

You've heard about some of our family vacations before, they are typically filled with adventure, a little family squabbling and at some point disaster. I want to share something we came across on our way to Colorado a few years ago when we pulled into Kearney Nebraska for the night. We were travel weary and ready to unwind in the hotel swimming pool for a bit and as we found our way to the pool we were met by the most explicit set of pool rules we have ever encountered. Here is a picture of the sign...

I guess the lesson there is that if you don't clearly state things people just don't get it! This is where we get warning labels on consumer products too. On packaging for a Rowenta Iron: "Do not iron clothes on body." On Marks & Spencer Bread Pudding: "Product will be hot after heating." On a Swedish-made chainsaw: "Do not attempt to stop chain with your hands."

The truth is such instructions ARE necessary because frankly sometimes we aren't that bright. God knows this... I believe this is what motivates the Holy Spirit to inspire this portion of the book of Galatians. Open with me this morning to Galatians 5:26-6:5.

**Galatians 5:26 - 6:5** <sup>26</sup> **Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and thereby 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 each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. <sup>5</sup> For each one will bear his own load.**

From Galatians 5:16-25 Paul has explained to us that as Christians there is a battle that is being waged within our own Souls between what he calls the Flesh (our old sinful life) and the Holy Spirit who NOW dwells in us by faith in Jesus. The victory, you remember, is won at the cross but we have the joy and privilege of experiencing this victory DAILY when we learn to walk by the Spirit and crucify the flesh.

We walk by the Spirit when we start our day and consciously acknowledge "Lord, I long to grow in your righteousness today". We walk by the Spirit when we daily preach the Gospel to our hearts and believe it and all the promises attached to it. We walk in the Spirit when we "Walk daily with Jesus" since the Spirit God has placed in our hearts is the Spirit of His Son.

We crucify the flesh when we "consider ourselves dead" regarding the passions and desires of our flesh. When my flesh rears its ugly head I mercilessly, often painfully and decisively respond with the truth that "I am dead and now live by the Spirit of God." Remember the example of how powerful that truth planted in the root of our thinking really is. The youngest living Medal of Honor recipient Dakota Meyer explained how he was able to accomplish what he did in earning his medal. "I didn't *think* I was going to die. I *knew* I was dead."

**We should realize that life by the Spirit *must* have a profound impact on our lives, certainly inwardly in our relationship with God, but outwardly in our relationships with people as well.** John Stott writes, **“The first and great evidence of our walking by the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit is not some private mystical experience of our own, but our practical relationships of love with other people.** Since the first fruit of the Spirit is love, this is only logical. It is easy to talk about “love” in an abstract and general way; it is much harder to get down to concrete, particular situations in which we actually demonstrate our love for one another.”

This is where we must confess, “Sometimes we aren’t that bright.” Beginning in verse 26 Paul spells out very clearly and practically the implications of all this because as we’ve said, “if you don’t clearly state things people just don’t get it!”

**In verse 26 Paul shows us what our relationships look like when we are not walking by the Spirit.** He writes, <sup>26</sup> **Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.** This verse taken together with verse 15 give us some idea that pride was a big problem in the Galatian churches. The word we have translated “Boastful” means someone who has an opinion of themselves that is empty, vain or false. The Galatians were struggling with the belief that they could be MORE acceptable to God based on their observance of the Law. Those who believed they observed the Law BETTER also believed they were more acceptable to God and the result is an opinion of themselves that was empty, vain or false...in short sinful Pride.

This comes out in verses 3-4 as well if you look there. <sup>3</sup> **For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.** <sup>4</sup> **But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason* for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.**

In *Mere Christianity* **C. S. Lewis says that the devil laughs when he sees us overcome by pride: The Devil “is perfectly content to see you becoming chaste and brave and self-controlled provided, all the time, he is setting up in you the Dictatorship of Pride--just as he would be quite content to see your chilblains (that is an annoying rash or itch) cured if he was allowed, in return, to give you cancer. For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense”.**

We’ve noted before in our study of Galatians that Legalism, the belief that I am accepted by God based on my performance rather than simple faith in Jesus, produces one of two things, either sinful pride or sinful despair, and we see them both clearly in verse 26. When we become boastful or proud Paul says it shows up in **challenging one another**. Other translations say *provoking one another*. The word means to challenge to a contest or even combat. Some were so sure of their spiritual superiority that they wanted to prove it in a contest...a debate if you will.

We see the second result of a Legalistic approach to God, sinful despair, in the phrase **envying one another**. If you are trying to be acceptable to God based on your performance (rather than by faith in Christ) and you are aware of all the ways you fall short you look around

at others who seem to be doing quite well and you begin to despair. What's more...those who believe they are doing well flaunt it and challenge those who aren't. The result... "envying one another."

Both attitudes were caused by the belief that "I am accepted by God based on how well I perform according to the Law." Pride is actually at the root of both sins, pride that could not tolerate rivals. G. Walter Hansen comments, "The only treatment for the cancer of pride is radical surgery: we must crucify the pride of sinful nature and be led by the Spirit, who alone has the power to overthrow the dictatorship of pride."

Now **in Galatians 6:2-5 Paul shows us what our relationships look like when we ARE walking by the Spirit, crucifying the flesh, and bearing fruit to God's Glory.** You might notice we are jumping verse 1...we will come back to it next Sunday. It's place in this text is as a very clear example of what Paul describes in verses 2-5.

If Spirit-led Christians are NOT to become boastful thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, then we ARE to Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. There is an assumption here...I don't know if you catch it immediately or not. Paul is talking to Christians and the assumption is that we DO have burdens to bear. It is kind of like James in this regard... "Consider it pure joy when you face trials," not "if you face trials." So we DO have burdens in the Christian life. **When we are walking in the Gospel, walking by the Spirit, we don't become a burden to others in our boasting, rather we are a blessing by becoming burden bearers.**

Jesus bore our burden of sin and the judgment of law against our sin all the way to the Cross. We have the privilege of bearing lesser burdens (burdens that are far short of God's judgment...only Jesus could bear such a burden), but we still have the joy and privilege of reflecting the character of our Lord. We can be Jesus to a Christian friend who is feeling crushed under one of life's burdens.

We can get weird about our burdens. We kind of treat them like underwear...everyone knows we have them...we just want to keep them to ourselves! We need to be careful because this can actually be the flesh at work...it is more in line with the pride Paul has already warned us about in verse 26. I'm concerned people might think I'm not such a good Christian if I share the burden of this struggle going on in my family or my marriage. If I am unwilling to ask for other brothers and sisters in Christ to pray about such things...even to help bear their weight by reminding me I'm not alone... this might be an area of the flesh that needs to be crucified.

We can even hide this in a cloak of Spirituality and lean falsely on God's Word to do so. **Psalm 55:22 <sup>22</sup> Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Certainly God DOES bear our burdens but we have to realize that one of the ways he accomplishes this is in Human friendships.**

There is an example in this in Paul's life and I don't think there is anyone who would say Paul was a weak Christian. In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul lists all the way that he had suffered for the

Gospel...39 lashes, beaten, stoned, ship wrecked 3 times...and then says in **2 Corinthians 11:28-29** <sup>28</sup> **Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.** <sup>29</sup> **Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?**

Earlier in this same letter Paul gives us insight into Paul was very worried about the Corinthian church...specifically about their reaction to a very severe letter he had written to them. **2 Corinthians 7:5-7** <sup>5</sup> **For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.** <sup>6</sup> **But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;** <sup>7</sup> **and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.** God didn't comfort Paul through his private prayer or with some Spiritual vision, but through being reconnected with a friend and the good news that he brought.

In verse 3 Paul says <sup>3</sup> **For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.** Again, this calls back to verse 26, but here Paul is saying if we are not walking by the Spirit then we think we are above bearing a fellow Christian's burden.

Finally then, **when we are walking in the Spirit we don't compare ourselves with other Christians.** Paul says in verses 4-5 **Galatians 6:4** **But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for boasting* in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.** <sup>5</sup> **For each one will bear his own load.**

This is what was going on in verse Galatians 5:26 as we began this morning. When I am trying to be accepted by God based on my performance (legalism) then the only way to gage how well I'm getting on is by comparing myself with others. This leads, as we've already learned, to pride in either challenging others or envying others. Instead of scrutinizing our neighbor and comparing ourselves with him, we are to test our own work for we have to bear our own load.

All over the Paul's letters he says that the only thing He boasts in is the Lord...he did say he boasts in His weakness...but this was because God was proven strong in his weakness so it amounted to boasting in the Lord as well. Paul is saying don't compare yourself to others and let your Spiritual progress be measured in light of them...look to Christ or the Law of Christ to fulfilled in Love and then your boasting will be "In the Lord" because anyone who looks intently on Him finds nothing in themselves to boast in.

Finally verse 5. Some of you may be wondering if verse 5 contradicts the command in verse 2 to bear one another's burdens. It doesn't...first off they are actually 2 different words. But more than that, given the context with verse 4, John Piper suggests that Paul means: "Don't ever try to lighten the load of your own sin by comparing yourself to a failing brother or sister. Why? Because you are going to bear your own load in the judgment. When the final assessment

comes and we are all measured by the law of Christ, no one will make your load lighter by being worse than you are. You will bear your own load in that day. The plea we hear so often—"But I was as good as Jack!" or "I wasn't any worse than Jane!"—will fall on deaf ears at the judgment. Don't bolster your pride by comparing yourself with others: you will bear your own load.

So...“Do not iron clothes on body.” “Product will be hot after heating.” “Do not attempt to stop chainsaw chain with your hands.” AND...finally..from God’s Word this morning...  
**“Life in the Spirit will keep you far from Spiritual Pride and move you to bear one another’s burdens.”**