the people who interact with you regularly: a neighbor, a coworker, a relative, they have a good idea of who you really are.

But for the old friend, for the cousin, for the former neighbor who lives across the country or, maybe even, across the world, all they really see about you is what you're sharing.

And so again, it can be really easy to share a certain version of yourself that only shows the good things you do.

But there's another downside to Facebook. Because so many people have a tendency to only show the good things happening, for the active user of social media, it's also to see everyone else's curated lives and think that everyone else around you is so much happier than you are. That everyone else is doing so much better than you're doing.

Again, generalizations.

You get snippets of people's activities, that trip they went on, that game they attended, that great meal they had, that smiling photo with their family and it can create this perception of "they've got it more together than I do."

And so, if we're not careful, social media can easily become the place where we project our own pride to the world or where we become susceptible to envying the lives others have.

It also creates an environment with friendships that are easily controlled and kept at distances. It's easier to do that online than with people who you actually have to see in your daily life. And that's not to say that people cannot make real friendships on social media. I mean, I met my wife on eHarmony.

And again, I go into these details today, because the downsides of social media just magnify existing interpersonal problems that a fallen world has.

Pride, envy, comparisons, superficial relationships.  
All of these ideas will come up in our passage today.

### Bridge

We're resuming our Galatians series this morning. When we were last in this book, Paul was talking about the fruit of the Spirit. For the person who has the Spirit, who has been transformed by the gospel, the Spirit works in us and through us to produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What we see in this passage is a follow up to that as Paul will again talk about the Spirit working in us and the way that influences our relationships with other people.

### Thesis

The main idea of our passage today is that the church is called to be an authentic community in an inauthentic world.

We'll look at our passage in three parts. Pride and envy. Love and friendship. And humility and grace.

With that, we come to our passage this morning.

Pride and envy

Beginning at the end of chapter 5.

Right after Paul has given his treatment on the fruit of the Spirit, he says in verse 25:

**If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.**

At the beginning of the passage, Paul is basically calling on Christians to simply live out the faith that they say they have.

Thomas Schreiner, in his commentary, argues that Paul is also doing this to give his reader pause and to ask themselves if they really believe the gospel in the first place<sup>1</sup>.

And so I'll also ask you that same question.

Do you believe in the gospel? Do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and savior? Do you know that you're a sinner and the only way you can be forgiven is because of the saving work of Christ?

Because if you believe the gospel, then that means you've been born again, and to be born again is to have the Holy Spirit. And to have the Holy Spirit means that you are being transformed from the inside out.

But there is also cooperation with the Spirit involved on our part. It's not like you're filled with the Holy Spirit and now you're living on autopilot.

But as we live for God, as we pursue Christ, as we grow in a relationship with God, as we live by the Spirit, the Spirit is also working in us.

And so everything in this passage is meant to flow from a person who is living by the Spirit, who truly does have faith in the gospel.

Verse 26:

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, [Galatians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 356.

**Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

Conceit is not a word that gets used a huge amount in the English language. In English, it's basically thought of as arrogance or pride. The Greek word that's being translated more literally means "vainglory." Basically excessive pride and vanity in oneself.

And so after Paul has talked about walking in step with the Spirit, the first place he goes is for a person not to have this conceit for themselves.

Because when we're conceited, it becomes a comparison game.

There are two byproducts which result from our need to compare. Either, we will provoke others to envy if we act like we're somehow superior to them, or we ourselves will feel envious towards others.

That's what Paul means when he says:  
**provoking one another, envying one another.**

And the reason why this matters is because this vanity or conceit runs into competition with the command we have to love one another.

It's hard to be loving towards someone you're jealous of or someone you feel you're better than.

But that's what Christians are called to do.

In Galatians 5:14-15 Paul had said:

**the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.**

When Paul gave the fruit of the Spirit, the first example of the fruit of the Spirit was love.

And again, if we feel like we need to show others up, that's not loving.

And again, it works both ways, where we can either live lives of envy where we want what others have, where we're jealous of what others have accomplished. We can be envious of a person's family, of their situation in life, of their possessions, of their looks. There's really no limit to the areas where we can be envious.

The Tenth Commandment commands us against envy and covetousness. It's sinful.

Furthermore, when we fixate on wanting what others have, it keeps us from enjoying God. It is subtly saying that God has not been good to us, that God has not given us enough.

It can consume us, if we're not careful.

That's not to say that we can't have goals or things we're working towards. But when we put off our joy and think that it's on hold until we get to a certain point in life, until we attain something, we're putting our joy in something other than the Lord.

#### Commentary - cultural covetousness

And this challenge is magnified by the fact that our culture sells us on covetousness.

We always need more. We always need more stuff to be happy, we always need more things, more experiences.

We are exposed to advertising all day. TV commercials, ads online, billboards, ads in newspapers and magazines. Radio ads. Product placements in TV shows and movies, ads that get sent to us in email. I have over 60,000 emails currently unopened in my inbox right now. They're all ads. It is a constant inundation.

We tune a lot of these out, but we're exposed to thousands of ads everyday.

And what a lot of marketing campaigns are selling us is "you need this product. This will make your life better, it'll make you feel more complete,

it'll make you more attractive, it's what successful people use, it's what winners use."

Pride and envy.

Illustration - the brain surgeon and the rocket scientist

I recently saw a sketch from a British comedy show.

The scene involves a dinner party. One of the guests walks in. He says "Parking was really tough out there. I had to back in to a tight spot, but I managed. It's not like it's brain surgery."

"And I should know."

A guest at the party says, "Oh, are you a doctor?"

He corrects her. "No, not a doctor, a brain surgeon."

And so he's making small talk with some of the guests at the party, finding out what they do. He keeps making condescending comments about other people's jobs.

Finally, another guest walks in and the host of the party greets him and says "did they keep you at the space station?"

He shrugs it off, "yeah, like always."

And so he starts talking to the brain surgeon. They ask what the other does. The newer guest says "I'm a scientist. I work mainly with rockets. What about you?"

The brain surgeon says "I don't mean to boast, but I'm a brain surgeon."

The new guest is totally unimpressed. He says "it's not exactly rocket science."

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I love this saying, "comparison is the thief of joy."

And again, that works both ways. If a person is prideful and feels like they always need to assert that they're better, there's no real joy in that. It's trying to find joy at the expense of others.

And there's certainly no joy in envy, and being jealous of other people's lives and things.

God doesn't want us obsessing over stuff, but to enjoy him, to love him, to live for him. To know that God is sufficient, his grace is sufficient, his blessings are sufficient.

Our world wants to sell us on prosperity as being the real source of joy. The Bible points to an empty tomb and a living Lord who gives life as the one who brings real joy, peace, belonging, and love.

We come to our second point.

And this really will follow up from our discussion on pride and envy.

Love and friendship

We come to chapter 6, verse 1:

**Brothers, 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.**

What does this have to do with pride and envy?

Because Paul is talking about the heart of the Christian community and the ways in which we love and support each other. And so he is giving the example of a person struggling with sin.

And pride and envy are corrosive to relationships.

It's hard to be loving and restorative in a person's life if you feel they're inferior to you. The danger with envy is that if you're consumed with jealousy, there can be a temptation to not want what's best for a person who's struggling.



Malicious envy is a real thing. If you've ever heard the term: schadenfreude, that's what that refers to. It's a person who finds joy in the misfortunes of others.

Now a prideful or envious person can certainly recognize or point out the sins in someone else. For the prideful person, that's one of their favorite things to do. Find flaws in others. It's what they live for.

But the text says that we are to work to restore that person **in a spirit of gentleness**.

By the way, gentleness is another one of the fruit of the Spirit.

Because restoring a person who is caught in a pattern of sin, or who's fighting a losing battle to sin in his or her life should be with a scalpel, not a chainsaw.

There's a right way and a wrong way to do it. The right way is out of love. The wrong way is out of pride. The right way is with gentleness, the wrong way belittles. The right way is to seek a person repenting and God being glorified. The wrong way seeks to punish.

And so the prideful person CAN try to push a person to repent, but they're not going to be good at it. Because they're coming at it from the wrong place.

God is still gracious even through imperfect people.

But the point is that what the Bible calls us to is to lovingly seek restoration.

The desire to see people turn from sin must come from a love for God and a love for that person. From a desire to honor God but also a desire to see people living for God and walking in the ways of righteousness.

In verse 2, Paul says:

**<sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

When Paul talks about fulfilling the law of Christ, he's referring to the command to love your neighbor as yourself.

We aren't called to be competing with each other, to be fixated on comparing ourselves to others, how our kids are fairing compared to there's, how much more spiritual we are than them.

But as a community of faith, of imperfect people who have a perfect savior, to work together as co-laborers in the gospel.

We are called to authentic community in an inauthentic world.

We are called to bear one another's burdens.

Martin Luther said, "Christians must have strong shoulders and mighty bones"—sturdy enough, that is, to carry heavy burdens<sup>2</sup>."

What are the burdens we bear?

There are many.

Sometimes it's a burden with an area of sin in our lives. That certainly fits the context of the passage, but to exclusively read it in terms of sin is too narrow.

But yes, we support each other in times of sin. What does that look like? It's praying for a person. It's encouraging. It's potentially helping someone with accountability. If it's a struggle that you've shared, it might be sharing from your experience. It's walking with a person in tough times. It's being a friend.

And so yes, as the church, we are to encourage one another in the ways of righteousness and to be living lives which glorify God.

## Gospel

Jesus is the ultimate example of one who bore our burdens. We were dead in sin and he bore the cost of that. We were dead in sin and Jesus died in our place. We were without hope, and Jesus saved us.

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<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, [\*The Message of Galatians: Only One Way\*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 159.

We want to feel so good about ourselves in comparison to some other, sinful person? Jesus is righteous and perfect. He's the Lord, he has mastery over nature, power over life and death, he is the eternal Son of God and is almighty.

he "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

We come to our third point.

Now to this point, there's something that's been left out of this.

Pride and envy and how it harms relationships, our duty to love one another and bear one another's burdens.

Third point.

#### Humility and grace

Part of the heart of bearing one another's burdens and restoring others is because we all need that at times in our lives.

We are not too good to help each other. And one of the blessings which Jesus has given to us is the fellowship of other believers as a community of faith who can love and support one another and bear one another's burdens.

Part of the danger of pride is that it can blind us to our own sinfulness.

Because all of us are sinful. When it comes to us standing before the cross of Christ, none of us have any room for boasting. Apart from Christ, we are all equally dead in our sins. In Christ, all who believe in the gospel are equally forgiven of our sins.

No matter how great you are or how much you have it together, you're still a sinful person.

And so there's no room for us to feel superior.

It's the sick tending to the sick in a fallen world.

Verse 3, Paul says:

**<sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**

You want to be conceited and feel like you're too good, you're not as great as you think you are.

It reminds me of the story from the gospels.

Mark 10:35-39:

**James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." <sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup> And they said to him, "We are able."**

These were in the inner circle of Jesus. They're not as great as they thought they were.

Before the crucifixion, Jesus talks about how the apostles will fall away. Peter says "Not me, Lord. I love you, I'd never do that."

Denies him three times.

No, we're more like the two debtors.

Gospel of Luke, chapter 7.

Two men are both in debt. One owes a lot of money and has it forgiven by his debtor.

The debtor there represents God who forgives.

But the forgiven man is owed a small amount by someone else and he tries to shake the guy down.

Now the point of the parable is about forgiveness, but it's all illustrative of a point that you have two men who are both ultimately in a debt which they cannot pay and need grace for it to be forgiven.

One might have owed less money, but both owed money they couldn't pay.

Earlier I talked about the comparison games we play, and sadly, we can do that with our spiritual lives as well. Feel like we're so much closer to God, so much more prayerful, so much more moral.

I mean, people don't usually admit to it in those terms.

And here's the thing, you might have it more together than someone else in here. So what? You're better than some other sinner? That's like being the most honest person in congress.

All sin and fall short of the glory of God

In verse 1, when Paul talked about bringing restoration when we sin. He says at the end of that verse:

**Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**

Because on this side of heaven, you are never so sanctified, you are never so mature in your faith that you are beyond temptation and sin.

You never outgrow it, you never get past it.

Last two verses of the passage. 4-5:

**let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. <sup>5</sup> For each will have to bear his own load.**

The heart of these last two verses is that we shouldn't be focused on grading others. We should focus on ourselves and our own walk with the Lord, and worry about ourselves.

Don't worry about how you measure up to other people. Acknowledge that you don't measure up to a perfectly and holy God, but that he offers grace and forgiveness.

Our focus on others should be to serve and help people.

### Conclusion

I'll close with this.

Returning to the idea of bearing one another's burdens.

Now, I'll lovingly call this church out on one thing.

I think there are lots of people who are more than happy to lineup to help someone. Which is great.

But some of us aren't as good at speaking up when we might actually be the one who needs help. I think that's the German influence.

It's ok to need help sometimes.

Needing a helping hand isn't weakness. It's not necessarily anything that's directly your fault. Sometimes people face disasters that are totally beyond their control.

We talked about pride in the beginning. When we're struggling or going through really tough times and we don't speak up, that can also come from a place of pride. Not wanting to look weak, fearing what others might think of us.

You might think "well I don't want to be a burden." But the Bible calls us to bear one another's burdens. It doesn't say to pretend our burdens are not burdens, or to feel like we must bear all of our own burdens alone.

May we be a church who always remains eager to lend a helping hand, but may we also be people who aren't afraid to ask for it.

The burdens we can can vary.

Yes, it might be an area of sin where someone is struggling.

For another person, they might have a burden come up that's financial and they need some help.

Someone might not have that struggle, but maybe they have a burden that deals with a crisis of faith, and what they need is a friend, someone to sit with them, someone to care, someone to listen, someone to walk with them through a challenging season.

And there are undoubtedly many more examples we can think of. I'm sure there are as many examples of burdens we could think of as there are people in this room.

May we have a heart to come alongside our brothers and sisters in the church.

May we have strong shoulders to bear one another's burdens.

May we be an authentic community in an inauthentic world.