

Text: Galatians 5:26-6:6 – Helping One Another

Exegetical Big Idea: Christianity is lived out in the body of the Church. Humility is needed when we sin against each other and God, and as we spur one another on towards holiness.

Homiletical Big Idea: **You grow in your personal faith in Christ, by being part of the Body of Christ**

Fallen Condition Focus: Our culture in many ways is focus on the individual. The importance of community, especially the community of the Church is downplayed as old and unimportance. Unfortunately, this thinking has slipped into the church.

Background:

Freedom in Christ in the letter to the Galatians means the God-empowered ability to live out joyful obedience in Christ, because of union with Christ.

Living out the law of God is not simply between you and God however. It's more than that. Living out your freedom in Christ is living out obedience in the community of the local church.

It's no accident that Paul laid out for us the Fruit of the Spirit in the previous verses, because we're going to need them if we're going to live out obedience and freedom the way we see it in these verses.

Intro:

For most of my childhood I shared a room with my brother.

As you can imagine, it wasn't always pretty. He would invade my space and I would invade his space and we would argue.

We tried different ways to make it work so we wouldn't fight. We tried making rules of when he would have the room and I wasn't allowed in, or I would be using the room and he wasn't allowed in. But anyone with young kids will immediately see that this would simply not work because unless it could be exactly even and satisfactory to both kids, someone was going to get upset.

One day we even agreed on a line, and there may have been even tape involved, that went down the middle of the room. That side was his, and this side was mine. You stay on your side and I'll stay on mine, and if you step one foot on my side I'll get upset. That didn't last long because we didn't take into account the reality that in order to get to the door of the room, one of us would have to go on the other one's side.

Like it or not we were sharing a room! We had two options really. Option one was to be more selfish and fight for what I thought I deserved or wanted, or option two was to start thinking about someone else than myself, and enjoy the company of my brother. I wish I could say I did this perfectly, but I can't. But I do think we grew in that, and I am happy to report that I still love my brothers today.

I've become more convinced over the years that adults are not so different than kids in many ways. And if you think about it, the church is not a whole lot different. I have my personal faith in Christ and I have

my life and my job and my way of living out my faith. But you also have your personal faith, and your life and your job and your way of living out our faith. How do we each live this out?

God's good design is for us to be a family. Like it or not, we live the Christian life together. That's not easy! It's not easy because we are human. We sin, against God and each other. And we'll continue to do so until we stand in eternity with Christ. And on top of that, we were never designed to live in solitude. Life is hard! We need each other.

Though the body of the Church is not perfect, and is often difficult, the answer is not solitude, or giving up on the community of the church. The solution is humble and sacrificial loving communion.

You grow in your personal faith in Christ, by being part of the Body of Christ

(Vv. 26-1) We become more like Christ with each other's help

I think we have to begin with the reality that probably we know all too well. There is sin in the church. And let's be honest, the reason there is sin in the church is because the people in the church struggle with sin. Paul just wrote about that in the previous verses. The Christian is called to "walk with the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit", which we talked about is a picture of constant communion and obedience with Christ. And although this is certainly the goal that we should strive for in the church, it does not always work out that way! In fact if you've spent any length of time, in any church at all, you will of course come across what we see in verse 26 of chapter 5. You will see conceit, provoking one another (to anger), and envy.

These sins that Paul writes here are all sins that happen in community. They are all sins against other people who we are close with. It's hard to envy if there are no people to envy. It's hard to be conceited if there is no one to compare yourself to. And it's hard to provoke some when there is no one to provoke.

In fact we could easily say that it's only when we are in community with each other, that these sins are revealed. It's not the community that causes the sin. The sin is there in the human heart, but it's only when we are commanded to live out our faith in the Body of Christ that these sins in our hearts is shown to be there. And so in one sense there is great difficulty often in living in community with other sinners, it's also a blessing! It's a blessing because for one, the Christian *wants* to have sin rooted out of their lives, and without people around to reveal their sin it's going to be hard to root out. But it's also a blessing because the very people that I sin against are the same people that God has put into my life to help me remove that sin!

That's what Paul is writing about in verse 1 of chapter 6. It's intentional that Paul calls his audience "brothers" in verse 1. Of course we can expand that and know that he is not just writing to his male brothers in Christ, but his sisters in Christ as well. He's intentionally calling them "brothers" because he wants to stress the reality that we are a family! Paul could have used "dear friends" or "beloved" as he does elsewhere, but he instead chooses here to call them "brothers". He's setting the stage for what he is about to write.

He goes on to say that "if anyone is caught in any transgression..." At first it might seem like Paul sees this as a possibility that someone, somewhere, maybe, per chance but quite unlikely, will sin. That's of

course not what he's meaning. Paul is saying that when the time comes, because it's going to come, that someone sins against another person in the church, this is what should happen.

But before we get to what should be done, it's important to recognize what "caught in any transgression" means. While this certainly does have the idea of sin that a person in the church is trying to hide but then it eventually comes out, it's actually more than that. The word for "caught" has also the idea of being "surprised or overtaken". So while we are often tempted to think of these verses as only when a big thing blows up in the church, it's really pointing to something more common than that. How often have you been surprised by your selfishness or pride? How often have you felt like sin overtook you? The way to think of this verse is when sin in the church is realized and has come into the light.

And the only way for sin to come into the light is for it to be recognized and called out. This is so hard to do because our culture hates this. Our culture is one of individual person rights and privacy and that I am the lord of my own life. But that's not God's plan for his church. It's a loving thing to do to call a fellow Christian out on their sin. It's necessary because of what comes next. Restoration cannot happen unless sin is identified and called out.

And restoration is the goal. That's why Paul says "you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness". Paul could have used many words here, but he uses the word "restore" on purpose. It's the idea of bringing something back to the state that it one was in. And that's the perfect word for what's going on here!

[A number of years ago we bought a table from the church rummage sale. It was a grey and white table. Very heavy. We used it for a number of years, and I started to notice that through the paint I could see these little designs. I realized that there was something under that paint. So one summer I took it out to the backyard and got my sander and some sand paper and started sanding away at the paint. Underneath the grey and white paint was a beautiful wood table, with artistic designs in it. When I finally got all the paint off I put a protective coating on it. The finished product was restored to what it was, and way better than the paint!]

For the person who has placed their faith in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation. They are a son or daughter of the living God. And yet when we sin against God and each other it's like we are covering that beauty with paint. Our fellowship with each other and our enjoyment of Christ diminishes. We need to be restored. It's often a slow and painful process, but it's a good and beautiful process.

And because it's a hard process, who exactly should take on this work of restoring believers who have fallen into sin? Paul tells us in verse 1 that it is "those who are spiritual". What does that mean? Those who have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Those are the fruit of the Spirit! If the paint is thick, and the work is hard, then you want the person who is getting out the spiritual hand sander to be a person who is gentle and kind.

And you want them to faithfulness to see the process through. There is no better example to follow than Christ. He called out sin, and he continues to call yours and mine out today by his Word. But he didn't just condemn in, he restored us to himself. Not only did he restore us to himself, but he continues to work in you to change you into his own likeness. And he will be faithful to finish the process.

May we too be faithful to finish the process. We talked early about the bravery of calling out sin, but in one sense that's not the bravest part. In one sense it's easy to point at another's sin and condemn it. It's

a whole lot braver to call out sin, and then in kindness and gentleness work out the process to restore the brother or sister. It was after all God's kindness that led us to repentance, ought we not to be the same for each other?

If we're not, we fall into the same sin. Paul goes on to say in this same verse that we are to "keep watch" on ourselves, because we might fall into sin as well! Now I doubt Paul is saying that we will be tempted always to fall into the same kind of sin. If you are working at restoring a brother or sister who has fits of rage, I don't think Paul is saying that you are in danger of becoming an angry person yourself (although it is possible with some sins). I think what is more likely the case is to fall into the sin of spiritual pride. It's so easy to compare ourselves with other people, and how easy is it to sit with someone who is revealing their sin to you and all you can think to yourself is "wow, I'm glad I'm not that bad". And all of a sudden we are now the ones who need restoration.

If instead Christ is our example, and our goal. Then we will keep a humble heart in this restoration process, because today it's you, but tomorrow it's going to be me. And when you are calling out my sin and restoring me, I need you to treat me with truth and gentleness so that together we are conformed into the likeness of Christ.

You grow in your personal faith in Christ, by being part of the Body of Christ

(Vv. 2-3) We bear life's burdens with each other's help

It is not only the reality that we will sin against each other, but it is the simple reality that we live in a fallen world, and life is hard! Even if we had a magic wand that could take away all of our sin so that we never sinned against each other, life would still be hard. There would still be sickness and death. There would still be anxiety and doubt. There would still be weariness and hunger and poverty.

Paul writes in verse 2 that we are to bear one another's burdens. The word that Paul uses for "burden" here is the word for a weight. One commentator likens it to the cargo on a ship. It is the picture of a huge and heavy weight. I think this is a perfect word to describe life sometimes!

I don't think there is a single person here who has not felt, or feels, like life is a heavy burden and weight. Here's the good news, you are not meant to carry that burden all by yourself. I know we often feel like we have to, and we are often told in many ways like we have to, and we are made to feel like we have to, but we don't.

Paul says here that we are to bear one another's burdens. And who exactly is to do the carrying is very important. Remember who was supposed to do the restoring? It was "those who are spiritual". But who is it that is supposed to do the bearing of life's burdens? It's "one another". Do you see what that means? That we are all responsible for that! And we're not just responsible for that, but we are all able to do that. Yes, even if your own weight seems unbearable, you are still able to help another bear there's.

[One fun thing we like to do at our house once in a while is have a family movie night in the back room with the T.V. And we also often turn this family movie night into a family sleepover. What that means is that we have to get the mattresses that are in the kids' room and drag them to the back. So after clearing away all the toys and stuffed animals out of the path, it's time to move the mattresses. Supposes for a moment all the kids are responsible for moving their own mattress. It just wouldn't work!

Alone they can't do it, it's too heavy. But they are not on their own. They have each other, and they have dad. Together, we can pick it up and put it on its side and one kid will push with the other kid pulls and the other kid steers around corners. Eventually, we make it back there with all the mattresses.]

Alone, we are not strong enough to carry the burdens of life. But God in his good providence has placed us together in the church to bear each other's burdens.

That's good news if you're feeling weak this morning. Especially when we think a little harder about what life's burdens are. Paul is not just talking about things that need to "get done". Life and ministry is full of things that need to "get done". Yes there are so many ministries in the church that are burdensome and help is needed and that is very true and yes you should be considering where you can serve in the church. But that's not nearly the extent of the burdens that Paul is talking about. What about spiritual burdens? What about the burden of doubt in the Christian's heart? What about the burden of sorrow and pain from loss of loved ones? What about the burden of loneliness. What about life's burdens of motherhood and family life? We can speak too of the burdens of marriage, and aging bodies, and poverty and things like that. Here's one we often don't consider. Paul was just talking about being restored from sin. What about the burden of carrying the consequences of our sin. The weight of all of this I would argue, is meant to be carried by each other in the church.

This is why Paul says that this kind of love is what fulfills the law of Christ. It's easy to say "you deal with your own mess, I got my own". But it's a demonstration of the overflow of the love of Christ in you to say to your fellow Christian "I'll bear some of this load for you, and with you".

But there's also a temptation that goes along with this. It's the temptation of spiritual pride. I think that's what Paul means in verse 3 when he says "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself". One way that spiritual pride rears its ugly head is to believe that we don't need others to help with our burdens. It's pride that is at work when we read this verse and think "I'll help others with theirs, but I don't need help with him". That's not spiritual maturity, that's spiritual immaturity. And on top of that, it's foolish because we all know that we all need help.

[One of the fun nights we have at the youth is at NERF night. NERF blasters shoot little foam darts, and on NERF night we hand out blasters and shoot each other all around the church. We play different games, and many of games have the rule that if you're hit you have to go back to a certain area for 10 seconds before getting back into the game. Every time we have a NERF night, I always tell the youth that it's so important to simply be honest. If you're hit, you're hit. I got into the habit of saying this because inevitably some kid will come up to me during the evening or after the evening and tell me that they were never hit even once. As they tell me this, I'm not impressed, because when you have twenty or thirty youth running around shooting darts everywhere, everyone is hit! It's not impressive if you tell me you're not, because I don't believe you!]

In the same way, it's not a mark of spiritual maturity to pretend we are strong, and don't need the help of others for the burdens of life. It's also not spiritually mature to think we can bear everyone else's burdens, while not needing help with our own. Paul is pretty forward when he says "you're deceiving yourself". It's foolishness. I am just as weak as anyone else. We're all in this together, and though it works out differently for each person, life is hard for everyone!

But it's not only foolishness, it's also disobedience. If you look back at verse 2, it's not a suggestion but a command. We are commanded to help other Christians with their burdens, but also to receive help with ours. Anything other than that is disobedience.

Christ is the only one to take upon himself the full weight of our sin and brokenness as he hung on the cross. He is the only one to fix our relationship with God, and make right this broken world. I'm not Jesus, and neither are you. Which means our job as the church is to say to each other "I can't do this, and you can't do this, but Jesus can. So let's walk with him together".

You grow in your personal faith in Christ, by being part of the Body of Christ

(Vv. 4-5) Our responsibility to each other, comes first from our responsibility to God.

We are called to responsibility to each other, but that can only happen if we are first responsible where God has called us individually. Paul gives us a difficult verse at first glance when he writes verse 4. He writes that we are supposed to test our individual work and then, the implication is that the work is approved, we may boast in ourselves. Is Paul advocating for spiritual boasting? Are we to ask who has done the most Bible reading this year and have a show of hands? I certainly do not think Paul is getting at that kind of boasting here. Think about it, he just told us in the previous verse that if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing he deceives himself.

Paul is shifting the focus back on the individual in these verses, not to promote individualism, but to remind us that we have our own individual responsibility to God. We can, and should, help each other in our Christian walk, but ultimately, we are responsible before God for our lives.

Paul begins by saying we ought to "test our work". I think we can safely assume that "our work" is the conduct of our lives. God has placed you somewhere in the context of the world. Your life is unique to you and you are placed on this earth in the way that God has ordained it and have given you responsibilities that are unique to you. How you carry out those responsibilities is your work before the Lord.

But how exactly do we test that work? Well if your work is unique to you, then certainly we can't our work against the work of another person. The test of our work for the Lord is not a test of accomplishment, but of faithfulness.

[Remember the parable of the talents. The owner gave different amounts of money to each servant. When the owner returned, he praise two of the servants in the same way, though they had differing returns for their work. They were praised not for how much they made, but because they were faithful where they were placed. This is in contradiction to the last servant who did see his personal responsibility to the master as important and did nothing with what was given him.]

Christians are responsible before God for the faithfulness of the work we do, but also for the unfaithfulness of the work we did not do. God has given each Christian a sphere of responsibility. We need wisdom to know that sphere, be faithful in it, and don't go outside of it.

This calls for a sober mind. A sober mind is the wisdom to see things the way they actually are. A Christian with a sober mind knows first that their identity is ultimately in Christ, and nothing else. I am in Christ because of his grace to be, received through faith. I am righteous before God not because of anything I have done, but because he has called me according to the glory of his name. But a Christian

with a sober mind also understands how God has gifted them for service in the church. If all this comes from the Lord, then he gets the glory.

A sober mind guards against comparison. Since you are called to be faithful, not successful (leave the results up to God), you can't compare yourself against the other parent, or worker, or student, or pastor.

A sober mid guards against self-deprecation and self-pity. Don't scorn or mock the gifts God has given you to use for his glory. Thank him for them, and use them faithfully.

A sober mind guards against pride, because the only reason you are what you are is by the grace of God.

I think that's what Paul is talking about when he says we are to test our own work, so that we may boast in ourselves and no one else. It's so that we can say, "I have run the race and fought the fight, and ultimately it was the Lord's hand on all of it".

Because no one can run your race for you. And that's the point of verse 5. You have to be the one to run. Paul is not contradicting what he said about carrying each other's burdens. We are responsible to help each other but I can't be obedient for you. God has placed you in your unique circumstances, and you need to walk in obedience to where God has called you.

Paul uses elsewhere the picture of the body to illustrate the Church. If God has made you an eye, and me a foot, we can certainly help each other out. You look where we're stepping and I'll get us there. But I cannot be an eye for you. In God's good providence, you're the eye, not me. And as a body, we need each other.

It's hard to see where verse 6 fits here, but I think we're seeing a practical outworking of what it means to be mutual help to each other. Many commentaries suggest it probably is a comment about taking care of those in the church whose role is preaching and teaching. We may not help each other in exactly the same way, but we all need help. The teacher is not above the help of those he teaches.

[When I was younger I struggled a lot with math. In fact I still do. There was a time when my parents got me a math tutor. Once a week or so I went to her house and she did her best to teach me math. That lady must have been the most patient person on the planet because I remember being confused every time I went. And largely it was my own fault because when I didn't understand it, I would simply give trying. She could try for hours and hours trying to teach me, but she couldn't understand for me. I had the responsibility of putting in the effort and learning]

I can't walk in obedience for you, and you can't walk in obedience for me. I will not stand before God one day and be responsible for your faithfulness. I will be responsible for how God called me to be a help to you, but you have an individual responsibility before God.

The very first step of obedience to God is simply believing in Jesus for the forgiveness for your sins. Nobody can do this for you, and there is no substitute for personal faith in Jesus. When you stand before Christ, if all you have to say is "but I went to a great church that preached the Bible", or "but my spouse was a Christian", or even "but I was a member of the church and served there often", that is not going to make you right with God. The only thing that saves you from your sin and grants you entrance into the presence of God for eternal life is faith in the work of Jesus on the cross.

July 5, 2026

As you walk in sober-mindedness before God, seeing clearly where he has gifted you and called you, and as I do, then we can carry each other's burdens, restoring each other when we sin, and in so doing we will live out our personal faiths in Christ, together in the gathered Body of Christ.

You grow in your personal faith in Christ, by being part of the Body of Christ