

Life of Love in the Spirit

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- [0:00] Well, good morning, everyone. It's a privilege to be able to open up God's Word this morning. And what a passage we have to look at. Please do keep it open. You know, God's Word is the most important thing that we will hear from this morning.
- But please do keep it open to refer to as we go through. I'm JT. I'm one of the elders. Just add my welcome to you. And we've been going through this letter of Galatians.
- And we'll get stuck in in a minute to what we have just heard. But, you know, if you could sum up your life in one word, what would it be? What characterizes your life?
- You know, maybe you would say hard work. You know, my life is all about hard work. It's all about working really hard. That's two words, but you'll forgive me. What characterizes your life? Is it difficulties?
- What characterizes your life? Is it hope? Well, here, Paul, who is writing this letter, he exhorts us to live a life that is characterized by love.
- [1:06] A life that is characterized by love. So this is chapter 6. As Graham says, we've been going through, I think this is something like the 11th sermon in this series.
- So where have we been? Maybe you've not been here. Well, Galatians, it's a letter that Paul writes to the churches of Galatia. In terms of the Bible picture, the Lord Jesus has come, he has died, he has resurrected.
- And then the early church has been planted. And the Christians, in a sense, they are finding their way of how to live in this new faith that they have, in this new life that they have.
- But this church, or the group of churches in Galatia, they are under pressure by these Jews. They have come in and they have said, you need to follow the customs of the Jewish religion.
- They are saying that Jesus isn't enough. You need Jesus plus X, Y, and Z. And the main thing that they are trying to put on them is circumcision. But Paul, he has explained so far through this whole letter, and it's a bit of a unique letter that he just keeps going on and on about the same thing in a marvelous way.
- [2:20] But he explains that it is by faith alone that we are saved. By grace, through faith, in Jesus alone.
- The law is powerless to save. These rules, these customs, they're no good. We need Jesus. And we've seen in the last couple of weeks, we've seen this call to serve one another.
- In chapter 5, verse 14, it says, Love your neighbor as yourself. Which, as you may know, that was what Jesus told his followers to do.
- And last week, Graham Dodds, he took us through walking by the Spirit, or walking free, as he described it. And we saw the fruit of the Spirit, if we live in the Spirit, if the Lord Jesus is our Savior.

You know, just before this passage, I'm going to read chapter 5, verse 25 to 26, because it's worth remembering that this is all one letter. This would have all been read together. This was not small sections.

[3 : 25] The chapters in our Bibles are just put in to help us reference them. It says this, If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. So Paul goes on from describing what life in the Spirit looks like, to illustrate a life of love in the Spirit.

What you could say is that here, Paul gets practical. Okay? So what a passage we have, and we're going to look at it. What we're going to look at this morning, we're going to see rightfully restoring in verse 1.

We're going to see burden bearing in verse 2 to 5. In 6 to 8, we're going to see selfless sowing. And finally, 9 to 10, we're going to see patiently persevering.

For any English students or scholars out there, I don't know if that's an okay phrase to say, but it worked for my alliteration, so I'm sticking to it. So let's get stuck in to rightfully restoring in verse 1.

[4 : 39] It starts by saying brothers and sisters. This is a loving term. It is a church context. It is describing our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Graham just described the sisters that have joined in membership to Brunsfield. Our sisters in Christ. This is a church context that it's speaking to.

It is speaking to Christians. Christians. And what it is saying that if there is a believer who has sinned, a believer who has really got it wrong, has really messed up, which we all do, then you who live by the Spirit, it says, this is mature Christians, those who show that fruit of the Spirit we looked at last week.

Not just anyone, not new believers who may be susceptible, as it says at the end, to falling into temptation, into being tempted by that same sin. Well, these Christians are to restore the person who has stepped out wrongly.

They are to do so gently. You know, this restoration word that is used there, interestingly, it's the same word that is used to mend fishing nets.

[5 : 58] To mend fishing nets. Now, fishermen, hardy men, you know, tough. It's a tough gig. But if you ever watch someone mending a fishing net, it needs to be done gently. There is a real skill involved.

It's more like knitting than anything. And that is the idea here, this gentle restoration of someone who has stepped in the wrong direction, in terms of sin.

It's also the same word used for the resetting of bones. Now, I'm not a doctor. I've only broken one bone in my life. But, you know, you don't want your doctor to be really rough and ready with you, do you?

You want them to be gentle. You want them to do it in the correct manner, a necessary manner. But you want them to do it in a way that is gentle and doesn't cause unnecessary pain.

And that is the idea here of restoring one another if someone has sinned and needs put back.

[6 : 58] So what does it need put back to? What's it going on about here? Well, it's restoring someone to that previous moral condition. Sin. We need to know the seriousness of sin.

Sin causes grievous harm. Sin damages us as Christians. We need to be put right on the right path once again.

You know, the gentleness that is described here, it's in sharp contrast to the law. The law that Paul teaches that all it did was point out our flaws.

But here, those are to be rightfully restored in that gentle manner. So that's number one. Number one way of living out practically the life of love in the Spirit of God. Secondly, we have burden bearing.

[7:56] Look with me to verse 2. Bear one another's burdens. Or yours might say, carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Now you might be sitting there and go, hold on a minute. You told me there was no more law. You're contradicting yourself here. What does it mean by the law of Christ? Well, this is Christ's general teaching.

If we look through the New Testament and reread what the Lord Jesus was all about. Well, as I said at the start, the Lord Jesus was all about love.

Not in the kind of way of banners and headbands and floral scenes. Not in that kind of way. But in a practical, a working out of your life in love.

The Lord Jesus' example as he lived with those around him. And especially as we thought about earlier, that love your neighbor as yourself.

[9:00] We're reminded of that in chapter 5. Jesus' teaching. Love your neighbor as yourself. The loving instruction of Christ. That is what the law of Christ is.

To those who already have life in him. Enabled by the Holy Spirit within us. And in doing so, we are to carry one another's burdens.

You know, when I was thinking about this, I was thinking of the old lady crossing the street. I tried to find a picture of an old lady carrying two heavy shopping bags. At the men's breakfast yesterday, the speaker, he said, Use AI if you ever need a picture.

Because you'll get exactly what you want. Because that's what he did. But it was too late. I'd already sent the PowerPoint off. So this is what we've got. But you know, you see an old lady or an old man crossing the street with heavy bags straining.

You can picture it, can't you? You know, you would like to think that someone would go and would share that burden. Would help them along across the road. Carry each other's burdens.

[10:07] What are burdens? It's not shopping bags. Burdens, well, there are moral faults that we can't carry alone.

Failures. Testing situations in life. Temptations. Trials. The word here, burdens, it has that real sense of heaviness.

Of weight. Of gravity. It is a plural word. These burdens are to be shared. Are to be carried. For one another. You know, the Christian life, it isn't isolation.

I think you know that because you are here. And that is great. It is great to gather as a church family. It is great to have new members join. Not so that Brunsfield can say we've got X amount of members.

But so that we can carry each other's burdens. We can meet on a Sunday. We can meet during the week. We can say, how are you? No, really, how are you? We can look out for one another.

[11:15] You know, like the illustration, we should ask for help if we are struggling. You would like to think that an old person carrying their bags would say, here, son, could you help me?

But likewise, if we're the young person in that story, we would like to think that we would go to them and say, can I help you? I see that you're struggling. That is what the Christian life is meant to be like.

Christian life is community. The church family. Yes, at Brunsfield, but globally. The beauty of going on holiday sometimes is you can go to a different church and you have that instant connection with someone because you share that faith in Jesus.

Christian life is community. And there's many examples of that in the Bible. So Paul moves on to verse 3 to 5.

It says this. Let's remind ourselves. For if anyone thinks that he is something and they are not, they deceive themselves.

- [12:24] Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone without comparing themselves to someone else. For each one should carry their own load.

This section is a real warning against pride. Keeping in mind our own faults.

Keeping in mind our own weaknesses. It helps us to be sympathetic to others. It is a mutual bearing of burdens.

It is not that the good people help those that are struggling. We all struggle at times. It is a mutual bearing of burdens. Humility. Realizing that we are nothing of ourselves.

It helps us if we are restoring others if they have stepped out in sin. Don't play the comparison game. It doesn't work.

- [13:22] All of us are compared, not to one another. You know, I can't say, well, I'm better than that guy, so that's fine. We are compared to perfection. That is God's holy standard.

God is holy. God is just. God cannot bear sin because he is perfect. Our comparison is not one another, but it is the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus, the one who came down, he was fully God, and yet he was fully man.

He was fully man so he could be tested, and he went through trials and temptations just as we are, and yet he is fully God, so he never sinned. He never messed up.

That is our comparison. That is our comparison. We will never match up. We will never be good enough. It's only through the Lord Jesus' work on the cross that we have thought about and sung about already this morning.

It is only through trusting in him that he has done it all, that we, nothing we do is enough, that we need to rely on him.

- [14:26] He went all the way to that cross. He took that punishment that we deserved, that substitution. We deserve that. And why did he go through that?

Why did he die? Why did he take sin upon himself in those hours of darkness? Well, he defeated sin. He defeated death.

He rose again, showing that what he claimed was true. Why? So that if we trust in him, then we can have that life in him.

We can have our sins forgiven, and that one day, when either the Lord Jesus comes back, or if we die, then we can go to heaven, and we can spend life eternal with a God who made us, who loves us, and who wants us to worship him, and love him, and be with him forever, otherwise known as heaven.

So be self-looking, rather than focused on how others match up to us. I don't know when you were thinking about this, but I was thinking about the Pharisee in Luke chapter 18.

- [15:36] The Pharisee, he goes to the temple to pray, and he stands there, chest puffed out, arms allowed, and he, arms allowed? Arms wide. And he says aloud, in a loud voice, and he says, I thank you that I, I'm paraphrasing here, I thank you that I'm not like that sinner over there.

I thank you that I give money to the temple. I thank you that I am righteous. I thank you that I do everything good. He was comparing himself, to the lowly tax collector, who was there, in humility, who couldn't even lift up his eyes to God, just crying out for help, and forgiveness.

But you know, it was the tax collector, who went away justified that day, because his heart was correct. And as we finish this section, verse 5, each one should carry their own load.

Once again, we're contradicting ourselves, aren't we? I thought we were to carry one another's burdens. Well, our load here, it's a different word in Greek.

Not that I'm a scholar, but so I'm told by people cleverer than me. But it's a personal term. The other one was plural. This is a singular word. And what is it?

[16:53] Well, it's our obligations before God. We each have an individual responsibility before God for our moral condition. Our actions, our words, that's all on us.

One day we will face God in judgment. We will either face God in judgment as one who hasn't trusted in the Lord Jesus. We will be on our own.

And as I've said before, we will not match up to God's perfect standards. So we will not be able to spend eternity with him. Or we will go as believers and God will judge us on our work on earth.

We will be judged for our work as Christians, how we lived out our lives in faith. We are not saved just to sit back and wait for heaven. We are saved from our sins, but we are saved to good works in love as we are thinking about this morning.

So we should carry our own load. We cannot rely on others. We cannot rely on others. Oh, my church, they were great at doing outreach into the community.

[18:03] So I'm just going to ride on the back of that. Oh, my family, well, I grew up in a Christian household. So surely when I get to heaven, God will let me in. It doesn't work like that. We each carry our own load.

So we have this balance in the Christian life. We have that balance of relying on one another, helping one another, that communal aspect, but also our personal responsibility before God.

And we each just need to work that out for ourselves. And so selfless sowing. Selfless sowing.

Verse six. Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructors.

Pay your pastor. There's a simple one. I don't know if I was giving this on purpose, whether Graham didn't want to stand here himself and say, pay me. But you know, it's right.

[19:05] Those who give up, I was going to say a normal life, but that's not fair. Those who give up, you know, a job where they work and then they do other things for God in their spare time.

Those who give their whole life to God's work. Those who make it their full-time job. Well, they deserve to be recompensed, don't they? That is what it's saying here.

Whether that is in a church, in a pastor context, whether it is those who go across to the other side of the world to speak about Jesus. But what it's saying here is support them.

They deserve to be supported in what they want to do for God. Those who have the courage and boldness to step out in faith and to serve God full-time.

So yes, pay them. But you know, also support them. Pray for those who do such things. Care for them.

[20:02] Love them. It's not an easy gig. Look out for those who work for God full-time or part-time. And so verse 7.

In verse 7 we have, Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. A solemn verse.

What is it? Well, it's a reminder, a very needed reminder of our selfish ways. I'm a bit of a DIYer. My wife will say in the house, she'll say, Oh, we need this done.

And I'll go, I could do that. I could do that. No problem. Why should we get a man in? I'm sure I could try. Go on YouTube. Work it out. And then where I end up is I end up at Screwfix.

I'm sure there's other good, reputable places you can buy stuff. But I like Screwfix. You go on the app. Search for what you need. You go through the payment process.

[21 : 01] How do you want to pay? And it says something like this. It says, Donate 51 pence. Round it up to 20 pounds. It helps the Screwfix foundations.

It does good work. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And you know what I pick? No thanks. It's 51 pence. Every time, no thanks.

There's no greater reminder to me of my selfish heart than the Screwfix website. I don't know if you're more of a McDonald's fan than Screwfix. They do a similar thing.

Often you get to the end, it says, Would you like to round up three pence? How many times do you just go, Not today. Not today. You know, it's an insight to our selfish heart, isn't it? We're all the same.

We might like to think that we are generous with our time and our money. And I'm sure a lot of us are. But you know, we sometimes need reminders of our selfish ways. And that's what Paul is doing here.

[22 : 00] Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. And it's not talking in this section. Let me just be clear. It's not talking in this section about sinners and sins.

This is not about salvation. It's talking about our meanness. Our lack of generosity. God knows. God knows our heart behind things.

He cannot be fooled. Here we have this exhortation, this encouragement to Christian giving. It is part of our service to God.

And so it goes on. It says, Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Maybe like you, you read that for the first time this morning and had to reread it and read it again. And you're still trying to work out what on earth that means. Well, this was written into a context of farmers.

[23 : 03] So most of the people who were reading this, they were either full-time farmers or they would have had a plot, kind of like an allotment, and they would have grown food to feed themselves. They were self, I can't remember the word for that, self-subsistence farming.

Is that what they call it? Anyway, not important. But that's what they were up to. So to them, this imagery made a lot of sense. You reap what you sow. What you put in, you get out. An example for us nowadays, I don't know if you remember the Green Giant advert.

So the kids are sitting eating their dinner and they've got peas on their plate. And if anyone's got kids, kids don't like vegetables. So what it is, and it says, the mum's saying, oh, you know, you are what you eat.

What goes in, that's what you are. So the kid goes, oh, if I eat a broccoli, will I become a broccoli? And dodgy parenting, but she's like, oh, yeah, yeah. She said, well, what if I eat jolly green giant peas?

Will I become a big giant? Oh, yeah, that's what will happen. So the kid starts wolfing the peas. You know, if it was my kids, they would just be running around as big bits of tomato pasta because that's what they eat.

[24:11] But that would be a modern day equivalent of what this verse is saying. You are what you eat. What you put in is what you get out. Here we have this farming analogy.

Let me just say, let me be clear that this is not what people refer to as the prosperity gospel. This is not saying that if you give to the church, you will become rich, that things in life will go swimmingly.

That is not what it is saying. We are not promised that in the Bible. There is a sense here that what we give to God, we will get back. And it may well be that it is in material things, but it is not guaranteed and it is certainly not something that is promised.

But what does it say? Well, it says, number one is those who sow to please their flesh. What that is saying is that those that put God aside in order to serve themselves.

And then there's those who sow to please the Spirit and that is saying those who put themselves aside in order to serve God. That is the two contrasting groups that we see here.

[25:31] As I said, this is not about salvation. So this isn't working for our salvation. Hopefully that has been clear. We are not working for eternal life, for that forgiveness.

No. Put God aside to serve yourself, sowing to please their flesh. This is probably Christians who are investing and we're talking money in the context, but it can be anything.

It can be time. It can be our resources. It can be our energy. Those who are investing in the world and the empty pleasures that it offers, that temporary happiness, these things that don't last, well, they will reap destruction.

It's not talking about eternal separation from God. What does it mean by destruction? Well, sin is serious. And if we are idolizing other things, then we will have distance from God, distance from His joy, distance from the peace that He gives.

Whereas if we are investing in God's things, if we are sowing to please the Spirit, then we will have life eternal. It is not talking about our salvation, but it is talking about fulfillment now.

[26:46] This word that is used is different. It is talking about the joy and contentment in our lives that we can have now on earth. Communion with God, that fellowship with God the Father through the Son.

So here's a challenge. If we are struggling in our Christian life, you know, instead of maybe blaming God for spiritual weakness, for lack of sense of power, where's my joy in God's things?

But what are you putting into it? Because what you put in is what you get out. You know, it's not just harmful things, but a lot of the time it's just useless things.

Yes, there is massive damage if we are watching explicit images and videos on our phones. Yes, there is massive damage if we are committing sins that we just know are not right.

But you know, our time is often spent doom scrolling, isn't it? Just looking at useless things. It's a total waste of time. We all do it. mind-numbing content that is just no good for us.

[27:59] Or maybe it's being able to outbench press that really strong person in the gym. Maybe that's where we devote our time to. Potentially we're wasting money on flashy possessions, experiences that won't fulfill, meals out that just we forget about.

Someone put it like this, cut out the harmless amusement, unprofitable, frivolities, time-wasting engagements that accomplish nothing and lead nowhere.

Fill time with the word of God, prayer, and service. How are we spending our time? What are we investing in our lives? I'm not saying don't go and have fun.

I'm not saying, you know, we must live a minimalist life and we must lock ourselves away from everything and we can't enjoy ourselves or do nice things. I'm not saying that at all. I like going out for meals.

I like having things probably too much. But you know, what is our focus? Where is our heart in all of these things?

[29:08] What do we really value? That's what it's getting at here. What does a life of love look like? Well, finally, patiently persevering.

Verse 9 and 10, it finishes by saying this, let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Don't weary in doing good. Yes, to all people, but especially to fellow believers, to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are waiting for that reward of heaven, aren't we? We live in hope, that assured hope that we are going there one day and that is our aim in life. You know, as it says, it says the phrase, God's proper time, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest.

[30:19] We will be rewarded for the good that we do for God. It might well be in this life, it may well be in the next. You know, in that farming analogy, and once again, I don't have a clue about these things, but you do not sow and reap on the same day.

If you get a seed from an apple and put it in the ground and stand and watch it, looks like apple crumbles off the menu.

You're not going to get it on the same day, are you? You reap what you sow, yes, but you wait. You have to wait. And as it is, we are not in control of the timing.

God is in control of the timing. We are just to faithfully do good to all, live out that life of love. You know, we are linked to every single other person on earth through creation.

Naturally speaking, we are all linked. But you know, we are especially linked to fellow believers, fellow Christians, the church. we are linked spiritually through our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[31:38] So as we live this out, well, what is some of these things that are doing good? Well, he's just summarizing what he's already said. Living a life of love in the Spirit by restoring gently, by bearing burdens, supporting our teachers, giving generously, and persevering in all that we do.

You know, it's a tough gig that. These things aren't easy. It's not easy to live up to these things. As we thought about, we have the Spirit's help.

We are living a life of love, not on our own, but in the Spirit. The Lord Jesus, look to him. Don't look to other people.

The Lord Jesus is our ultimate example of how to live a life of love here on earth. So look to the Lord Jesus as our ultimate example.

Let me just pray before we sing a few hymns to close. God and Father, we just thank you for your word.

[32:52] We thank you for Paul's letter to the Galatians and the truth that he writes in many of his letters. We thank you that we can apply these things to our lives nowadays because we face the same struggles, we face the same difficulties.

We thank you, as it says in Hebrews, that we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but who is tested and trialed in the same ways that we are and yet he did not sin.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus. We thank you for his death and resurrection. And the work of the cross that allows us to come before you, Father, and that when you look upon us, you see the righteousness of Christ, not our sinful ways.

So we thank you that if we have faith in the Lord Jesus that we have been made right before you and that we have that glorious future to look forward to. So as we do so, help us to live a life that is worthy of that calling we have received and to go out and to love one another.

And so help us as each of us works these things out in our lives this week. Give us the strength. We thank you that the Holy Spirit is within us and we just ask your blessing as we continue to think on these things and as we respond in worship now.

[34 : 26] In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.