

Doing good to all

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[0:00] Thank you, Valerie, for reading the Bible for us there. Do keep that passage open before you.! What we've been hearing in this letter to the church in the region of Galatia, we've been hearing about the glorious gospel that saves us, which the Galatians need to be reminded depends not on their own work, but depends entirely on the finished work of Jesus. One of the key verses in the whole book is just a few chapters before, chapter 2, verse 16, which says this, know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

We are not justified, we're not made right before God by our own working, but only by faith in someone, not ourselves, but from the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the clear message of this book. Galatians chapter 5, verse 1 says, It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. And we've been exploring, what does that freedom in Christ look like? And we're going to explore more of that today. And one of the things that the gospel frees us from is, it frees us from comparing ourselves with one another.

Thinking, how do I match up to other people? And so that's why we started our reading in chapter 5, verse 26.

Because Paul says, don't play the comparison game. Do you hear that? Verse 26, let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

[2:22] That word conceited, it means self-glorying. Look at me. Life's about me, but there's actually a far better words that our English translations should be using there.

A word, vain glory, which means empty of glory. It goes deeper than conceited does.

It means that sort of desperate recognition that we have for affirmation from others. Constantly trying to prove ourselves, constantly comparing ourselves to others.

And there's two types of players in the comparison game. They're either those who provoke others or are envious of others.

And so those that are provocative, that they just speak all about themselves or do other people down.

[3:39] Perhaps saying things like this, I'm glad I'm not as poor as they are. I'm glad I don't behave like they do. I'm glad I don't have their singing voice.

Or the other way you can play the comparison game is by being envious of others. And so constantly feeling like you're not matching up to them and what they have.

And so you think things like, I wish I've got the relationships they've got. I wish I knew as much as they did. I wish I was as beautiful as they were.

And either way, it's all to do with our self-image. Either I see myself as superior to others, and so I look down on them, or I see myself as inferior to others, and say I wish I had what they have.

But the gospel frees us from that. Because that's all about trying to justify where we're at in life.

[4:49] Justify ourselves and our position in life. Remember that key verse in Galatians. We're justified, made right with God by faith in Jesus alone.

The gospel helps us to look outside of ourselves. To see that the solution is not found in either me being better than others, or trying to live up to what others that are higher than me are.

The gospel says, you are a sinner. You cannot be good enough for God on your own, but Jesus has come, and he's the solution you need.

And as we heard last week, he is at work in us, in a deep and profound way, by his spirit growing, that gospel fruit in us. Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Recreating us, changing who we are to be more like Christ. And so, being conceited or vainglorious, it doesn't have a place in the Christian life.

[6:13] It shouldn't have a place in us, if we're walking in step with the Spirit. Spirit. And so, how does this help us then, as we go through the next few verses?

Well, it helps us to remember three things. If being conceited, if being vainglorious, we're always looking at others and doing them down, or trying to be like them.

The gospel frees us from that, and helps us to remember others in love. That's what Paul goes on to say in the next few verses. Remember others.

Remember others in love. Because Jesus has loved you. Think of how completely staggering the Lord Jesus' love for you is.

How Jesus, mighty God, the one through whom creation came to be, his love was shown as he stooped down to wash the feet of his disciples.

[7:35] A job that was really reserved for the lowest of slaves. Not a job for the king of the universe.

And then, consider how even more completely staggering Jesus' love for us. Jesus, who's mighty God, through whom creation came to be, stooped down even lower than that.

To be humbled to death, even death on a cross. He really did come to serve us.

Not to be served. And he gave his life as a ransom for us. His love for us is astonishing. And it frees us to remember others in love.

Paul says this, chapter 5, verse 14. The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command. Love your neighbor as yourself.

[8:46] Love as Jesus loves. Love your neighbor as yourself. And in this way, Paul says, you fulfill the law. And he says very similar in our passage this morning, chapter 2, verse, chapter 6 even, verse 2.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. But hang on, Paul.

You've been telling us the law doesn't save us. That's Paul's big message to the Galatians. Why are you then saying I should love and carry others' burdens because this fulfills the law?

Why are you saying that? Well, we need to remember what freedom in Christ is. The illustration we used a few weeks ago is the illustration of someone who has their driving license.

They've passed the test. They're free to drive on the roads. But if you start driving up Viaduct Road at 60 miles an hour, you're not going to enjoy that freedom to drive for very long.

[10:04] So too with Christian living. We are free in Christ, but surely that freedom doesn't mean we just indulge in our sinful nature as we please and think, it's okay, Christ has freed me.

Don't live recklessly. That's not what Paul is encouraging here. That's not how it's wise to be using our Christian freedom.

No, we're free now to enjoy living life under the rule and reign of God who has loved us and provided us with a great salvation.

And so we are free to obey him. Remember earlier, we were told in Galatians that we're children of God.

We're free to please our Father. If you've got a good Father, you'll want to please them. You'll want to do what they say because they know that they love you and they think the best, they want the best for you.

[11:22] And their commands come in love. We're free to obey God's commands. And so we're free to obey God's commands to love, to remember others, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

And Paul says there's two ways in which he particularly wants this church, to remember others. The first is found in verse one.

Remember those caught in sin. Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves or you also may be tempted.

Sin is to be treated very seriously in the Christian life. John Owen, the old Puritan writer, wisely said, be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Don't be playing with it. Be ruthless with it. And we need to take action because it just doesn't belong to the Christian, does it? Last week we spoke about that war between our old sinful nature and the new self in Christ.

[12:44] And in our passage, in our reading last week, we heard these words, verse 24, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh, that's the sinful nature, with its passions and desires.

Our sinful nature has been crucified. It doesn't have a place. It's died with Jesus. So don't let it revive itself.

Don't let it resurrect. See it as we should. But there's times that I'm sure we don't see it as we should.

It's a bit like when I'm eating dinner at home and I get a little bit of mess on my face from what I'm eating or the other day as it was all over my hands and stuff when we're eating burgers at home, sauce all over the place.

But I don't see it. But Becky does see it and thankfully tells me, you've got this all over your face. And if she didn't do that, who knows what I'd be looking like today.

[13:52] Because sometimes we just don't see the mess we're in. And so that's why Paul here encourages us to be pointing out sin in others' lives.

But we need to be careful how we do it. Don't be doing it in a conceited, provocative way. Because if you're doing that, you're going to say, hey, you're terrible.

Be like me. And that's not going to be very encouraging. And if we're envious of others, perhaps we're going to look at someone who's caught in sin and be like, yes, finally, I'm better than they are. Got one over on them and you're not going to point it out. But Paul says, no, you should point it out. Restore that person.

But do it like this. Do it gently. The way of love is to show gentleness towards brothers and sisters caught in sin.

[15:04] Realizing, remembering, it could be us there. We are prone to sin too. Yet we stand by the grace of God. Being gentle, I don't think it's being timid and shy.

The Lord Jesus was gentle. But when he needs to be angry, like with those money changes in the temple, he showed it.

But he was the most gentle human being on earth. And so, to be gentle, I think, is to speak the truth in love.

To come alongside a brother or sister and say, I've noticed this is happening in you. It doesn't seem to be good. It needs to stop.

How can I pray for you in this? How can I help you to fight against this? And look to the Lord together for the strength that that person needs to fight against this sin.

[16:17] So remember others. Remember those caught in sin. And secondly, remember those with burdens to bear. Remember those with burdens to bear.

Verse 2. Carry each other's burdens and then this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. We can have all sorts of burdens on us.

All sorts of worries that weigh us down. Unemployment, financial pressures, pressures of an essay deadline, pressures at work, pressures raising children, you name it.

And we build up these burdens and it's a bit like we're carrying this big backpack on our back and it's heavy and it's weighing us down and we're struggling to live.

That's what the burdens there mean. That's what the word means there. That Paul is using. And it can lead to all sorts of worries and anxieties and we know we should cast our worries upon the Lord but when we're filled and overwhelmed by burdens it's not always very easy for us to do that.

[17:31] Like it should be. The Christian life isn't meant to be lived alone. And so we don't have to hold these burdens all by ourselves.

We can share them with one another. Just a side note on that. These two verses at the very least show us the Christian life shouldn't be lived alone.

It's good, it's important for us to be in a church family. A church family that knows us and loves us and wants to support us in Christian living.

Otherwise, how can someone point out to you where you're caught in a sin if they don't know you? How can you share each other's burdens if you don't get to know one another?

It's really important that we're in a church family. Particularly a church family like ours made up of all sorts of different ages and stages of life. Some in this room have been through all sorts of things that can really help those of us who are younger in the faith.

[18:49] Perhaps we need to be making the most of our tea and coffee times after a service to be sharing our burdens with others. I know when I've done this, when I've told someone something I'm struggling with and just telling them it and sometimes praying with them just feels like it releases a lot of pressure.

It doesn't change that situation but it helps me to face it knowing someone else knows, someone else is praying and the Lord's got this.

To pray for one another. Do use the time that we have after our services to pray for one another. And if we have much capacity as well maybe through the week say, is there any way I can help you through this week with this?

That might not be possible for all of us but it might be for some. And we can do that because of the love that Jesus has shown to us. Remember that He is our ultimate burden carrier.

He carried that burden, that weight of our sin on His shoulders at the cross. He was a man of sorrows bearing our sin.

[20:11] So in Him and the love that He's shown to us we are free to show each other this kind of love. But secondly, we should also remember ourselves. This passage also makes sure we view ourselves rightly.

Helps us to view ourselves not in a conceited, vain, glorious way but also not to completely just forget ourselves.

That's not right either. The command of God is to love your neighbor as yourself and I think that assumes we're loving ourselves as well. And when we remember ourselves we need to remember ourselves in humility.

A right humility. Verse 1 if someone is caught in a sin you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently but here's when it turns to ourselves but watch yourselves or you also may be tempted.

We need a right humility when we're pointing out others' sins. Don't view this command as thinking great I can be someone's savior because we're not.

[21:34] Only the Lord Jesus is the savior. Only his spirit works in us to produce that fruit. It's good to come alongside each other but don't think you are more than you are.

You are. As we point out other sins remember we ourselves are sinners saved by grace.

Verse 3 continues this right focus on ourselves. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not they deceive themselves. If we think we are spiritually elite we're in a dangerous position.

We are indeed of great value and worth to the Lord. Look at what he's done for you in Jesus but you're not all sorted. You're not the perfect Christian.

There is much good in us and it's been produced by the spirit growing that fruit in us. and where we see good in ourselves praise God for it.

[22:52] That's what Paul sort of goes on to say as he also says don't be comparing. Verse 4 and 5 each one of us should test our own actions then we can take pride in themselves alone without comparing themselves to someone else.

For each one of us should carry their own load. we can compare ourselves to others as much as we like and we're never going to be satisfied with who God has made us to be with our own self-image. As we've said the gospel it frees us from that. It is needless especially when you consider verse 5 for each one should carry their own load.

Which you may stop and tell me that seems to be contradictory verse 2 doesn't it? Carry each other's load but no each one should carry their own load. What does this mean?

The word for burden and load is different. Burden it's a weight. We cannot carry that backpack on our backs.

[24:10] It's too heavy for us to bear on our own. It needs to be shared. Load in verse 5 is each person's individual pack that can't be shared.

What's that about? Well it's speaking of our own personal standing before the Lord. And it's a reminder that one day Jesus is coming again.

That's what this Advent season reminds us of. We've said that earlier. We will ourselves stand before the throne of God. The throne of God where there will be judgment.

Paul's very clear the first four chapters of Galatians very clear. We stand right before that throne because of Jesus. We praise God for that.

But as we do stand before that throne there will be no sharing of our faith with others. There will be no oh I'll give you some of my faith in Jesus to our mate over there.

[25:28] each of us will carry our own load before the Lord. And that's important for us to remember because perhaps some of us or some that we know think well because our parents are Christians then we must be too.

But no we have individual responsibility before the Lord. John Stock put it starkly in his commentary there is one burden that we cannot share and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgment.

On that day you cannot carry my pack and I cannot carry yours. So in light of that we need to stop comparing ourselves to others and think very carefully and soberingly about ourselves.

Paul says test your own attitudes particularly our thoughts regarding others. It's good to think why am I trying to help that person?

Is it so that people look at me and say what a good person they are? Is it so I can look at myself and think what a good person I am who have done my good deed for the day?

[26:53] Or is it because I want to love them because the Lord Jesus has loved me with such incredible love and I am now free to love and serve them? It's good to just test our own thoughts.

And where we see encouragements about how the Lord is working in us, how the Lord is helping us to love others, verse 4 says we can take pride.

Take pride in the work of God within us. Next week we'll see that the boasting should only be in the cross of Jesus.

Where we see the good in us, let's praise God for who he has made us and is making us to be.

Remember others, remember self, remember self rightly, and then thirdly, remember eternity.

I'm just going to give you a little bit of gardening advice before we read on through the passage. I can't give you a lot because I'm not very good at it, but my understanding is that if you want to grow a tomato plant, you need to find some tomato seeds and put it in some soil and water it and treat it carefully and hopefully you will grow a tomato plant.

[28:20] if you want some sunflowers, you need to do the same but with sunflower seeds. Hopefully that's correct.

And Paul says if you want to grow in the spirit, you need to be sowing seeds to the spirit. Verse 8, 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. Last week we had two battlefields.

This week we've got two sort of farming fields. The flesh field and the spirit field. The flesh, that sinful nature that fights against our new nature in the spirit and the spirit one that the Lord is in us, working in us by his spirit, growing that fruit.

And we can either be choosing to plant the flesh one or the spirit one. And so Paul is asking here really, which field are you sowing to?

[29:35] Because sowing to the flesh is dangerous. Paul says it will reap destruction. It's a bit like pressing self-destruct button.

So how can we feed that field? Just one example. If we're holding a grudge against someone, instead of in love, remembering to forgive them, we can be feeding that flesh field and thinking, yes, I'm right to be ignoring them.

Yes, I'm right to keep reminding them of their mistake. Yes, I'm right to tell half of the church about how terrible they are. And it gets worse and worse and could even cause harm and destruction.

Paul said to the Galatians earlier, don't be biting and devouring one another. That's feeding the flesh field. likewise, we need to be careful with things that we consume.

I'm not speaking about food, but more careful about what we're watching and what we're listening to, because that can feed the flesh field. What TV shows am I watching?

[30:59] Is it helpful for me? Or is it actually causing me to stumble? I remember there was a comedy panel show on TV that I was watching week by week and realised it was really affecting my thoughts and my language.

And I was like, I've got to stop watching this, haven't I? Because that's feeding the flesh field. I'm not saying it's wrong to watch that progress. It's just unhelpful for me.

The Spirit was prompting me, I think. Don't be sowing to the flesh field. Remember, our flesh has been crucified.

Don't be trying to revive it. Instead, Paul says, be sowing to the Spirit field. And for that, we need to plant in good seeds in us that can grow and produce good fruit in ourselves.

God's. So, how important it is that we gather here on a Sunday and hear God's word. Because surely that's planting seeds for the Spirit to be growing in us.

[32:14] How important it is that we need to be spending time in prayer, perhaps praying over that list of the fruit of the Spirit in 5 verse 22, praying, God, be growing this inside of me, be showing me where I'm not living this.

We need to be feeding that field, not the flesh one. God's grace, Paul says, you'll reap eternal life. Remember, probably bored of me of saying it, but we need to be clear, remember it's only through Jesus we get eternal life, but remember we carry our own load.

And we'll stand before his throne. And we'll be safe because of Jesus, but we're standing before that throne thinking, I've been actively seeking to please you.

Because God cannot be mocked, Paul tells them in verse 7. He sees those deliberate and willful sins of us. We need to remember eternity, live in light of eternity.

[33:35] And I think that's where verse 6 fits in. I was puzzling over where verse 6 fits in, but I think it fits in with the latter half of this section, which says, nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

As part of sowing to the spirit, we need instruction in the words. words. And so, Paul's asking them, consider who's instructing you in God's words.

Perhaps you regularly meet up with a Christian friend who helps you understand God's word.

Perhaps you regularly go to a Bible study and someone leads it or you help each other understand God's word.

You instruct each other in God's words. You come along to church week by week and you hear messages from God's word that are instructing you in it.

words. That's helping you to sow to the spirit. And Paul says it's good to share good things with them because they're helping you to live in light of eternity.

[34:48] Give encouragements to those that are instructing you in the words. So thank you so much for helping me to understand this. Thank you so much for that thing that you said.

And perhaps as it gets near to Christmas, if you're meeting up with that Christian friend and they're really helping you to get into the word, perhaps give it a little card or a token of your appreciation to them in some way, a little gift or something.

Thank you so much for helping me understand the word. And many churches will employ ministers who can devote their time to helping people understand the word.

And so this is a chance for me to just say thank you. Thank you to many of you who give towards the work of this church and some of that money goes towards employing me.

So thank you for the good things that you give. Don't take it for granted. We're not part of a denomination.

[35:58] We don't get money elsewhere. It all comes from gifts of the Lord's people here. And it's extraordinary. It really is. So thank you. And even just that giving to the work of the church is a way to help people be instructed with the word and live in light of eternity.

It's a way to remember others, not just ourselves and the benefit that we get it from it. And so the passage concludes with these words in verse 9, really summarizing what we've thought of already. 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 those who belong to the family of believers.

it all comes back to that serving others, serving others, doing good to one another because it can reap all sorts of things.

What a witness it is to the world. It could reap eternal life not for others, the watching world around us. And nowhere we're told that doing good saves us, but the Bible is clear that once we're saved by God, he saves us for doing good.

[37:29] So do good because God hasn't been weary in doing good to us. The Lord Jesus went all the way, all the way to death for us.

and this doing good, and this doing good, Paul says, it starts here, it starts in this building, it starts as we share tea and coffee with one another, it starts among the family of believers.

But it shouldn't stop here once we get outside. This doing good, this remembering others, this loving others, it flows out of here. So, look for those opportunities.

I'm going to leave us with three questions just to reflect on from this passage. Perhaps I could have asked other questions as well, but here's three that I hope and pray are helpful for us.

Who in love can I do good to this week? What good in me can I thank God for? Where do you recognize God is working in you, producing good things in you?

[38:50] And sadly, how can I be taking steps to sow to the spirit rather than the flesh this week? Maybe you take notes and you want to note them down.

Maybe you're very modern and have a phone and there's a camera and you want to take a picture of them and to consider them outside of today. But let me just give you an opportunity to pause and reflect on this for a minute or so.

And then I'll lead us in a short prayer. Not justified by our own works. And therefore, we're not trying to be like someone else in the church family or thinking we're better than others in the church family but we're standing as sinners saved by your grace for that is the only way.

to stand before you. And Father, thank you that that then frees us to serve others. Lord, help us to remember others this week.

Thank you that that frees us to view ourselves rightly before you. Lord, please would you be working good things in us by your spirits.

[40:10] And help us to see those good things and give glory to you for them, Lord, and continue to produce good fruit within us, we pray. Help us to be sowing, not to the flesh, not to the old sinful nature that's been crucified with Christ, but help us be sowing to the spirits.

Help us to see where we need to do that more this week, so that we may continue to be changed, to continue to be like our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has done such good, who has shown such incredible love for us.

And thank you that it is in him and in him alone that we stand. Father, thank you. Amen. Are we going to a