

"Bear One Another's Burden"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 April 2026

Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. It's good to see you all this morning. Our sermon text today! is Galatians chapter 6, verses 1 through 5. We're actually going to pick up for context at the end! of chapter 5. So if you have a pew Bible, you can open with me to page 916, and we'll start in Galatians chapter 5, verse 25, and then I'll read through chapter 6, verse 5. These verses will be on the screen as well. All right, let me pray as we come to God's Word. Father, we've sung this song of consecration and dedication. Lord, take all that we are, receive it, Lord, and Lord, use us for your glory. God, in this time as we come to meditate and reflect and to listen again to your Word. Would your Spirit use it as an instrument of His work of sanctification and redeeming power in our lives, that our hands, our voices, our minds, our feet, our wills, our hearts might more and more glorify you. We pray this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. All right, Galatians 5, 25.

Paul writes, 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. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 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. Well, in this passage, as Paul begins to talk about how the Holy Spirit begins to show up practically in the life of a Christian, it's interesting that he doesn't highlight any of those things.

They all have their place, of course, but what does Paul say here is the main outgrowth of a Christian in whom the Spirit is active? When a Christian is walking by and keeping in step with the Spirit, what are the key marks in their life? Well, it's not particular gifts or worship experiences.

[2 : 31] It's not about intellect or knowledge. No, it's about how you love in community. A Christian who's keeping in step with the Spirit will be a Christian who loves his or her fellow Christians in a local church. The Spirit produces churches of grace-fueled love.

But what specifically does that love look like? Well, Paul shows us two aspects of this love in verses 1 through 5 of chapter 6, and that's what we're going to spend our time looking at this morning. And what we're going to see is that the Spirit produces communities of, on the one hand, mutual correction, and on the other, mutual care. So, mutual correction and mutual care. Let's consider each of those in turn, and let's learn how we might keep in step with the Spirit. So, first, if we want to keep in step with the Spirit, we must be a community of mutual correction.

We see this in verse 1 of chapter 6, brothers, and as the ESV footnote points out, that term includes brothers and sisters. So, brothers and sisters in Christ, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore Him in a spirit of gentleness. Now, we have to admit, at first, the thought of fostering a community of mutual correction at first sounds terrible, doesn't it?

I mean, who wants to live like they are under a constant performance review, right? Who wants to be surrounded by people who are quick to point out their faults and their flaws? Many of us have unfortunately experienced what it's like to be in a workplace or to be in a peer group where there's constant evaluation and judgment, right? At work, are you working hard enough? Are you producing enough?

Or amidst your peer group, are you cool enough? Are you into the right sorts of music or hobbies or clothes or causes? Those sorts of communities, if we're honest, are exhausting and they're awful.

[4 : 45] And unfortunately, churches can become that way too. If we lose sight of the gospel, if we lose sight of the fact that we are sinners saved by the sheer grace of Christ, then churches too will become just like the world. Judging everyone by external standards of performance, writing people

off as hopeless cases, as irredeemable, showing no mercy, no patience, no kindness. And in a church like that, everyone wants to hide.

No one is real or transparent in a church like that. And in a church like that, no one grows because we just hide our faults and our flaws and our struggles, and we put up a good show on the outside while inwardly. We're stuck in habits and patterns of sin that we wish we could break, but we can't overcome in our own strength. So we fight alone, and we live in shame, and we quietly wither spiritually. We're like plants longing for the sun and for the rain, but we can't seem to get ourselves out of the dark warehouse and into the rich soil of the garden.

But what sort of community, what sort of church does the gospel create? What does mutual correction look like specifically when the Holy Spirit is at work and the grace of Christ takes center stage? Well, look at how Paul describes it in verse 1. He begins with that word, brothers, brothers and sisters. It's a family word, right? It's actually the first and the last word of chapter 6 if you don't count the final amen in verse 18. In other words, the whole culture that we're talking about here is a culture where we no longer view one another according to worldly standards of performance or pedigree, but as family, as brothers and sisters through the grace of Christ, not as competitors to be exposed or humiliated or bested, nor as heroes to be idolized and chased after and envied, but as brothers and sisters, as family that we love. So we start in the gospel by viewing each other differently. And next Paul says, if anyone is caught in any transgression. Now the word caught here, it could mean sort of found out, as in someone is discovered in sin, but that word can also mean overtaken, as in someone's habitual sins have overtaken them, so they're stuck in transgression. Caught in a web, and they can't get free. In any event, Paul says this could be the case with anyone in the body of Christ. If anyone is caught, he says. You see, we're all susceptible in our battle with our old nature to get stuck, to get overtaken. And this means our work of mutual correction can never come from a place of judgment or superiority. Rather, it comes from a place of mercy and of compassion.

We don't look at a brother or a sister caught in transgression and say, how could they? But rather, I know what that's like. That's why at the end of verse 1, Paul says, keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. It's tempting, it can be tempting, when you see a fellow Christian overtaken in sin to think, I'd never do something like that. But Paul says, keep watch on yourself. You might not be tempted to fall into the same sort of transgression, but don't let pride creep into your heart. Don't fall into the temptation of thinking that you aren't a fellow sinner in need of grace. Your particular sin may be different than mine, but every Christian knows what it's like to battle besetting sin, to wrestle with old habits, to get caught, to get overtaken by selfish desires. So, we view those that we are aiming to help as fellow travelers on the journey of sanctification.

[9 : 18] And what's the goal? What's the goal of this work of correction? Well, consider first that in a community where the gospel is lost, in a church where we've lost sight of the grace of Christ, the goal of correction is usually self-justification. In other words, if I can correct and judge you, then I can prove that you're beneath me, then I can feel better about myself and my own efforts at performance. I prop up my own self-righteousness by judging and correcting others.

But when the gospel reigns supreme, when Christ is our righteousness, not our own performance, when our standing with God is based on God's gift and not our works, then the goal of correction completely changes. According to verse 1 of chapter 6, the gospel-shaped goal of correction is what?

Restoration. You who are spiritual should restore them. The aim of correction, then, is not condemnation, not humiliation, but restoration. When we see a brother or sister under the heavy burden of sin, walking down a path that leads to sorrow, our desire above all is to restore them. This is what Jesus taught His disciples about the ministry of correction in Matthew 18. And because the goal is restoration, not humiliation, He describes what? A long and patient process.

First, He says, go to your brother or sister one-on-one. Talk with them. Ask them questions. Be patient. Be clear. Be loving. Let them know you desire their good. Then, if that one-on-one ministry over time doesn't produce repentance, doesn't produce change, what does Jesus say? He says, post on social media how terrible that person is and write them off as a lost cause. Right? No.

[11 : 31] Jesus says what? Get everyone in the church and stage an intervention. No. What does He say? He says, take one person with you, another mature believer, and perhaps two of you over time can help bring this brother or sister back from their sin. And only, only in cases of ongoing unrepentant sin would a more formal process of church discipline begin with the members of that

local church who have committed together to this ministry of mutual correction. But again, the aim in all of that is what? It's restoration. Jesus says, if He listens to you, you've gained your brother. Now, the word restoration here is the same word that was used in the ancient world for a doctor resetting a bone. And the reality is that sort of work isn't always comfortable. I've never had the privilege of resetting a bone. Some of you are medical doctors. Maybe you have. My guess is...I've also never broken a lot of bones. My guess is that resetting a broken bone really hurts, right? I'm sure it hurts for the person for whom it's getting reset. I'm sure it's kind of a little painful for the person doing the resetting, right?

It hurts at first, but only then can the real healing begin, right? But in what manner, in what manner should this restoration happen? If family is the context, brothers and sisters, fellow sinners, if family is the context, if restoration is the goal, what sort of attitude or spirit should we have in this ministry of mutual correction? Well, Paul says, in a spirit of gentleness. Gentleness. A good doctor knows, I'm guessing, exactly how much pressure to apply at just the right spot for the bone to be put back in place. That is biblical gentleness. Not weakness, not passivity, but strength applied, perfectly controlled in the right way.

Or picture, if you will, kind of restoring an old historic home, right? Now, if you want to quickly renovate a house to flip it and make a quick profit, what do you do? You use a sledgehammer, right? You demo the walls, you gut the rooms, you throw up some paint and new appliances, and you're done. But if you want to restore a home, if you want to return it to its original beauty, then you use a totally different approach, don't you? You don't want to demolish the old woodwork and the crown molding, you don't want to demolish the old floors and the antique fixtures and the clawfoot tub. You want to restore it. So, you don't use a sledgehammer. You use more gentle tools. You use more controlled tools. You don't swing and destroy. You tap, you file, you sand, and it takes a lot more time and a lot more care and a lot more effort. Friends, that is what real soul care looks like. Real, grace-filled, restorative correction is gentle. That doesn't mean it's painless. Broken bones hurt when they are reset, but it does mean the pressure is only applied where it's needed most and always in hope of healing, always in hope of restoration. Because what are we doing in this ministry of restoration? We're helping to bring one another back to our original beauty, the beauty of being creatures in God's image before the fall ravaged so much, to become more like Christ, who is the image of God. That's the work of restoration. But last, on this first point, who is it? Who does this work of restoration? Paul says, you who are spiritual. You who are spiritual. And what does spiritual mean in the New Testament? Does it mean super-Christians, right? The Christians who have to go into a phone booth and come out with a cape and all that sort of stuff? That's Superman, for those of you who are not familiar with that. I was more of a Marvel guy, but you know. What does spiritual mean? Super-Christians? Is it an elite class of believers who've leveled up beyond the rest of us, right? They spent some time level grinding and collecting coins, so they've leveled up to super-Christian spiritual status? No! Look again at the end of chapter five. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. The truth is, every Christian is alive by the Spirit when He grants us faith in Christ and causes us to be regenerated, to be born again with a new spiritual life in us. Every Christian is spiritual. You can't be a Christian and not be spiritual. So when Paul says, you who are spiritual should restore them in a spirit of gentleness, He's reminding us Christians what the real qualifications for this ministry of correction is, lest we'd want to avoid it. What are the real qualifications? Not years and years of seminary training, although that's good. Not a PhD in counseling, although that's good too. No, the essential qualification is a regular walk with the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit produces in us the fruit of love, of joy, of peace, of patience, of kindness, of goodness, of gentleness, of faithfulness, of self-control, we will be more and more the sort of people who can do this work effectively.

[17 : 38] You who are spiritual is meant to give us confidence to do this work. So this work of restoration is really for all of us together. This is part of what we commit to when we commit to being members in a local church. No one is above receiving this restorative correction.

No one is below imparting it. We need one another to do this well. So this, this mutual correction, this is the first aspect of love that the Spirit produces in us.

We love one another enough to engage in mutual restorative gentle correction. We neither excuse nor condemn each other, but rather we seek to restore those caught in transgression.

Paul then continues with the second aspect of love in verses 2 through 5. And what we see here is that we don't just love each other as we wrestle with sin and temptation, we also love each other as

we struggle with sorrows and trials as well. So the second big point is this, if we want to keep in step with the Spirit, we must be a community not just of mutual correction, but of mutual care. Mutual care. Verse 2, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. And the word burdens here refers to all the hardships that arise in life, exhausting work, sickness and physical pain, psychological suffering, loneliness, strife, failure, the whole gamut of living life in a fallen world. Keeping in step with the Spirit means seeing your brothers and sisters in need of care, in need of help, and taking the time the energy, the resources to help lift that heavy burden, to come under the weight with them, and to help them carry on. And again, this isn't just a ministry for some Christians. This is a ministry for every Christian. Look at verse 3. Paul says, 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. In other words, do we think that our time and our talents are too precious and too important to help a young family change diapers, to help a struggling Christian find work, to give an encouraging word to a downcast brother or sister?

[20 : 08] Ah, don't deceive yourself, Paul says. No one is above this ministry of mutual care. Before the cross of Jesus Christ, we see what's really true. Apart from Christ, we are nothing.

We're helpless sinners. We deserve condemnation. It is pride that prevents us from doing this ministry of mutual care so often. But the gospel reminds us that everything we are and everything we've received, we've received as a gift of God's grace and love. So how could we turn a blind eye to the needs of our brothers and sisters when God has been so kind and so gracious to us? This is why Paul says that bearing each other's burdens is the way we fulfill the law of Christ. And what is the law of Christ? Well, it's what we read earlier in the service from John's gospel. Jesus, in that passage, stooped to wash His disciples' feet. Can you imagine? The One who fashioned the universe through whom all things were created, the One to whom all things belong by right, the One who will receive the focused glory of all creation one day, came to earth, and what did He do? He washed the feet of His disciples.

We don't even like looking at each other's feet, right? And He washed them. Incredible. If there is any human being in the history of the world who could have rightfully said, that is a task beneath my dignity, it was Jesus. And yet, He gladly stooped to serve.

And then He said, this is my command to you, that you love one another, that you serve one another, that you take off your pride and your worldly significance, and you put on a towel, and you care for each other. That's how the world's going to know that we're Jesus' followers.

not by the cleverness of our arguments, not by the polish of our programs, but by the genuineness of our love for one another.

[22 : 33] A church that bears one another's burdens in the name of Christ, that will be a place where the light of Christ shines brightly for all to see. Why? Not just because it's so countercultural, but because it's going to be tangible evidence, a tangible sign, a tangible speaking forth of the very heart of the gospel that we love because He first loved us. You see, the gospel is this, friends, that the God who created all things and who created humans in His image didn't turn away from us when we turned away from Him. When we rejected God, He did not reject us, but in Christ, God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And three days later, He rose again as proof that all who fall on Him in faith and trust in Him will be forgiven and granted everlasting life. What greater love could there be than the love we have received from Christ?

When the burden of sin had buried us beneath eternal death and condemnation, Christ stooped and carried that burden for us all the way to the cross and lifted it once and for all when He died and rose again for all who believe. So you see, the law of Christ is not some new code that we have to meet in order to earn our salvation. No, rather the law of Christ is a whole new principle of life. It's a whole new way of being in the world, a way of being in the world that says what we have freely received, we now freely give. He has borne our burdens free of charge, so we willingly bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters in gratitude and in love. But just as there was a danger to avoid in the work of mutual correction, so there is also a danger to avoid in this work of mutual care.

Remember, it's easy to look at a fellow

Christian caught in sin and say, oh, I'd never do that. And it's just as easy to look at a fellow Christian buried beneath the sorrows of life and say, I'd never be that weak or foolish or downtrodden.

In other words, it's easy to compare ourselves with others, to think that just because I'm not experiencing a certain trial or challenge or because I'm not suffering in a certain way, then I must be living my life in a better way. I must be doing something right that they're doing wrong.

One Christian sees another Christian struggling with parenting and starts to think, I must be doing a better job raising my kids. Look how well-behaved mine are compared to them. One Christian sees another Christian struggling to hold down a job and starts to think, I must work harder and better than them. I've never had to hunt for work for so long.

[25 : 43] One Christian sees another Christian wrestling with their health and starts to think, I must be taking better care of myself. I've never had those sorts of issues.

But Paul wants to cut this comparative thinking off right at the root when he says in verse 4, You see, when Paul talks about your reason to boast, he's not talking about sort of proudly, brashly boasting about all the awesome things you've done.

No, he's talking about where your confidence lies. Does your confidence lie in the fact that you're doing better or worse than this person over here or that person over there? If so, then you're putting your confidence in the wrong place. Let your confidence, let your reason to boast be in what you've done with what God has entrusted to you. What has God in His providence given to you? And how, with His help and His grace and His Spirit, are you fulfilling the calling He's put on your life?

One Christian might wrestle with chronic pain. Another might be relatively healthily most of their life. At the same time, one Christian might experience financial hardships. One might be relatively well off. One Christian might be struggling with loneliness or anxiety. Another might be quite carefree. As we practice mutual care, as we bear each other's burdens, the question we must continually ask is not, how am I doing compared to so-and-so? But rather, how am I stewarding the calling God has given me?

[27 : 37] It's easy to see someone else's weaknesses and shortcomings when they have a different road to walk than you. But instead, pay attention to the path God has given to you. Are you walking in faithfulness, in love, depending on the grace of Christ, giving God the glory for it?

And on the flip side, sometimes, a lot of times, it's easy to see all of your own weaknesses and shortcomings and beat yourself up all the time because your life doesn't look like this person or that person. But Paul gives us this liberating message. Test your own work. Then your confidence isn't in how you compare to others, but in how your life, your unique life that God has given you is being conformed more and more to the image of your Savior. Yes, we should be receiving wisdom from one another. Yes, we should be caring for one another. Yes, we should be open to learning from one another. But each of us has a unique way that God intends us to bear forth His image and His glory.

God has given each of us our own load, as verse 5 says. And as we carry this load, this particular responsibility from God, we will display that unique glory that He intends for us to shine forth. Now, it does seem on the surface that verse 2 and verse 5 kind of sound a little contradictory, don't they? Should we bear one another's burdens or should each one bear our own load? Well, the answer is yes. On the one hand, we should never be unwilling to help a brother or sister in need, and we should never be unwilling to receive help. When the heavy burdens of life come crushing down, we must give and receive loving care to and from our fellow Christians. The very word burden implies something that requires help. But as we bear each other's burdens, we must remember that each of us has our own load to carry. We can't abscond responsibility for our own lives by quoting verse 2. You know, I'd love to just sit around and do nothing and eat ice cream all day and then tell everyone else to bear my burdens. That's not what Paul's talking about, right? We must remember that each of us has our own load to carry. And the word load there literally means it's a different word than burden. It literally means a backpack. It's not a crushing burden, but it's the unique responsibility God has entrusted to each of us. We each have our own responsibility before the Lord which He has entrusted to us and for which we will be held accountable. It kind of reminds me of Jesus' words to Peter at the end of John's gospel. After the resurrected Jesus comes to Peter and sort of restores him, after his betrayal, Peter says, I love you, Lord, I love you, and Jesus says, feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed, and then Jesus says to Peter, remember what He says? He says, Peter, you're going to follow me so faithfully all your life that you're actually going to lay down your life for me. You're going to be a martyr for me. And on the one hand, that's kind of good news, right? Because Peter, who just betrayed Jesus just a few weeks before, or a few days before, excuse me, right? Jesus is saying, you're going to finish well, Peter. But then Peter starts to think about it, and he

says, well, he looks over at John.

He says, what about that guy? What's going to happen to him, Jesus? And Jesus says, what is it to you if he remains until I come? Don't worry what my plans are for John, Peter.

[31 : 22] You worry about following me. In other words, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. And as we fix our eyes on Jesus, we'll stop measuring our success or failure in terms of other people. In fact, other people won't be the means of judging ourselves at all. Rather, we're going to be more concerned with our eyes fixed on Christ, the great servant King. We'll be more concerned about loving other people and fulfilling what God has called us to do rather than comparing ourselves to other people, for good or for real. And friends, coming back to where we started, it's only the Holy Spirit that can really do this work in us, because only the Holy Spirit is able to take the great truth about Christ and to make it not just clear to our minds, but real to our hearts. When by the Holy Spirit, the grace and love of Christ for you hits home, not just to your head, but to your heart, then you'll let go of comparing and you'll start loving. Then we'll stop competing with other people, and we'll start rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, because we have something that nothing in this world can take away, something of so much value and such enduring eternal quality and joy that the comparisons of this life are meaningless. We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. What is there to compare to that? And then we'll start bearing one another's burdens, just as Christ did for us, and we'll start restoring the fallen, just as Christ restored us when the Holy Spirit does His work. And friends, here's the good news. The Holy Spirit is at work in our midst. The ascended Christ, do you remember in Luke's gospel, in the first chapters of Acts, the end of Luke's gospel, in the beginning of Acts, when Christ ascended on high, what did He do?

He poured out the Holy Spirit. Not withholding the Spirit, not sort of like, you know, just trickling it out a little bit at a time, a slow drip. The resurrected and ascended Christ has poured out His Spirit upon the church. As we read the Scriptures that the Spirit has inspired and proclaim its message, as we sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs, as we pray with the Spirit's help, crying out, Abba, Father, when the Spirit Himself even prays with our spirits and groans that are too deep for words, that is the Holy Spirit doing His work, and He will continue to do His work.

And we'll see, then, His work expressing itself in how we love one another, restoring the wayward, comforting the downcast, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

To love because He first loved us. Let's pray. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth, come down.

Fill us with Your Spirit, Lord Jesus, that we might become a church that truly loves. And so that the world might see how wonderful and great You truly are through us.

[35 : 09] We pray this in Your mighty name, Jesus. Amen.