

# Brotherhood

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Date: 28 January 2015

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, congratulations everyone who's braved the snow, and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk.

We're working through the finishing straights now of Paul's letter to the Galatians, looking at the marks of true freedom in Christ. But before we turn to read chapter 6 together, let me encourage you as ever to stay behind at the end if you can, and help yourself to a coffee and a bite to eat, and a bit of time together.

But for now, let's turn to God's Word, and to page 975 in the Blue Bibles. And our passage today is the last verse of chapter 5 of Galatians, and the first 10 verses of chapter 6.

Let me read from Galatians 5.25, where Paul repeats his big message of last week. Galatians 5.25. If we live by the Spirit, he said, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

[ 1 : 12 ] Brothers, if anyone's caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourselves, lest you too be tempted.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing, he deceives himself.

But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

One who is taught the Word must share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

[ 2 : 14 ] So let us not grow weary of doing good. For in due season we will reap, if we don't give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Father God, we thank you that once again you've drawn us together this afternoon to come under your words and be brought back to the cross.

We thank you once again for the wonderful ways that you've shown your patience, loving kindness to each one of us in the Lord Jesus. We thank you for the way you've persevered with us in spite of our stumbling and our faltering and even our pride.

And we want to thank you especially for those brothers and sisters that you've blessed each one of us with. For the Christians who trod Jesus' path before us and brought us patiently to him.

For those who've modeled the grace and humility and the love of Jesus to us. For friends who've been there when we've fallen.

[ 3 : 38 ] To pick us up out of the dust and care for us. And we ask that as we study these words together now, Christ's Spirit would get a firmer grip on our hearts so that our lives would become more and more shaped by his cross.

And the loving kindness he showed us. We ask that what we learn today would change us for the good of your church. And the glory of your son. Amen.

Well there's almost nothing in the world as precious to human beings as a true friend. You don't make many in a lifetime, do you?

And the instinct for companionship, to find a brother in arms, runs deeper inside of us than a knife can cut. But my daughter is just a three-year-old girl who has barely known sorrow.

And yet one thing will make her utterly stricken with grief. It's simply saying goodbye to a friend. Even one that she's squabbled with all morning long.

[ 4 : 45 ] And if there's anything at all that human beings fear more than death itself, it's dying alone and unloved. Isn't that right? People often mock Nelson's last words as he lay below the deck and shot through the spine.

Kiss me, Hardy, he said. It sounds so quaint now, doesn't it? And yet isn't the tenderness of a friend precisely what all of us would want? God seems to have made us as creatures designed to need each other.

And yet, if you ask us what gift you most wished God would give you to keep you walking with Christ, I wonder how many of us would ask for a good friend.

I think what Galatians 6 reveals is the single most underrated and unacknowledged spiritual gift of our age. It's not the gift of tongues or of prophecy or of any of the things that people seem to get all excited about.

No, the spiritual gift which God most treasures and we see most ambivalent to is the church. Brothers and sisters who walk alongside us.

[ 6 : 04 ] We've been looking for the past few weeks at Paul's answer to the problem of our sinful and selfish natures, our flesh. And he's called the Christian life a life of freedom.

But what that hasn't meant is freedom from our struggles. It means the freedom to hope for a real solution, not something we can do, but something we wait for.

And then last week we saw that freedom in Christ means duty. A duty to love our rescuer and to show that love by loving each other. To fulfill Christ's law of love through his spirit of love.

And so now in chapter 6 we come to Paul's third pillar of true freedom. Because thanks be to God we have not been abandoned to a lonely struggle.

Simply fending for ourselves against our flesh. Being joined to Christ automatically means being joined to each other. Fourteen times as this letter closes, Paul uses words like one another.

[ 7 : 13 ] Anyone. The household. The one who does this and the one who does that. And so our third mark of true freedom is fraternity.

Brotherhood. It seems that God in his wisdom has designed us as creatures who are not able to keep going to the end on our own.

Even after we've come to Christ and had our sin forgiven. In fact let me say something that I've never said before and I never dreamed I'd find myself saying now.

Now you and I stand very little chance of making it to heaven. Unless we belong to a charismatic church. Now that doesn't mean a church that does all sorts of weird things.

There's nothing about those in this letter. But it does mean something very supernatural. It means a church walking together in step with Jesus spirit.

[ 8 : 13 ] Verse 25. A church marked by the sorts of supernatural fruit that we looked at last week. So what does that look like on the ground?

I think Paul shows us two things today about true brotherhood. And they both flow from verse 26. That verse is really just the flip side of let us walk by the spirit.

Let us not become proud and provoking and jealous of each other. Next week we'll get one last ugly portrait of a church where conceit and jealousy rules.

But today Paul paints us a beautifully practical picture. Of brothers who understand that grace kills pride.

You see people who know the uncomfortable truths about their own heart. Are able to do two beautiful things. They can carry each other.

[ 9 : 12 ] Because they share the same struggle. And they can invest together. Because the same things matter to them. So firstly from verse 26 through to chapter 6 verse 5.

Brothers carry each other through a shared struggle. It's a paragraph all about how messed up people look after each other isn't it? But Paul's focus here isn't on the ones who know they've messed up.

He's interested in how the rest of us behave then. Brothers if anyone is caught in any transgression. You who are spiritual should restore him.

In a spirit of gentleness. If you've ever found yourself. Swallowed up. By behavior that's crept up on you. Well don't you think the word Paul uses in verse 1.

Is beautifully gracious. Your job. When I fall. As my brothers and sisters. Is to restore me. To put the pieces back together.

[10:19] It's the word used for fishermen. Mending their nets. And notice he doesn't give that job to some elite class. To the priests. Or the specially religious lot. No it's you who are spiritual.

Which in this letter just means the ordinary Galatian Christian. Everyone who's walking in step with Jesus. Because if it's Jesus spirit ruling them well.

They'll know what it means to care for someone gently. And tenderly. Isn't that how Christ deals with you? This is simply the fruit of his spirit at work.

Isn't it? Surely Jesus people ought to be the gentlest on earth. Because we know exactly how low we can sink ourselves. And how deeply he's waded into the filth.

To rescue us. We know don't we? That the struggle with the flesh. Is a struggle we all share. Or at least you'd think we know that.

[11:21] It might look different in you to me. I hope it does for your sakes. But the flesh is always ugly. No matter how you dress it up. There's one thing though which can stop us.

Being any earthly use to each other. And that is pride. Or as Paul puts it in verse 3. Being self-deceived. Thinking we're something. Thinking that there's something special about me.

That means that I'd never fall. As far as him. It's utterly graceless isn't it? Christless. And it totally disregards Jesus' law.

Remember what that law was all about for us too. It was about bearing each other's burdens. It was about love. But pride is just that way of religion. All over again.

It talks the talk. But it utterly misses. It's what God wants from his children. So keep watching yourselves says Paul. Lest you go the same way as your proud Galatian teachers.

[12:24] Unless we know our own hearts. We'll never be gentle enough. To be let loose on God's precious restoration project. I wonder if you remember that precious fresco that was ruined a few years ago.

In a Spanish church. I think we've got a picture of it up on the screens in a minute. You see one day an elderly lady took it upon herself to restore that painting. The problem was she barged in so proudly.

So confident in her own ability. That she forgot what a tender. Delicate job restoration is. And so what began as an unmistakable portrait of Christ.

Ended up looking like this. It's like something from the planet of the apes isn't it? Maybe cross with Josh Johnson our church apprentice. We can have a laugh when we look at that.

Because precious though it is. It's just a painting really. But then we have to remember what God wants from his church. He's making us into Christ's image isn't he?

[13:31] And what a grotesque thing that would be. If Jesus image became a mockery. Like that fresco. I think that happens when the cross gets pushed aside.

By our pride. So keep looking in the mirror Paul says to them. Let each one of you test his own work. Verse 4. Don't measure yourself against your stumbling brother.

And let yourself feel all smug. Because there's one test coming. Which each one of us will have to face on our own. When we answer to the Lord Jesus.

Verse 5. It'll be for our own works. And no one else's. And if there's any boasting to be done on that day. It'll be in what his spirit has done.

For us. No brother will be able to carry us through that judgment. Only the Lord Jesus himself. And only if we remember that.

[14:29] Will you and I be able to carry each other here and now. I find that this little paragraph describes. Something I desperately need from my fellow Christians.

But it also tells me something that I just. Don't much want to hear myself. It tells me that crucifying my flesh. Means crucifying my sense that I'm something special.

That my job or my preaching or my grand plans or my personality. Makes me something. We all want to believe that don't we?

We all want to believe that we're special. But God. But God. Wants us to be something far more ordinary. And far more supernatural.

He wants us to be the sort of broken people that other. Broken people can turn to. So that together like. Patience recovering from a stroke.

[15:29] We can learn how to walk again. In step with his spirit. Slowly. But surely. And that ought to be an incredibly. Practical lesson.

Shouldn't it? For me. It means that somehow. I just have to be better at making. Time. And making the opportunities. To care for someone else. Because we've got to be realistic.

It's. Just not going to happen on a Sunday morning. Or here in all the rush. And busyness of a lunchtime Bible talk. But if we take this responsibility.

Seriously. If we love each other. Then it has to happen sometime. Doesn't it? A couple of the men who come along here. Get up. Very early in the morning.

One day a week. So they can meet together. Before work. Over breakfast. They just have to make the opportunity at some point. Even if it's early. And all they do is.

[16:25] Talk a little bit. About how things are going at home. Or in the office. And then spend a few moments. Praying for each other. Simple really isn't it? If one of them makes a mess of something.

Or gets into trouble at home. Well he knows the others will be chasing him up. Making sure he puts it right. As just being brothers. Isn't it? Carrying each other.

Through a shared struggle. Well secondly. Thankfully. Christians. Have much more in common. Than just our sinful natures. As a church.

We've got a shared hope. A shared destiny. Which means that the things we value now. Will be shaped by that future we share.

Where we invest our time. And our money. And our efforts. It's going to be driven by the things that really matter to us. In the long term. And I think that is the message.

[17:22] Of verses 6 to 10. Brothers invest together. In a shared salvation. Now what on earth is the link. Do you think. Between verse 6.

And everything else. Paul's been saying up till now. One who is taught the word. Must share. Or partner. In all good things. With the one who teaches. It seems like a bit of a bolt from the blue.

Doesn't it? Perhaps. The cost of living crisis. Had reached Galatia already. And this is just. A bit of special pleading. From the pastor's union. A bit more money for the preacher. Or perhaps.

Paul has a reason for. Needling them a little bit. About how much they value the people. Who teach them the truth. This is written to a real church somewhere.

Isn't it? And he introduced. This whole section. Remember with verse 26. Let's. Not become conceited. And right after this verse. He's going to warn them a second time.

[18:20] About the danger of being self-deceived. And proud. So the question we have to ask ourselves is. What's the link between people who tend to be proud. And blind to themselves.

And people who don't really value. Bible teaching. Well you can work it out. Can't you? A proud Christian just. Doesn't think he needs to hear.

Uncomfortable truth. So I don't think it's really the pastor's pay. That Paul's worried about here. Partnering goes deeper than that. Doesn't it? We partner with our ears.

And with our hearts. It's happening right now. Isn't it? In this room. Otherwise. I'm just standing up here like an idiot. Giving a pointless lecture. Pride is.

Just the way we fool ourselves. Verse seven. Into thinking that the message. Is never for me. And Paul wants us to know that God. Isn't fooled as easily as we are.

[19:22] He's going to give us. Exactly what we've invested in. Whatever one sows. That. Will he also reap. Whatever you plant. That's what you'll end up harvesting.

It's a very simple illustration really. Isn't it? Just perfect. For thick skins and skulls. Like my ones. If you plant a cheap. Shriveled up old sea potato. Well don't expect a pineapple tree.

To pop up suddenly in the summertime. If you spend your lifetime. Investing in your own. Sinful flesh. Verse eight. Living proudly.

And complacently. Well don't expect a healthy reward. At the end of it. How stupid. That we think God is. It's really about what.

Age. Matters to us the most. Isn't it? Is it this age? The age of our own flesh? Or is it the age that Christ came. To deliver us into. Invest in this age.

[20:22] Sow. To the flesh. And the rewards. Are instant. We can have whatever we want. Or at least it feels like it now. We just have to remember the small print.

Don't we? Investments. Can go down. As well as up. And one day this age. Is going to go down. Verse eight. In fact it's heading towards death.

And decay. So is that really where we want to stake. Everything we have. You see the reward God gives us. Will be the great giveaway.

Won't it? Of what it is that we've really cherished. If we cherish this age. Well we'll perish. With this age. But if we keep going.

Verse nine. Because what matters to us most. Is the world to come. The new creation. Where one day. Something beautiful will grow. Something eternal.

[ 21 : 19 ] And right now. It doesn't look like much at all. Maybe just a little green shoot. Sticking out of the muck. That's what it's like with seeds. Isn't it? To believe that you and I.

Are going to grow into something beautiful. Takes a lot of patience. And a lot of trust. But if you believe that that's where the real value is.

Well. You'll plant the seeds in the ground. And wait patiently. And gently nurture whatever grows up. And notice Paul immediately puts that in practical terms.

What does it mean to sow to the spirit. And to wait patiently for God's harvest. Well. It means looking after each other. Verse nine. Once again. That's what Christ's spirit.

Asks for. Putting others. Before ourselves. Just like Christ does. Doing good. To everyone. Verse 10. And especially. To the people who are actually in our lives.

[ 22 : 19 ] The church. Why do we find it so easy? I wonder. To give money to Woxfam. Some remote and distant cause. But so hard. To love the people close up to us.

The ones in the church family. Verse 10. The household. Who's stumbling and struggling. We actually have to live with. But it's then that it counts. Isn't it? That's when patience.

And kindness. And gentleness. And self-control. Make all the difference. Well let's draw a little application together. Every so often we read the Bible.

And we're reminded that God sees. Right through us. He knows exactly what I am. In fact. He knows it better than I do. He knows what I've deceived myself.

Into thinking that I am. He knows just how much room. And how many excuses I make for my flesh. He knows how little time.

[ 23 : 25 ] And practical love. I give to others. He knows how tight I am with my money. He knows how much more. I would value a new watch.

Or a new pair of shoes. Than the cost of a meal. With a brother. Who needs a little encouragement. Just notice as we close. That at no point in this paragraph.

Does Paul directly talk. About money. Doing good to all. Will certainly be costly. Won't it? But Paul just seems to think about cost.

In a different way to me. It's not cash. It's not cash. That you spend on a brother's need. And then lose. No. It's seed. That you plant in the ground.

You invest. And then you wait patiently. Until one day. All that time. And effort. And tears.

[ 24 : 24 ] That we've spent on each other. One day. In the blink of an eye. That will be all that's left. We'll look at each other. And we'll be astonished.

At what Christ. Has made us. And we'll thank the Lord. For the brothers and sisters. He gave us. To keep us. Walking on the road.

Let's pray. Our loving. Heavenly Father. We thank you again. For. The cross of your son.

Where our curse. Was taken away. And our brokenness. Covered over. We thank you. For the gift. Of each other. That you've. Placed us.

Within a church. With. Friends. To share our struggles. And to share our hope. Hope. And we ask. That you would make us. More and more conscious.

[ 25 : 18 ] Of the truth. About ourselves. That we would be. In our own eyes. Just what we are. In yours. So that gently. And graciously.

We would be persistent. In helping each other. Apply your word. To our lives. And so. To your spirit. For Jesus sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I personally have takenavors candidates to help connect this to any competencies. I've seen positions of profesional semesters in ■■■■ glimpse.

For example, roles and Reserve ■■■■ are! Iajitra straps so that they don't have an individual role. So as a celebrity as well,