

Caring For One Another By The Spirit

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Date: 05 January 2020

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[0:00] Well, when I was in fifth grade, I started playing saxophone in my school band. And we had a great band director.

His name was Mr. Johnson. He was patient with us, he had fun with us, but he was also not afraid to work as hard in preparation for concert season.

I can remember us being in the middle of a song and him yelling over all the din of the instruments, tempo, keep the tempo. And he wasn't afraid to call out individual players either in the middle of a song.

Billy, you're speeding us up. Daniel, play softer. Sometimes he would resort to banging out the rhythm with his wand on a music stand instead of conducting us in the air because he wanted us to fall into step with where he was leading us.

At the beginning of a new semester, we would always sound terrible. Squeaky, out of tune, hitting wrong notes or hitting, not hitting notes at all.

[1:14] But by the end of the semester, our conductor, having stuck with us, would lead us into some pretty good sounding music. The unity and the harmony of the whole body of instruments would fill the performance hall.

And it was all worth it to see his smile at the end of the concert. Well, church, we have a conductor too. We are all individual members of a whole body of instruments.

We are a spiritual orchestra. And we have one conductor that we must fall into step with. Or, if we don't, we will miss the beauty and the harmony of where he's leading us, of what he's intending us to play.

And our conductor, church, is the Holy Spirit. And although there are many songs that he has for us to play, there's one song that's pretty close to his heart. And the name of this song is Love One Another.

It's a tender, gentle, exquisitely beautiful song. But it's also complicated. It's messy, even. It requires close and careful attention to our conductor.

[2:33] At times, he'll speed us up. Then he'll slow us back down. Then we'll change keys. Here we're loud. Here we're soft. And if we don't pay careful attention to where he's taking us, we're going to be hopelessly lost as we try to play the song.

And so this morning, that's exactly what the Apostle Paul is trying to communicate to the Galatian churches, starting at chapter 5, verse 25, and through chapter 6, verse 5.

And what he wants them to see, and what the God wants us to see, is this. That when the church is in step with the Spirit, we will humbly care for one another.

When the church is in step with the Spirit, we will humbly care for one another. When we, as the body of Christ, are paying close attention to our conductor, the resulting melody will be humble care for one another.

That's the emphasis in this particular passage. So let's unpack the passage in the following way. First, there's a call to action in chapter 5, verse 25.

[3:46] And then we'll see in 5:26 through 6:3, sorry, 6:2, that that call is for a community. And lastly, we can't miss the caution in verses 3 to 5 in chapter 6.

So it's a call for a community with a caution. Let's start looking at the call to action in chapter 5, verse 25. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

If we live by the Spirit. Well, what does that mean? What does it mean to live by the Spirit? Well, word to the wise, and maybe a quick preview of our word workshop coming up on January 25th.

If you're stuck on what something means in the Bible, take some time to take a look around at the context. Look for clues around that phrase to help understand what that phrase means. And that's what we're going to do with live by the Spirit. Look up to verse 16 for starters. Paul says, but I say, walk by the Spirit. Well, that sounds pretty close to live by the Spirit.

[4:55] That kind of helps us understand what that's about a little bit. And Pastor Matt last week helped us see that people who have put their trust in Jesus, Christians, and who have received God's Holy Spirit on the inside of them as His indwelling presence within, we still have to cultivate a dependence upon the Holy Spirit to be able to live the life that God's called us to.

Right? That's reinforced in verse 18. If you are led by the Spirit, okay, that kind of gives us a little bit more understanding. Walking by the Spirit, there's this kind of plodding mentality, it's activity. Being led by the Spirit, we have to be leaning into His guidance and His leadership. So being dependent upon the presence and the power of God's Spirit within us as Christians is basically what Paul's saying here.

That's what it means to live by the Spirit, to be defined by the Spirit. Christians are people whose lives are defined by the Holy Spirit. By what the Spirit produces in them, the holy fruit of Christ's character.

He's the one who provides power to fight against the flesh. He is the one who gave a spiritual life to the beginning. So our lives are defined by the Holy Spirit.

[6:11] So basically he's saying if you're a Christian, if you live by the Spirit, then, here's the call to action, keep in step with the Spirit.

So yes, we are Spirit-dependent people. We are Spirit-defined people from beginning to end. We must rely on His presence and power to live this life that God has called us to in Christ.

So therefore, it makes a lot of sense that we have to put effort into keeping in step with Him. So just as an orchestra has to pay close attention to its conductor, the church has to pay close attention to put real effort into following and responding to the Spirit's lead.

This is a call to action. It's the same way what Pastor Matt preached last week, only here we're getting a little more nitty-gritty. It's like keep an eye on Him. Stay really closely connected to Him. Now just in case you're not musical and the whole orchestra illustration doesn't work for you, here's another one. The Christian life in the Spirit is a lot less like flying a plane and a lot more like a bicycle race.

[7:25] In a plane, now I might be oversimplifying this if there are any pilots in the room, but in a plane, once you're up in the air, you can push the autopilot button and it basically gets you to where you want to go.

You don't have to do a whole lot. You kind of relax until you start your descent. But in a bicycle race, there's no relaxing. You have to stay on your leader.

You've got to stay with the group. You've got to be pumping the pedals the whole way, breathing hard the whole way. Now there are easy stretches. There are flat straightaways. There's downhill slopes.

But even in those parts of the race, you still have to stay on the leader. You still have to keep pedaling. You have to stay with the group. And when Paul calls us to keep in step with the Spirit, he's calling us to action.

We need to sit up straight when we hear that call. We need to feel the urgency of that call. We need to shake off the slackness that we tend to naturally get as we run our Christian race, and we need to prepare ourselves for real, steady, and sustainable action.

[8:33] Now it's a new year. This is a great time to begin asking the question, where am I going? What am I doing with my life?

How am I doing with my life? And if this is a time when you realize, I'm kind of drifting. I'm coasting. I'm not really pushing the pedals.

Then hear the call. Hear the call of action. Being a Christian does not mean pushing the autopilot button. It means, okay, roll up my sleeves.

Let's get to work. That's not how we earn our salvation. We know that. We know it's by faith. But it is a call to work. It's a call to action. We need to hear that here. So if you are a Christian, if you have

the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, if we, the church, have the Spirit dwelling among us, if we're defined by the work of the Spirit, then hear the call to action.

What is the Spirit, our conductor, tapping out for us? What's His rhythm? Are we listening? Are we paying close attention?

[9:42] Are we leaning into Him? That has to do with spiritual disciplines. If you're slack in your prayer, if you're slack in reading Scripture and paying close attention to your own heart, then that's going to mean you're drifting.

You're on autopilot. So, all right. Take a moment to say, all right, this is what the Spirit's calling me to do. Keep in step with Him. Lean into Him. This is whether you're new in the faith or whether you've been a seasoned saint for many years or if you're foot sore and you are war weary or maybe you're discouraged from a lack of growth or a lack of affection for the Lord or maybe you are just awash in apathy or maybe you're stuck in sin.

But wherever you're at, the Spirit, hear what He's saying to you. Pick up your instrument or if you prefer, hop back on your bicycle.

Keep in step with Him. Resist the temptation to push idle pilot. There's no drifting or coasting here.

Posture yourself for action. Roll up your sleeves. Get ready to work.

Church, we're not home yet. Just like the song we sang, Come Thou Fount, Come My Lord No Longer Tarry, Bring Your Promises to Pass. We're not home yet. We live in between the comings of Jesus, between His first advent and His second.

[11:04] And so the time in between is the life of the Spirit. We get to participate in the life we have to come that Christ has promised us, of full fellowship with Him, and yet we know that that fullness hasn't come yet.

And so we strive, we move towards Him, because we know we're still pulled back into our old ways of the flesh. And so the time between the comings here is to be lived in step with the Spirit.

He's our guide to our heavenly home, to our destination. So lean into Him. That's the call to action.

But that's pretty broad.

It's pretty general. It's not very specific. So how do we start keeping in step with Him in practical and specific ways? Well, this call to action is for a community.

It's a call to action for a community. And the call to action for the community is this. Humbly care for each other. That's the way that we keep in step with the Spirit.

[12:06] That's the way we roll up our sleeves and keep in step with our leader is by humbly caring for each other, right here, right now, as a body of Christ. And we're going to spend the majority of our time on this because that's the real emphasis of this passage.

So let's look at chapter 5, verse 26, through chapter 6, verse 2. I want to read it again. And as I read, I want you to hunt for clues that Paul is speaking to a community.

Did you see clues pointing to a community?

How about those one another's provoking one another, envying one another, bearing one another's burdens? How about the way he addresses them as a church family?

Brothers, which can be translated easily, brothers and sisters. How about the call to restore the sinning member by other members? Remember, Paul is writing to a group of churches here.

[13:19] He is writing to a community. He's not writing to random individual Christians. He's writing to groups of people who have joined themselves together because of their mutual faith in Christ for the purpose of accountability and encouragement to live the life of the Spirit together.

By the way, Christ the King Church, that's what we are. We are a group of people who have joined ourselves together because of our mutual faith in Christ so that we can keep each other accountable and encourage one another as we live the life of the Spirit together.

So this has a lot to say to us right here, right now, January 5th, 2020. I almost said 2019. Phew, okay, good thing I didn't. So what is the call to action?

To humbly care for one another, to demonstrate real Christ-like love in the power of the Spirit to one another. In verse two, he gives us a great visual, bear one another's burdens.

Well, that helps us, doesn't it? It gets that in our minds. But before we get to that serving one another part, the bearing one another's burdens part, that's what keeping in step with the Spirit means for us in community.

[14:27] Let's take a peek in verse 26 of what it doesn't look like. Paul's great at setting up a negative before he gets to the positive. So let's look at verse 26. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

So how do we put effort into keeping in step with the Spirit in our community of a church? Put to death your self-important attitude. That's how.

That word translated conceited in our Bibles could also be translated literally empty honor or empty glory. Paul's warning the community of the church right on the heels of his call to action that if they want to stifle the Spirit's life-giving work in their midst, then be thirsty for self-importance.

A desire to be recognized and praised for yourself, to think highly of yourself, that's how you can quench the Spirit in your midst. That's how you can not keep in step with the Spirit.

And this appetite for recognition, for reputation, for being known as something, produces all kinds of sinful activity within a community. For one, those who desire recognition and praise often provoke others within the community, basically picking fights, challenging those who disagree with them, calling them out, stirring up dissension and division within the body.

[15:55] Some of us, perhaps this can get kind of glossed over with spiritual language, but it is, if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it's a duck. Some of us are more prone to this, especially those of us who have more dominant personalities, we're go-getters, we're more vocal, we're more opinionated.

We can tend to be this way. That is not keeping in step with the Spirit. But there's also another way. Do you see that? Envy one another. Perhaps this is more common for us.

Self-important person may not necessarily show their self-importance by picking fights externally, but it's an internal attitude of envy or comparison or holding grudges, and it can poison our attitude toward others and rob us and them of the life-giving work of the Spirit at work among us.

For six years, I was a teacher at a Christian school here in town. I started as a Spanish teacher, and then I was really hoping they'd ask me to teach Bible at some point.

Well, during a staff meeting, midway through my time there, it was announced that they had asked another guy to teach Bible, and they hadn't asked me.

[17:11] And immediately, my conceit, my self-importance, my sinful desire for recognition as a great Bible teacher raised its ugly head, and it showed up in the form of intense envy toward my brother in Christ.

It took me a little bit of time to realize that was what was going on in my heart. I couldn't quite tell, and then it's like, oh, wait, that's what's going on. I'm envying him. Have you ever had something like that happen to you in the context of the church or somewhere else?

Hear the call to action. Self-importance has no place in the community where the Spirit is in charge. Put it to death, the Spirit says, whether in its outward form of picking fights or dissension or division or in the slow internal poison of envy or comparing yourself with others or bearing grudges against others.

Rather, Paul says, now that you know what keeping in step with the Spirit doesn't look like in the community, this is what it does look like.

It looks like humbly caring for each other. It means laying aside your sense of self-importance and adopting an attitude that emphasizes the importance of others.

[18:37] In verse 1, Paul shows us that not only are we not supposed to sin against one another, we're supposed to help restore those who do sin. We are to care for one another's souls.

So, if anyone is overtaken in a sin, Paul says, you who are spiritual are to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. In the ESV, it uses the word caught, but I think the word overtake might be better.

Caught makes us think of, like, you're caught in the act, caught red-handed. That's not, I mean, obviously, that's going to, we need to restore folks who are caught red-handed, but we also need to restore anyone who is overtaken in a sin, and that's all of us.

Sin has a way of sneaking up on us. Think about the last time you blew it and you knew it. You weren't planning on sinning that day, but a combination of circumstances caused you to get angry or to lust or to be dishonest or whatever it was.

And just think about, once you knew that that happened, despair starts to set in, shame and condemnation start to come in, and you're thinking, whatever, I just might as well give up.

[19:54] I just might as well keep on doing this because there's no hope in trying to resist this anymore. Well, that's where God's saying here, community to the rescue. That's why we have each other, church.

There are men in this church that God has used to restore me when I have been overtaken in sin, and they did it in a spirit of gentleness. And I am very thankful for those men.

And don't think for one minute that that word spiritual means only pastors and leaders. It's a temptation we have, I think, in the American church.

Uh-uh. That word spiritual could just be translated, you spirit people. Same thing back up in verse 25. If we live by the spirit. Well, that's Christians.

If you are a Christian, you are a spirit person. You are spiritual because you have the Holy Spirit. And you are being called upon here to help restore your brother or sister who falls into sin. This is not something we should slough off to the professionals because, guess what?

[20:58] There are no professional Christians. We are all the body of Christ indwelt by the spirit, and he has laid on us the responsibility to humbly care for one another and help each other follow Christ together.

So if someone in this body has a sin problem, then that should concern you. It is, falls on you to be concerned about them because you are one with them in Christ.

You are members one of another. That doesn't mean you're responsible for their sin nor ultimately responsible for their well-being, but you are being called upon to humbly care for them by helping to restore them in some way.

Now you might be wondering how this works, practically speaking. This is maybe a little bit tricky. What do you do if someone confesses sin to you? Well, you remind that sinner that they have a friend and his name is Jesus.

He is the friend of sinners. So speak 1 John 1, 9 to them. If anyone confesses their sin, God is faithful and just to forgive them of their sin and to cleanse them of all unrighteousness.

[22:08] So speak words of gospel truth to them, of forgiveness and assurance of pardon. And you get to be the Spirit's agent to help heal their soul.

What an awesome privilege. Don't shy away from that just because you don't feel like you're a professional. Now if it's a matter that feels pretty heavy, like an addiction or maybe a sin involving lots of people that's rather complicated or a sin that's pretty grievous and serious, well then talk to that person and to see about involving a pastor or an elder or some other life group leader, some other mature Christian who can help maybe shed light on a complicated issue.

So be careful, be humble, speaking into situations you don't understand well necessarily, but don't let that keep you from participating in restoring a brother or a sister.

Now life group leaders, life group members, you need to hear this. If something like this comes up in your group, lean into it. Don't overwhelm the person with lots of words, just listen sympathetically, ask good questions, and speak weighty words of gospel truth, of forgiveness and assurance to them.

But don't do the other error. Don't paint their sin in a good light. Don't sugar coat things. Call a spade a spade. If it's sin, it's sin. Deal with it head on with the gospel.

[23:32] So treat others how you would like them to treat you if you're confessing sin. Gently, truthfully, lovingly point them to Jesus. And you will be an agent of restoration.

But you also need to hear this. Whether you're in life group or not, this is what the community is for. We exist to help each other do this.

So if you are the one overtaken in a sin, don't stay quiet. The Psalms talks about if I kept my sin within myself and my bones started rotting.

Sin has a way of rotting us from the inside out. Speak it. Confess it. Go to someone in service. Go to someone in your life group. Go to someone you know well who would be able to speak God's truth to you.

Risk the transparency in order to keep in step with the Spirit. Obey James 5.16. Confess your sins one to another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

[24:37] Sometimes this might mean having to confront someone gently. That's scary. But along the lines of Matthew 18, we're called to do this too. If you see or become aware of a sinful behavior and another believer, then we are called upon to humbly care for that brother or sister in the spirit of gentleness by asking them about it.

Much humility is needed here. Not self-righteous judgment. We're not trying to accuse. We're trying to restore. And you've got to be careful. Remember Jesus used the log in the eye and the speck of sawdust in the eye illustration.

Approaching someone's eye to get a speck of sawdust out is a very delicate process. You've got to be very gentle. You've got to have confidence. They need to have confidence in you.

But if Jesus is our Lord and our Master and we are His servants, we must be willing to approach another servant in gentleness if they're doing something that does not please or bring honor to the Master.

And this is for all of us. This is not just for pastors, not just for leaders. Now before we move on to other ways we can care for one another, look at the end of verse 1. Keep watch on yourself lest you too be tempted.

[25:51] When helping restore a fellow sinner, we are often tempted to fall into sin ourselves. We are tempted to conceited self-righteousness. Like thinking, I would never sin like that.

We are tempted to frustration and impatience with our brother or sister, especially if they're not changing or especially if their sin affects us negatively. We might be tempted to join them in their sin in some way.

Coming into contact with sin can sometimes soften our hearts to it and tempt us toward it. So just think about Johnny Cash. Walk in the line. I keep a close watch on this heart of mine.

I keep my eyes wide open all the time. Keep a close eye on your own heart when you're in the process of doing this. It helps us do this in humility and gentleness.

So restoring a sinning family member is a way we humbly care for one another and keep in step with the Spirit. But it's not the only way we keep in step with the Spirit in community. Look at verse 2.

[26:55] Paul tells the Galatians to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. This includes bearing the burdens of those who've sinned and need restoration, but it's broader than that.

It means lending your strength, skill, time, energy, resources to help another believer through difficulty.

As Paul says somewhere else, when one member hurts, the whole body does. That's because the Spirit binds us together. We have Him in common. So therefore, when we become aware of a difficulty that another member of the church is going through, then we ought to have an impulse to help shoulder that burden.

That's what keeping in step with the Spirit looks like in the community of the Spirit. We get to humbly care for one another and bear one another's burdens in a variety of ways.

It can be acts of service. This summer, my wife had shoulder surgery. So many of you cared for us in very practical and needed ways.

[27:59] Y'all bared, you bared, you bore our burdens with us. Thank you. That's exactly, and this church is so good at that. Our deacons are so fantastic at being able to find ways to care for body members that are hurting.

But we also bear one another's burdens when we sit and we listen and we share God's Word together and encourage one another. When someone's going through a difficult time, we have one another over for dinner and we ask good questions.

We take time after service to hunt down people we know are going through a rough patch to be able to ask them how they're doing and pray for them. That's bearing one another's burdens as a body. And speaking of praying, that's probably the most wonderful, most effective, and maybe hardest way to bear one another's burdens is to take intentional time to pray and care for one another's burdens in prayer.

So when we do this burden bearing in all of its forms, we fulfill the law of Christ. What does Paul mean by that? Look back up to chapter 5, verse 13 and 14.

[29:07] Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

This is very similar to the command that Jesus gave his church, the disciples, in John 13. A new command I give you that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.

So we fulfill the whole law of the Old Testament in one sense by just doing this, by bearing one another's burdens in practical, real, meaningful ways. So in one sense, it's what the law of Christ is what he's spoken to us, love one another.

But it's also the model he's provided for us. Church, the only reason we exist as a body is because Christ bore our burdens on Calvary.

We sang of it earlier in How Great Thou Art. Christ bore our burdens to the cross. As Paul says in Philippians 2, Jesus took on the form of a servant.

[30:16] He took on the burden of human flesh. He was born as one of us. In being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So we are to humbly care for one another and bear one another's burdens in the same way Jesus bore our burdens and because Jesus bore our burdens.

He did the same for us. And if we belong to him and we have his spirit within and among us, how can we act any differently? So friends, if we are spirit-defined people, if we are people who have the spirit and live by the spirit, let us keep in step with him.

We need to be about the priority in community of humbly caring for one another and by doing so, we keep in step with him. Our conductor is tapping out his rhythm to a song of love and we have to keep our eyes on him.

So let me just give you a few brief and concrete ways to do this. First, examine your heart for self-importance. There is no better way to keep a community from following the spirit's lead than to be concerned about yourself as your first priority.

[31:34] Jesus came to free us from that destructive tendency of our human hearts. So ask yourself Philippians 2 verse 3 in question form. How does God want me to humbly consider others as more significant than myself?

I'm guessing there are probably a few people within the church that you have a hard time interacting with without self-important pride showing up in your heart and yet they are your spiritual family.

So ask the Lord to help you put your self-importance to death and the Holy Spirit will be glad to assist you. Secondly, move towards other people. Move towards other people.

Do you hear the movement in that? Do you hear the action in that? Move toward other people. This is a call to action. Bearing one of those burdens assumes you have relationship with people. So move towards people.

Now this is harder for some people than for others. I get that. And it doesn't mean you have to be best friends with everybody or even know everybody in the church. But it does mean that your posture is toward people, not away from them.

[32:40] It means a willingness to engage in conversation with people, even the people you're not naturally attracted to. And not just in conversation about you, but also in conversation about them.

Ask good questions. It's a way we bear one of those burdens and care for each other. Discover what's going on in their lives. Be listening for ways you can help. It might mean praying with them on the spot after service today.

It might mean intentionally praying for them throughout the week. It might mean texting them. It might mean getting together with them through the week to hear how they're doing or to help

restore them when they've sinned.

It might mean showing up at their house to fix their dryer or with a cooked meal. There are a zillion ways we can bear one of those burdens. But we must be willing to move towards people to find out what those burdens are.

Well, I'm guessing you've heard the call to action. And you've heard what that looks like in community. But there's one more thing we need to pay attention to. It's the caution that's attached to the call in verses 4 to 5.

[33:44] Sorry, 3 to 5. And the caution is this. Don't forget that the only one God will hold accountable for you is you. Don't forget that the only one God will hold accountable for you is you.

Verse 3. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is 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. Notice that little word for in verse 3. That should signal to us that Paul's connecting this caution to the community call in the previous part of the passage. He's connecting it. And what he's warning against in verse 3 is that we won't be able to bear the burdens of others properly without an honest and humble view of ourselves before God.

This caution has a lot to do with what Paul says at the end of verse 1. When you're restoring someone who sinned, keep a close eye on yourself so that you too are not tempted. He's saying, hey, pay attention to yourself too.

[34:57] The caution is also related to his command to put self-importance to death back in verse 26. It's very easy to serve others self-importantly. At times, our conceit and our self-importance prevents us from serving others because we're picking fights with them or envying them.

But at other times, our self-importance makes us think that we're stronger and healthier than we actually are. And then we think we're something when we're actually nothing and we deceive ourselves.

And out of that self-deceit, we serve others but really, we're doing it for ourselves and not out of obedience for Christ or out of love for others.

Some of us just need to be needed. We want to be wanted. It makes us feel stronger when we feel needed or wanted.

It makes us feel healthier than we actually are. And so when we actually stop serving and things get quiet and we start honestly assessing where we're at spiritually, we start realizing maybe I'm not as strong or healthy as I think I am.

[36:06] And this is something that leaders are particularly prone to. Life group leaders, elders, deacons, pastors. We serve and help bear burdens and teach and lead but secretly, sometimes if we're honest, we can keep busy doing these things because we don't want to acknowledge that we're not as healthy as we think we are.

Or because we find our identity too much in serving and not enough in who we are in Christ and how he has loved us and accomplished our salvation for us. But look at the solution at verse 4. How are we to not think ourselves something when we're nothing? Test your own work. Test your own work before God. What Paul means here is that we need to ask ourselves whether our work is just for show or actually has good quality to it.

Jess and I recently watched the movie Ford versus Ferrari. It's a great movie. At one point, the Ford executives in the movie unveiled the exciting new Mustang GT as its new racing model.

And everyone in the showroom is very impressed. It looks sleek. It's slick. It's very exciting. It looks like a race car on the outside. But one of the characters, one of the main characters in the movie, he's a veteran mechanic and race car driver.

[37:24] He saw right through the show. And he told the executives, this thing is not going to race well. Its engine and its design are not going to keep it up with how it looks on the outside.

It's just not going to perform. And the same is true with our caring for each other. We need to be humble and honest about our efforts to serve others, whether they're just for show, whether we're longing for recognition or whether the engine that drives them is of good quality.

This is also keeping in step with the spirit. He is concerned whether we're serving others, that's for sure. He's also concerned why and how we serve others.

He has a way of getting our serving out onto the racetrack and testing it out for quality. And we need to be along with him in that. That's what he means by boasting there in verse four.

He's not talking about self-important boasting. Rather, this is kind of the spiritual equivalent of a good, healthy, taking pride in your own work, of satisfaction with excellence.

[38:38] It's kind of stepping back and looking at the floor you just mopped or the meal you just made or the car you just fixed and saying, yep, that feels good. It's good work. And the reason that the spirit wants that for us is because at the end of the day, the only one that God is going to hold accountable for you is you.

God will not ask your brother who can vouch that you helped him through a rough time, nor will he ask your sister who will tell him on judgment day that you fixed her a meal when she had a baby.

The only one who can truly answer for your motives and attitudes of your heart is you.

Ultimately, God will hold you accountable for you for how and why you served others. He will weigh the attitudes and intentions of your heart.

He sees right through us. Therefore, in our serving, we don't do it for others, we do it for him as an act of worship and service because you have offered your life to him in gratitude as a living sacrifice, as Paul says in Romans 12.

When Paul says in verse 5 that each one must carry his own load, it could be talking about making sure that you've got your own life in order before you help others.

[39:58] That's a pretty valid interpretation. It's hard to serve others when your own life is in disarray. But more likely and more importantly, it's a reference to the day when you stand before God to give account for your life.

life. Everyone is only accountable for themselves on that day. It means that God will hold you accountable for you. So therefore, test your work now so it may prove to be of good quality then.

This is also keeping in step with the Spirit. And here's what you test for. Ask yourself why you are desiring to serve others. Is it because you need to be needed?

You want to be wanted? Is it because you find your identity not in Christ's love for you but in others' love for you when you serve them? Is it because it makes you think that God loves you more when you serve others?

Is it because being around hurting or less mature believers reinforces a self-righteous attitude in you that you are a pretty good Christian indeed? Or is it this?

[41:12] Do you joyfully bear the burdens of others because Christ has done the same for you? And you are eager to follow his example. Do you serve out of gratitude for what Jesus has accomplished for you and the awesome privilege that you have to be his instrument for good, the good of others?

Do you serve others because you want to offer your life to him as a living sacrifice out of joyful thanks for his grace? That's the ideal.

That's what we're striving for. That's what we need to aim at. That's the quality work that will prove itself on judgment day. So let's aim for that. Something that's not just for show but has the right kind of engine in it.

But one word before we move toward a close. None of us does this well. We are all failures.

Not just in our lack of serving, our lack of care, but in the way that we actually do it. There is much grace for those who are failures in the way that we don't serve or the poor way that we do serve.

[42:24] If you're feeling a particular hopelessness in this, particularly if you're in a hard season of serving a lot and it feels more out of obligation than anything else, continue to press into the grace of Jesus.

He is enough for you now, today, and he will be enough for you tomorrow too. This is the kind of humble care that we need to have for one another and it will happen as we keep in step with our conductor.

conductor. Let's hear the words of our spirit conductor today. Let's pay careful attention to the rhythm that he's tapping out for us. Let's keep our eyes on him so that we can play beautiful music

together and it will all be worth it to see the smile on his face at the end.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, I'm sure that many of us can hear this and get excited, eager to roll up our sleeves and get to work and keep in step with you, Jesus, by your spirit.

But Lord, I know that some of us are weary. Father, I pray particularly that you would grant strength and grace to those of us who are weary in our serving and in our caring for others.

[43:52] Lord, especially if it's chronic and seemingly unending situations, would you grant much grace? Father, fulfill every resolve we have to do good.

And keep our eyes on you as you lead us to your heavenly kingdom. We will be with you forever and faith will be sight.

Help us to strive after your smile on that day, Jesus. In your name, amen.