

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Galatians, chapter 6. We have three more in this series, Lord willing, so we have today, and then we have two more after this. We've been doing big chunks; they'll shrink now.

Before we get into Galatians 6, I just want to lay something out for you. Over the last 10 years, there have been four or five instances in the life of The Village Church where God just kind of profoundly flexed in a way that was kind of spectacular to watch. Several years ago, when we were at the Highland Village and Denton Campuses (it was just those two campuses), Highland Village, in particular, was just at capacity again, and so we needed to do something.

The Lord, in his sovereign will, decided to press a little bit on Albertsons, and so they had to close a bunch of stores, and we leapt upon that like vultures and purchased the Flower Mound Campus. If you'll remember how we did that, if you were here, we were still a pretty young church (and by *young*, hear *poor*), so we just kind of stood up, and our massive campaign was, "You have it; we need it. We need \$4 million in 30 days." I think it ended up being 90 days, but that money came in.

We were able to buy the building, and then we retrofitted it. It's more than a renovation if you have to put on a new roof so it doesn't echo, so when a plane flies over, you actually hear in there. So we had to completely retrofit the building. Again, the Lord provided pretty miraculously for a church of our demographic and size. Then Dallas opened, and just over and over again, you guys have been unbelievably generous.

One of my favorite things to watch is really the generosity as it kind of crosses the campuses, because there have been times where the bulk of our resources are going to a campus other than, say, this campus, but Denton and Dallas have given faithfully into what we needed to see happen at this location. This is one of those things where we truly are one church in multiple locations.

It has also worked the other ways, where we have done a ton of work in Fort Worth or done a ton of work in Dallas and a ton of work in Denton, and that money has flown out of here. I say all of that because several weeks ago, almost a month ago now, we voted (to the tune of 97 percent) to launch Fort Worth Campus. We purchased a building out there, and you gave us permission in the vote to incur debt if we needed to incur debt in retrofitting that campus and making it ready.

But then one of you, whose name I will not say, really emailed in rebuking us for not giving you the opportunity for what you've done so faithfully historically, and so I wanted to kind of start here before we get into Galatians 6 and lay before you that the cost to retrofit Fort Worth is between \$1.7 million and \$1.9 million. That's what it will take to get it all up and running, everything from technology to getting the building where it needs to be to hold what we believe it will need to hold from day one.

I simply want to lay before you, if you want to give into that... I wanted to give you the opportunity to write a check or sow into that campus out there. We're already starting to build the staff out for that. There's already a lot of movement and noise about heading out there, and so man, if you're so inclined to give to that, you can just write a check. Put in the memo, "Fort Worth," and we'll know what to do with it.

I want to say this to you. If you're not a believer and you're here tonight, don't feel any need. This is about family business right now at this point. Now don't get me wrong. If you're pagan and feel like you want to give, just give. I'm not trying to stop that. I'm just trying to take from you any ability you have to think we're all about your money.

If you find even a tinge of that in your heart, keep your cash. Get yourself something nice later. But if you feel so inclined to give toward this and you believe in what we're doing (and apparently 97 percent of our covenant members believe this is where the Lord is leading), then man, if you'll give into this, that will be great to once again watch God work in your generosity for his glory and to see men and women come to know, love, and worship him.

Let me pray for us, and then we'll get into the first five verses of Galatians 6. I don't believe we'll go long today, but we'll go good. Let's pray.

Jesus, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for the opportunity to open up the Word of God and be read by it. I pray you would challenge our understanding of community and challenge our understanding of how the gospel affects and creates community, and that we might leave this room with a greater understanding of what the gospel is and how it affects our relationships, and whether we believe it or not, how *that* affects our relationships. So Jesus, we just lay our hearts before you. Holy Spirit, I ask you to move powerfully among us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

As I've covered the last couple of weeks, the book of Galatians is just a book about the gospel. What *is* the gospel? What is *not* the gospel? Really, the word *gospel* simply means, in the Greek, good news, so the gospel is good news. Now let me try to explain why it's good news. Regardless of how you've come into

this room today, all of your dysfunctions... In fact, I'll go *all*, 100 percent of your issues, dysfunctions, problems, hurts, hang-ups... All of them are owing to a failure to believe and embrace gospel realities.

Even if you are a victim of something heinous, there was a failure to understand the gospel somewhere in there, either in your perpetrator or in what you've done with that perpetration from the moment it occurred until now. So let me explain how that all flows and how that all works, and why the gospel is such good news. All of your difficulty and my difficulty, all of our loneliness, anger, despair, frustration...on and on I could go...is owing to the fact that you and I are fractured in our relationship with our Creator. When that happens, that leads to all sorts of other fractures. That leads to, really, what we (or maybe other people) would point out as issues in our lives.

Here's how that works. Without reconciliation to our Creator God, we are left to our own devices to discover or figure out our identity. Now when identity is taken away from God and is taken onto our shoulders, it becomes crushing, not only for our own souls, but for the relationships we have around us. I'll paint a picture of how this looks. If you are a man or a woman and have not been reconciled to God in Christ, then you are finding your own identity in something other than God.

So now, you have to make your identity your work. You have to make your identity your spouse. You have to make your identity your kids. None of those created things can hold up the weight of identity. They simply can't do it, and so what ends up happening is you put an undue amount of expectation on your job, on your spouse, on your kids, and that undue expectation leads to relationships being fractured. Now all of that is solved in the gospel.

If my identity is work, and how I find value and how I feel fulfilled is to be successful in business, then that means everyone around me must serve that end, because that's where I feel full. That's my identity. That's what I'm all about. So, "Honey, you be quiet. I need to work 15 hours a day. I'm sorry I can't make it to your game, and I'm sorry I'm not around. Why can't you appreciate the stuff I'm buying you?" That's an identity issue that has put its hope in work and not God.

Or maybe your identity isn't in that. Maybe it's something else. Maybe your identity is your husband or your wife. What a train wreck of a place to try to find your identity! Look right at me. Your spouse, however spectacular they are (single people, please hear me), will never be able to fulfill that gnawing in you, ever. Going into a marriage with that expectation is devastating for everyone.

*I really love my wife!* I would hope you would really love your wife. *I really like my man!* Like your man. Don't go there; I haven't gone there! I'm just saying they shouldn't be your god. They shouldn't be the

point of your existence. They shouldn't have ultimate authority to make you full of joy or full of death. You shouldn't give anyone that authority.

These are all gospel issues. See, a failure to understand ultimate identity is to put you in a state where you have to find your own identity, which would put you at odds with you. Once you're at odds with you, you're most definitely at odds with everyone else. Now the reason the gospel is good news is it intervenes at every level and changes everything, if you'll believe and buy into it. Not intellectual assent. Not, *Oh yeah, I believe this, and I believe this...* No. At a heart level, that you would believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So let's follow that little path I created earlier. If my identity is found in my relationship with God via Jesus Christ, if my identity is not *Matt Chandler, preacher*; not *Matt Chandler, pastor*; not *Matt Chandler, Lauren's husband*; not *Matt Chandler, the kids' dad*; not *Matt Chandler, writer...* My identity isn't in any of those things, but my identity is *justified by God, adopted son of God Almighty*. Now if that's my identity, then I'm completely free in that moment to be obedient to God and to pursue my relationship with God. What happens between you and me, I'm free in.

I don't need my wife to be my god. I have one! I don't need her to make my life work. Now am I grateful for her? Yes, I am. Do I love my wife? Deeply. Do I love my children? Deeply. Do they control ultimate joy? Not at all. Could they give me a bad day? Often. But can they crush the meaning of my world? No. They don't have that power. They have a lot of power, but they don't have *that* power. Why? It's because my identity is in Christ.

Now this frees me up to walk with *you* in a way that doesn't enslave either one of us. Since I have my identity in Christ (catch this; this is going to be subtle), I don't need you to like me. I don't need you to go, "That was a great sermon," or, "That was a lame sermon." I appreciate feedback of any kind if it's coherent and out of concern. Some of you need to hear both of those, because sometimes I get it and I just file you in the crazy drawer. All right?

I appreciate feedback, but I'm not living and dying off of it. I have family in the room who could testify. I don't live and die on it. If I walk off this stage and some of you send me an email saying that was the worst sermon you've ever heard, and it looks like I didn't even prepare, and I make you sick and you're leaving and going to another church, I will sleep just as well tonight as if you would have told me that's the greatest sermon you've ever heard, and you're inviting your whole neighborhood.

I'm praising God for one, and I'm probably frustrated at the other, but ultimately, I've been set free to tell you the truth and let God do what God will do. My identity is not wrapped up in the size or success of this church. My identity is wrapped up in being obedient to the One who saved me. That sets me free to do

some things that, if you're not in that place, you're not free from. Do you see what happens? If I am reconciled to God in Jesus Christ, and my identity is now, *I am a son of God. I am loved by the One who, ultimately, it matters that I'm loved by*, well, that frees me up to not need your love.

That frees me up to be able to speak the truth to you and hear the truth from you. That actually allows me to hear criticism, take it, and do something constructive with it besides mulling over how I might deceive you and make you think I'm better than I am. It's freedom. The gospel solves it all. It enables me to love my wife like Christ loves the church. It enables me to impart to my children the wonder of God. It enables me to not take things personally (hear me) that aren't personal.

We've talked about this often. The more the world is about you, the more angry and frustrated you'll be, and the more the world is not about you, the happier you'll be. I don't fling that word *happy* around hardly ever. I think happiness is cheap. The more the world is not about you, and the more the world is about him, the more free you are, and this is an identity issue.

Now in this gospel-redefining/rearranging world God has created in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not only are we powerfully reconciled to God the Father and given new identity, but that new identity in Christ creates a community of faith that's spectacular to behold, and we get to behold it today, so let's look at it. Galatians, chapter 6, starting in verse 1. If you're a guest with us, I read a little bit, talk, read a little bit, talk, read a little bit, and then talk. You'll get used to it (maybe).

**"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression..."** Okay, let's talk. We need to talk, because you can't go to a bad place with that verse. When this text says, **"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression..."** this is not the idea of being busted. It's not that you caught someone sinning, like you're some kind of sin detective. "Aha! Gotcha!" That's not what this is. This is not, "Brothers, if any of you are caught in the act of a transgression..."

This is actually saying, "Brothers, if any of you are entangled or ensnared, if any of you are in trouble, if sin is beginning to overcome you..." This is not the idea of busting someone. This is the idea of seeing a brother or sister drowning. What's our response to a brother or sister who's drowning, as we've found our identity in Christ and he has made us new in him? **"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression [sin], you who are spiritual should restore him..."**

So now you have a brother or sister who is entangled or ensnared in sin. We see it, and now the responsible party is those who are spiritual. Now we know from our study of this book that when it says, "those who are spiritual," he's not saying, "those who are varsity in the faith, those who are super mature in the faith." We know that because already, earlier in this book, Paul had to rebuke Peter, so Peter is on the receiving end

of this rebuke. He's tying this verse to what he has already said above it when he talked about walking in the flesh versus walking in the spirit.

Those who are walking in the spirit, being led by the spirit, living in the spirit, keeping in step with the spirit... Those of you who are in the spirit, your job is to engage the brother or sister who is caught in, ensnared in, entangled in, transgressions, and...do what? Restore them. The ultimate goal is restoration. Why do we engage brothers and sisters who are drowning? Why do we engage those who are being overcome by sin? Why do we engage those who are hurting and losing their fight against iniquity? In order to restore, We work, not as detectives, but as friends and coheirs.

Let me show you this. It's such a great attitude. 1 Peter 4:8 says, "**Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.**" If I combine that verse with this idea, here's what you have. You don't have a police-state environment. *Well, I always have my sin antenna up, and I'm just waiting for somebody to screw up so I can pounce on them, write them the ticket, and turn them into the elders.* Actually, what he just said here is, "...**love covers a multitude of sins.**" This means, if you're having a tough day, I'll be like, *Oh, tough day*, but if that becomes pervasive, then I have to engage.

If it's a one-off and you handle something poorly, man, I'm not pouncing on that. I might ask you how you're doing. When love covers a multitude of sins, the motivation of my heart is faith working through love, not fear. Man, if you have a bad day, I have a tendency to just trust the Lord with you, and move on, but if that becomes pervasive and becomes kind of a pattern I see in you, then if we're spiritual, we engage our brothers and sisters who are being entangled and ensnared, who are beginning to drown in their sins.

Now how do we go about that? Can we all say those conversations are a bit awkward? Don't you sometimes ignore it or turn it into a prayer request? Let's look at how we are to restore our brothers or sisters who are caught, ensnared, enslaved, or engulfed in any transgressions. "**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.**"

Now that word is a little too ambiguous for me. How should we go about doing this restoration? Gently. Well, here's what I know. *Gentle* is a relative term. Isn't it? Some people, you can be super gentle with, and they feel like you just took a sledgehammer to them, and then other people, you could take a sledgehammer to them and they don't even feel it. I think the key to how we approach brothers and sisters who are entangled and ensnared is to... The second part of that... How do you define *gently*? It's by watching your own heart, and how your own heart is tempted.

If I could read this backward, here's how I believe this should take place according to the Word of God. If I see, you see, or we see a brother or sister who is drowning, who is giving in to temptation, who has a pervasive type of behavior that goes against God's revealed will for their lives... If we see a type of disdain for their family, if we see a neglect of their wife, or if we see other sins in their life that are blatant, out there in the open, and they're not fighting them anymore and it's becoming pervasive, then we engage, but not before we search our own hearts and make sure our motive in it is compassion.

You will always approach another brother or sister gently if you're aware of, *But for the grace of God, there go I*. If you feel like you're beyond that and you feel like that could never happen to you... If you feel like you're well beyond that and you're taking the position of superiority, then it will be impossible for you to come gently, because you would rather show your biblical insight, you'd rather show how mature you are and how holy you are. You will take far too much delight in being the helper rather than being in the same ditch.

But if you can search your heart and not give in to the temptation to feel greater than... If the Holy Spirit would do his work in reminding you that all of your successes are owing to the grace of God, and not your own might, then you can genuinely and truly gently reach your hand out to a brother and sister and say, "Come on. Let's get out of here."

I want to talk about this in two directions. For the one who is spiritual, who sees the one struggling, who sees the one entangled, who sees the one engulfed, our job biblically is to get into our hearts and see what's motivating that. Do we want to be right? Do we want to be seen as superior? Do we want to be seen as godly, or do we have a genuine concern for the soul of, the heart of, our brother and sister? I would put that on the spiritual one.

But what if you are the recipient of such a conversation? Can I point out some things everyone is prone to do, just so you can be on guard against it? One, if someone comes to you and says, "Hey, man. I've noticed this. I just want to lay it out before you so you might... Maybe you're not seeing it. I just want to ask some questions," let me give you a couple of things not to do.

1. *Don't go try to find people who disagree with that.* Let me flesh this out. If you don't know if it's right or wrong, what you need to do is go find some men and women who love you (and here's what I need you to hear) and aren't cowards. Do you know what most people are? Cowards. Here's what I mean by that. If you were to sit down with most of the people you know and walk with, would they give you an honest answer to a question like, "Well, Bill says I'm hostile toward my wife. I just don't see it. Do you see me being hostile toward my wife?"

"No! Do you know what? I bet you Bill is just jealous of your relationship with your wife."

"Do you know what? I think that makes sense, because his wife looks miserable."

Right? Now what you're going to do is build a coalition that agrees with you instead of taking the accusation seriously. Don't build a coalition. If it's right, how could that possibly help you? If I could encourage you in any way relationally, it would be to limit the amount of cowards you put around you. That might sound like common sense, but I know very few people who put in that type of work to invite people in to engage you, and watch who actually does it. To surround your life with people who are willing to go, "That's not right. What you did there is not right."

Again, if the gospel puts our identity in Christ and not on ourselves, how can that be personal? That's not personal. It's an act I'm doing, and so this person engaging me is after my good, and that should come off because they should have been praying and engaging the Lord and approach me with a great deal of gentleness and compassion for my soul, and so the first thing I want to do is not build a coalition, but to seriously consider the accusation before the Lord, before the Word of God, and then before those who are of good courage around me. Don't build coalitions; it is not good for your soul.

2. *Don't look for faults in their life that somehow remove the truth of their accusation in your mind.* There are no perfect people, which means if you look hard enough, you'll be able to see everyone's junk. You'll get to see, *This is where they fall short. This is where they're not perfect*, because the play of so many people when they are lovingly engaged is, *Well, they think they're perfect*. No. Unless they said that in the accusation, I don't think you have any basis for that. "You know, I'm really concerned about this area of your life."

"Oh, you think you're perfect?"

"No. I'm just saying I saw this, and I was concerned."

"Oh, so you don't have issues?"

"Tons of them, but again, *this* is what I want to talk about. Trust me; I've had people already point those things out. I'm talking about *this*. I'll deal with *those*. If you feel like you have to talk about that with me, I'll hear that and receive that, but that doesn't change *this*."

Don't let other people's shortcomings somehow remove any weight behind the accusation, even if (because this is my favorite) they did not approach you with gentleness and a heart that should have been

laid bare before God to see what the motivation was to begin with. It is a terrible reality that God speaks out of the mouths of jackasses. Don't email me. That's biblical. That wasn't me popping off my mouth. That's in the Bible.

Isn't that a terrible reality? If someone just booming godly wants to engage me, I tend to hear that well, but it seems like, more often than not, God sends people I don't care for to see my weaknesses. I wouldn't mind if some kind of big, Bible-saturated dude who lost a hand in Africa sharing the gospel at some tribe pointed out something to me. I'd be like, "All right, man. You must see it. All right. I believe you."

But for the guys he usually sends to me (God help my soul), I almost immediately downshift into, *What? You? Nuh-uh.* I don't even consider, *This brother might have a point.* Well, I do after the Holy Spirit chokes me out, but my preference is to get there faster than that. So even if someone has approached you wrongly, I think you owe it to your own soul to consider whether the accusation is true.

God creates this environment, with our identity being found in him through the gospel, in which I am willing to engage you, and you are willing to engage me, as we see one another drowning, with gentleness, humility, grace, and a heart that, when all is said and done, is most interested in you walking fully in what Christ has died to bring you. That's a beautiful community of faith, and you don't see it often. People actually avoid community to avoid this kind of thing, because there's no way to spin this where it sounds great.

If it sounds great to you right now, you have a high view of yourself that thinks this isn't coming for you. You might have to do this, and it's going to be awkward to have to tell Bill now. Right? That's kind of where your head is, but eventually I think this comes for all of us. Eventually, some of us are in step with the flesh while others of us are in step with the Spirit, and then that conversation takes place. But that's not the only way this new relationship capital the gospel purchases us works itself out. Look at this again. Let's start in verse 2 now.

**"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."** So not only now are we, with our identity in God, set free in our relationships with one another to both receive critique and to give critique as we see one another drowning, giving in to our sins, being entangled, being choked out, and being wrapped up in... We are willing to engage, but then on top of that, we're willing to bear one another's burdens. We are able to engage one another and go, "I'll help you carry that. I'll walk with you through that."

Now again, that is profound, and here's why it's profound. It's because some burdens are easy and only take a couple of days, maybe even a single meeting, and some burdens go on and on. Right? Have you ever been around anybody who is just like...*Come on, bro. I had*

*this same conversation like 614-615 times! This is what it is?* There are times we are carrying burdens for a long time.

We come alongside a brother or sister and we go, "I'll walk you to glory. Let's go," and that burden can be all over the map, guys. That burden can be financial. That burden can be spiritual. That burden can be emotional. That burden can be anything! It could be, "Oh, you're a single mom? How can we help? How can we serve? Oh, you're sick? How can we help? How can we serve? Oh, you're struggling with sin? How can I encourage you? How can I keep up with you? How can I engage you? Do I have your permission to engage you over this struggle of yours? Oh, you don't know how you're going to pay your bills?"

It can be anything. I love his ambiguity there. It's a rare thing for me to love ambiguity in the Scriptures, and yet right here he just goes, "**...burdens...**" What kind of burdens? Burdens. Burdens that burden. It's just *anything*. It literally could be anything, smallest to biggest, but what does a community that has found its identity in Christ look like? They engage one another lovingly when we get entangled and choked out, and they're willing, at the drop of a hat, to bear one another's burdens.

Just as the pastor of this, to our covenant members and some of our regular attendees, it has been a delight for me to watch you work this out. I have never, in the last six or seven years, gone up to the hospital under duress where I have not found emergency rooms filled with people. Kids being cared for, meals being cooked, houses being cleaned, money being raised... Your faithfulness to our covenant community is spectacular. You do this well. It's one of those verses that, as I read it this week, I was filled with gratitude for God's work among us.

But if we're honest, this is not most people's editorial on the church, is it? Most people's experiences in the covenant community of faith aren't just like, "Do you know what? I could never carry my own burden. I mean the second I would even notice it was a burden, there would be 400 people all around me, helping me carry it." That's not most people. Most people feel terribly alone. Most people feel in a crowd, kind of unknown, and some of that's on the person, but there's also another reason why this type of environment is rare, and he's going to tell us why that is.

**"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."** So why do we not find these types of environments? Why is the environment where burdens are shared...? Why is the environment where there is a courage that's willing to engage and come alongside of those who are struggling, have the awkward conversation, sit down for the awkward meeting, extend love to people who are struggling...? Why is it so rare? Pride. When you think you're something when you're nothing, you're deceived.

Here's the problem. I think if you let a burden be known, people will rally around. If you do it from the stage... If I were to stand in the stage and go, "This is a family. This is a burden. Let's come alongside of that," then that becomes easy. Everybody's antennae go up and we give to it. We walk in it. We press into it. But on a day-to-day basis, the reason why we're not apt to see the burdens of others is because, although we might hate that this is true about ourselves, there's a subtle form of pride that functions on default as though *our* burdens should be carried.

In that default belief, we can't even see the burdens of others. We have no ability to see it, no ability to see anyone else's struggle. Why? It's because of yours. It's impossible to spot anybody else in need, because other people should be spotting your needs. This is, by default, pride. It is wicked. It is a sign that your identity is not in Jesus Christ, but your identity is in something else. Because those who have their identity in Christ have been set free to notice others, to have a genuine concern, a genuine care for others, a default that seeks to encourage, edify, and push forward.

Then you have this great... I think this will be just so helpful for so many of you. Look at verse 4. **"But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor."** Now doesn't that sound like a strange verse? Let's read it again, because you don't look like you think it's strange.

Look at 4. **"But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor."** Now hasn't this whole book been about looking outside of yourself, looking outside of yourself, looking outside of yourself? Then all of a sudden, "Let each one of you look in your own heart and..." What? "...boast." *Boom*. I mean he just literally yanked the wheel, unless we pay really close attention to what he's putting together here.

For those of us who have found our identity in Jesus Christ, the question about God's love for us and approval of us is never outside of us, and the more we look outside of us to measure where we are with God, the more we will falsely puff ourselves up, or we will falsely press ourselves down. Let me give you an example.

If you're a believer in Christ and you're just surrounded by a bunch of heavy hitters... I mean there's just a bunch of women, a bunch of dudes who have memorized a ton of Bible. They've shared Christ with their entire neighborhood and they're all saved. They're baptizing people in their pool every other day. I mean wherever they go, revival follows. If you fell into that crew...

I know some of you are like, *That crew exists?* Yeah. You fell into that crew, and man, you're kind of timid, and you don't quite understand the Bible, and you begin to measure God's affection for you based on what

they're doing. Man, how crushed are you going to be? How much doubt is going to flood your soul about God's love for you and his delight in you? "Surely, you can be delighted in them, but not me." Or, flip it on its head. If you just fell into a herd of morons...I mean, just a herd of fools...how quickly will you elevate your own role, your own sanctification? How quickly will you slip into self-righteousness as you look around you and see nothing around you but that herd of morons?

In the text, the Holy Spirit is saying, "No, no, no, no. You measure yourself. Do you want to delight in God's progressive sanctification in your soul? You look at your own heart. You look at what you've done with the opportunities you've been given. You look at the opportunities you have done, or that you've been given and that you've taken advantage of."

See, when I get my eyes off of other people, and I just get my eyes inside, in what God has asked of me, what he has laid before me, the opportunities he has given me, and whether or not I've been obedient to those or not, I can literally watch sanctification. But if I look at you, I'm not looking at my sanctification. I'm measuring myself, not by the standard *God* has set, but by some standard *I've* set. That's slavery.

But to look and to see that God gave me this opportunity then gave me the grace to be obedient to that opportunity, to look at how I struggle with that opportunity back here, but how I'm more bold in that opportunity now, how I struggle with this opportunity back here, but now I'm getting into this rhythm with this opportunity...that builds confidence that God is at work in me. That builds confidence that God is directing, taking, and pulling me to a place.

Then look at this in the last verse, and I'll start to land the plane. Verse 5. "**For each will have to bear his own load.**" Again, that's confusing, because didn't verse 2 just say to carry one another's burdens? Now he's just like, but you have to carry your own load. Two things. *Burden* and *load* are not the same idea in the Greek at all. *Burden* is too heavy for one person. "It's too heavy for me. I need help with this!" But my load isn't like that. I can carry my load."

This goes back to this idea of opportunity and obedience to the opportunities you've been given. So let's be real straight. I don't have the opportunities many of you have. You don't have the opportunities I have. It's just the way it is. God has granted to you opportunities that I'm not going to get. Let me give you a couple of examples.

I have to actively seek out and try to find relationships with people who do not believe in Jesus Christ. I'm guessing most of you don't have that issue. I'm guessing you go to work. *Voila*. But when I come to work, I'm interrupting people praying. *Knock, knock*. "What are you guys doing? Oh, praying? Do you guys want to go to lunch when you're done? Okay."

Here's what can happen to us that would be awful. Do you know what I'd really love? I'd really love to go to your work. I'd love to sit in your office. I'd love to be surrounded by people who may or may not know. I'd love to be injected into that environment that I loved so much before my call to ministry, and that would be God-belittling, because that's not the opportunity he gave me. He gave me other opportunities. That's my load to carry.

For you, your mistake would be, "Oh, gosh, I wish I could just study my Bible and put together messages, and maybe meet with people who are interested in Christ, who have approached me and asked me questions about Jesus. I'd love that. You get paid to do that? Are you serious? I would love to do that." That would be God-belittling for you, because that's not the opportunity God has given you.

Your load is that workplace, that neighborhood, that hobby, those men and women around you, that world God has given to you, and that life God has given to you. That is *your* load to carry. I'm carrying mine. You're carrying yours, and I can't carry yours, and you can't carry mine. When we stand in front of God to give an account for our lives, I will give account for my load alone. I will not give an account for yours; I will give account for mine.

This is why we consistently want to remind, specifically you parents, that the job of discipling children does not fall on the church. The job of discipling children falls on Mommy and Daddy, and the church's role is to equip and encourage Mommy and Daddy. It's why you have a worship CD that just rolled out that will help you memorize Scripture and help your kids memorize Scripture. It's why you have that summer guide for your family so you have Bible-reading plans and activities. We want to empower you as Mommy and Daddy to herald the good news of Jesus Christ to Junior.

When we stand in front of God Almighty, we will not give account for your children, but you will, which is why we want to empower, equip, and release you at every turn. We pray for you often. We say this often, as crazy as it sounds in a culture that says, "Hand your kid off for somebody else to manage." You have your load; I have my load. I'm not looking to you, and you're not looking to me. We're being obedient to the opportunities we've been given to see the glory of God shine brightly, and to see God sanctify us more and more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let me just ask you a few questions. If we were just to start walking through this text again, are you able to spot and see when your brothers and sisters are entangled, when they're drowning, when they're hurting, or when their sins are getting the best of them? Are you aware, are you enlightened, have you been set free enough from you that you're able to even see that? Have you possessed the courage to

lovingly, gently engage, out of compassion, those who are entangled and ensnared in their transgressions?

Have you accepted the rebuke or the gentle exposure of your own entanglement in a way that is God-glorifying? How quickly are you able to spot and then meet the burdens of others? When is the last time you just noticed someone was struggling with anything, and engaged? Has your identity in Christ made you generous? Has your identity in Christ freed you up to serve, love, and encourage others?

Has faith, working through love, enabled you to, as Galatians 5 said, serve one another, love your neighbor as yourself, and outdo someone else in honor? I've always loved that. He turns honoring people into a competition. Outdo one another in honor. "Oh, you're trying to out-honor me? Well, here's *this!*" Do we have that type of culture here? May the Holy Spirit of God create it more and more and more fully.

Let me lay this before you to close us out. What, in your own heart and in your own life, needs to be confessed and repented of today? If the good news, the gospel, is that you're reconciled to God in Christ, therefore reconciled to yourself, therefore reconciled to others, are there those we need to seek out and ask forgiveness of? Are there those who we have noticed are drowning, and we've been too cowardly to lovingly engage?

Did this text expose in us that we have a failure to believe our identity is solid and sound in Christ? Do we need to confess a lack of belief in the gospel that gets its feet on the ground and works itself out in daily life? Do we need to be more serious about sin? Are we now entangled, ourselves? I pray that the Holy Spirit of God would stir up, stir in, and point you toward an identity that will set you free. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, thank you for these men and women. Thank you for the opportunity to just let the Word of God read us today, that you might stir up in our hearts now what needs to be stirred up. There has been much said in multiple different directions, but I pray more and more and more that, here at The Village Church, and at the churches of those who are listening on the podcast, that you would create this type of environment.

I pray that you would create a place where we bear with one another our burdens, that we engage one another when we see entanglements and those who have fallen into transgressions, those who are drowning, that we would gently engage, love, rescue, and restore, by your grace and power, that we would gladly look inside ourselves to see if we're walking in obedience to the opportunities you've given us rather than look outside of ourselves at the opportunities that others are walking in and taking advantage of.

May you make us, by your grace alone, motivated by love alone, more obedient to all that you've commanded us in Christ. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

I love you guys.

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