

# Restoration and Bearing Burdens

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right. Good morning. My name is Jesse. Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. One of the pastors here. For those of you that are catching this later online, thanks for listening. So we only have two sermons left in our series in Galatians. We're coming to the end of the book. It's been an amazing book. It's been a long, wonderful journey. We're just coming out of looking at the fruits of the Spirit and unpacking each of those. And so we have two weeks, and then we're going to jump into an Advent series for the month of December, which is kind of unpacking, looking forward to and looking at Jesus's coming, but also in a sense of like, man, we're remembering that because he came at Christmas, but we live in the other side of Christmas where Jesus came. So we're looking back, celebrating that, but we're also holding on to the fact that he's coming again, right? And so Advent is just a good reminder of that. So yeah, today's passage is Galatians 6 verses 1 to 10. If you have a Bible, if you're old school, you can turn there. It's in the New Testament, and keep turning to the right. It's more towards the end of your Bible. Those of you who don't have your Bible, don't worry.

We have the verses up online. So let's jump into it. It says in verse 1, 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 load. Let the one who has taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.

But the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good. For in due season, we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. This is God's word.

This passage is basically Relationships 101. If you were going to university, this would be the starting class, right? Understanding what healthy, good relationships look like, how to sustain healthy, good relationships. And these truths, when applied, will produce healthy, long-lasting, safe relationships to be in and participate in. And the context in which this is written, these verses are written, is into a very divided church. That's the irony here. Or maybe it was the most necessary thing and why it needed to be included. But Paul's writing to these truths to a very divided church, which, let's be honest, it seems antithetical when you look at Jesus. I mean, Jesus, man, he's loving. He brings people together. Why is this church so divided? I mean, if his disciples are supposed to be like him, then shouldn't we be more like the perfect family, right? Shouldn't we look more like the Cleavers?

[ 3 : 22 ] But that's the rub. Until we get to heaven, we will never be a perfect family. The church is never going to be a perfect family. As Jesus's disciples, we are learning. We are in process. We're learning to die more to our sin and to live to him. And this life that we live, it's a long journey of our hearts slowly changing over time. Eugene Peterson calls it a long obedience in the same direction. Like the Spirit's working on all of us, we are all in this patient work of slow progress. We're all in that together. So when you join a church, man, you're not stepping into the world of the Care Bears. That's not what's happening. You're stepping into a mixed cocktail of opinions and passions and temperaments and hurts and personal struggles. That's who we are. We all have our own things that we're wrestling with and working through. And you know, it's too bad we don't all agree on everything. And it's too bad we don't all behave like we're supposed to all the time. But you know what? Here's the thing. Despite our differences, despite our bad behavior as Christians, the gospel supersedes our differences and holds us together. Galatians 6.1, right? It starts this way. Brothers, 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. And before we just dive into everything here, we have to stop and reckon with that first word, brother. We are brothers and sisters in God's house. We are brothers and sisters in

God's family. Church is a family. It's not a club. You don't get to pick your family, right? When we think about family, we don't get to pick our family. Your family didn't get to pick you. You're born into a family, right? As Christians, we are reborn into the family of God by faith in Jesus. And what brings us together isn't our personal preferences. No, it's the gospel. The gospel brings us together. We have to ask ourselves, why do we gather? Why do we come together? What brings us together? It's one thing. It's actually one purpose. His name is Jesus. That's why we gather. That's what we come around. And if it becomes anything else, guess what? Our togetherness is going to fall apart. And that's the problem. That's the problem. We drift into adding a whole host of other reasons and prerequisites for gathering together.

But that's when we need the gospel all the more. That's when we need to double down on the gospel. See, the gospel doesn't just bring us together. It holds us together. When you look around a church gathering, you see many different types of people. Man, we're different in age and gender and income and education and political persuasion and hobbies and interests. And that's just to name a few.

Now, out in the world, all those things tend to be things that divide us. We typically break into groupings of familiarity or common interest.

And the more an aspect of myself becomes central, so the more a part I can hone in on any of those things, the more that becomes central. Or let me say it this way, the more I build my identity around any of those things, let's say, for instance, politics. The more my identity is that I have to be Republican or Democrat or liberal or progressive or conservative, whatever it may be. You know what?

[ 6 : 58 ] I'm going to struggle to gather with others that aren't like me. I'm going to struggle. And the danger is, is that we can make identities out of anything. Let's move on from politics. We can make identities out of anything. Your identity could be beard-wearing outdoorsman who likes craft beer and wears a man bun and has tattoos on his sleeve, right? That could be an identity. But if you build your identity around an image like that or on any of those things, then it becomes a problem, right?

Like we live in a town where, man, a lot of you are Marines, and that's great, and we love that, and we thank you for your service. But how much of your identity is built on having to be that?

I'll throw myself under the bus. I'm a pastor. How much of my identity is built on having to be a pastor? How much of my identity is built on me having to stand up behind this pulpit on any given Sunday and preach a sermon? None of those things, none of those things I mentioned are meant to be primary in our lives. And as soon as we start elevating those other identities, those secondary identities, those false identities, we start separating by our differences. And here's the thing, that's why Galatians, this is the thing, that's why Galatians was written in the first place.

The Jewish Christians started to elevate their dietary restrictions, the things that made them Jewish, they elevated it again to an identity level. And the difference in that false identity that they ran back to and started holding on to, what did it do? It brought division. And false identities are always, always built around what you can do. And by contrast, the gospel gives us a totally different type of identity. It isn't an identity you can earn. It is an identity that's earned for you, and it's an identity that is given to you. The beauty of the gospel is that it tells us that the only identity that really matters is that you're a son and daughter of God the Father, is that you are a brother and sister in Jesus Christ. The gospel reminds us that we are a people brought into the family of God by truth and by grace, nothing else. The gospel brings us together, and it holds us together, but we also need it for when we hurt each other. The gospel, what it does, it deals with offenses to keep us together.

Let's look again at verse 1. It says, 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. It says, if anyone is caught in any transgression, in any sin, what does it say to do? It doesn't say to sweep it under the rug.

[10:07] It doesn't say just ignore it, pretend it didn't happen. When we see it, we have to deal with it. And to be honest, this is where we Christians get into a whole heap of trouble, right? Some of us, we go a little overboard when someone's sin comes into the light. We act like we just found the mother load in a gold mine, right? We are so happy. Something inside of us just starts dancing around being like, yes, we caught them. Why? Because we've forgotten the grace of the gospel. See, the gospel, its message exposes our sinfulness, exposes us in a sinner because it points us to God. It starts exposing how amazing and holy and righteous God is. And in the light of him, we see how we truly are.

We understand that, you know what? I am not as righteous as I thought I was. I'm not as holy as I thought I was. I am a sinner. But it doesn't just leave us there. It also points to forgiveness and restoration. It shows us that sin breaks our relationship with God and people, but it also shows how Jesus came to bridge that gap, which is why the goal of the gospel is always restoration.

Let me give you a picture of what restoration looks like, right? My son Riley, when he was younger, he split his chin. And before that happened, his chin looked great. Skin was together, one, united, just as it should be. But the split showed us that something was obviously wrong, right? You had two little flaps of skin just separated out there. The skin wasn't together anymore. And that's what sin does.

Sin creates a rift between God and people, right? And as Riley's parents, we didn't say, well, you know what? Let's just leave it alone. I'm sure it's eventually going to work itself out. It's no big deal. No, we recognized that there was a big problem. We needed outside help. And so what did we do? We went and took him to a doctor to stitch him up. But that's what restoration is. Restoration is us coming to the great physician Jesus, who is the only one who can mend and heal our relationships when we sin against each other. That's restoration. It brings us back together. Now, that's a beautiful thing, but guess what? It's a lot harder than it sounds because the sin of pride often gets in our way.

If I'm the sinner, my pride keeps me from wanting to repent. And if I'm the one that sinned against, pride keeps me from wanting to forgive. Both positions are a power play.

[ 12 : 42 ] And both positions don't want to act in gentleness and humility like this verse commands. Instead, what we do is we stand back in judgment and self-righteousness, which is why we so desperately need to dwell in the gospel because the gospel opens our eyes to see ourselves honestly.

Galatians 6, 2 to 5 says, So this verse is telling us we aren't called to ignore each other. We aren't called to stay together as long as everyone is pulling their own weight. No, we are called to help each other carry burdens.

Sin heaps on burdens of guilt and shame. And you know what the effects of that guilt and shame is? Man, those are heavy burdens. They're the weightiness and the things that weigh us down emotionally and psychologically and spiritually. It's all those things working together. Man, they're a heavy load to bear. And if you've ever been through a breakup or a nasty argument with a close friend or a spouse, then you know what I'm talking about. There is a heaviness you carry after that. And until there is restoration, you've got a heavy burden on your back. So what does that look like? What is helping others carry those burdens? What does that look like? First, we don't let them sit alone in it.

Okay? Empathy is a beautiful gift of grace. It's a beautiful gift we get to give to each other. And empathy exists where we recognize we have common ground. Think about this. Aren't the best counselors those who've already gone through your situation? You know, I'd rather get parenting advice from grandparents than a teenager. Right? They've been there and done that and bought the t-shirt.

In 2021, we have a plan as a church to start a marriage-focused community group. And there's a couple that kind of, who are thinking about leading it and they kind of volunteered themselves. And by no means are they perfect, but they've gone through a lot of difficult situations in their marriage.

[ 15 : 08 ] And they've come out the other side trusting more in Jesus and leaning more on his grace and mercy. And people need that kind of empathy. To know you're not alone is to have a great weight lifted.

And to know the person that is sitting in there with you has already gone through it, what you're going through, and is thriving on the other side of it, man, that is a whole different kind of weight lifted. That gives you some hope. But first, that person has to learn empathy.

And empathetic people have learned to see themselves honestly. You know, I enjoy listening to people talk who see themselves honestly. They don't boast in themselves. They don't even boast in others.

They boast in what Jesus has done in their lives. They've been through some stuff and they found out that the only way through it is Jesus's way. Right? And that way is grace and truth and mercy and forgiveness. Empathy is one of the strengths of community. And we're all going through something.

Every single one of us. We're all going through something. Or we've gone through something. Or we're about to go through something. We all fit into one of those categories. But we can't be helpful to anyone else until we are first honest with ourselves. Until we start being honest with ourselves, we are never going to take a step towards being empathetic people.

[ 16 : 39 ] And my prayer is that we are a church full of honest people. That we are personally honest. That we don't keep things hidden from ourselves or from others. You know, people that feel safe to us.

People that are bold to talk about their current struggles and past failures. Those are honest people. Those are people who have learned empathy. And this is what the church needs. This is how we carry each other's burdens and carry our own load. That's difficult. It's difficult in the moment to be that honest.

It's difficult in the moment to be honest with yourself. It's difficult in the moment to take that step of vulnerability and be honest with others. But here's the thing, guys. As Christians, we don't live for the moment. The Bible calls us harvesters. Christians sow in tears and we reap in joy. That's what we do.

That's what we're called to do. That's the picture we're given all the time. And every time we choose honesty and humility and grace and truth and restoration, we are sowing a seed for a future harvest. In verse 10, it says, do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We as Christians are driven by a bigger picture that overshadows any given moment. We know that one day we are going to reap the ultimate harvest.

We are going to reap the ultimate reward, which is eternal life, which this verse talks about. That's the horizon we're constantly looking to. And then we have our eyes fixed on. And you know what? One day we will get there. But until then, what does it say we do? We live our life sowing to the Spirit, which means the Christian life is about growing more in tune with God's heart and God's will and God's ways. Let me show you how this works in real life. Let me show you what it looks like to sow in tears and reap in joy. I received an email the other day from a pastor friend of mine. His name is Elliot Grudem, and he was having a conversation with a pastor friend of his, kind of a mentor actually, that he recently connected with. He said this, I recently connected with a pastor I hadn't seen since I was a child.

[ 19 : 34 ] He heard about our work through a mutual friend and wanted to hear more about it, and our conversation covered a lot of ground. But most of it was spent marveling at the many ways of God, how he intervened in each of our lives in unusual and surprising ways to accomplish more than we could hope or imagine. He then offered the following reflection on nearly 40 years of pastoral ministry.

Now, don't check out because you're not a pastor. Think about what you're doing as a disciple of Jesus. We have people that we are discipling and influencing and leading, right? We all have that.

Well, this is what he said after 40 years of ministry. I have always seen pastoral ministry as Ecclesiastes 11, casting bread upon the waters, long-term, unplannable, requiring generosity, indiscriminate, fearlessness, and persistence.

And now, after many days, I am always coming across fruit from decades ago. We sow in tears, we reap in joy. Parents, you sow in tears, you reap in joy.

Anytime we pick up the mantle of saying, you know what? I'm going to be a disciple maker in Jesus's kingdom.

[ 21 : 10 ] Anytime we pick up the call to love someone and to sow into their lives, you know what? Sometimes it's going to be sowing in tears. Community isn't easy. It's not convenient. It's imposing sometimes.

Sometimes it's dealing with difficult people. Sometimes it's having our feelings hurt. But you know what? We sow in tears. We sow in tears and we reap in joy.

We learn to be more and more honest with ourselves. It's easy to live a life in Christianity the longer you go on, and as we get hurt by people to just start putting walls up to protect ourselves.

And if all we are are walls and we don't have gates in our walls, people don't get access in and out to us, we isolate ourselves. We shut people off.

And really, we don't really make much of an impact for Jesus. But man, we have an opportunity to hear what we're being told.

[ 22 : 15 ] Man, Christian community, it's a hard thing, but it's a beautiful thing. You know what? Christian community, church, and everything we've been talking about, sometimes it's hard to stay, but you know what?

It should be especially hard to leave. Because we gather around one thing and one thing alone. Jesus Christ. So I want to ask us as the band comes up, I want to ask us some questions for us to ponder and to think about.

Maybe jot these down, have these conversations over lunch when we go home today, or later on in the week. What will be your legacy?

What will your legacy be? I think about this 40-year-old pastor. Man, he might have in the moment, every single day, toiling, not seeing fruit, wondering, man, what the heck is my legacy going to be?

Thank goodness he can tell us 40 years on, you know what? Decades later, I'm coming across fruit all the time. What will your legacy be?

[ 23 : 33 ] What's going to be the legacy of our church? Will it be fighting against each other or fighting for each other? Will it be heaping burdens on each other of guilt and shame, or helping carry each other's burdens?

The final exhortation. Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season, maybe it's a year, maybe it's 40 years from now, in due season, we will reap if we do not give up.

Let's pray. Father, we've spoken about some heavy things.

Church is a beautiful place. It's the only place to be a disciple. But it's not an easy place all the time. But we thank you that you've given us what we need to sustain community, not just to eke it out, but to actually thrive in community.

We thank you for your gospel that teaches us to care for one another. We thank you for a gospel that gives us the best identity, which is sons and daughters of God the Father, which is brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

[ 25 : 00 ] We are a family. Help us, Holy Spirit, to show us what we are holding on to as a primary identity besides you.

Help us to see what we've added to the gospel, what we've added to Jesus, as a prerequisite for gathering. Help us, Lord.

Help us to come and lay down every identity, every false identity, every heavy burden at your cross, Jesus Christ. I pray for those in the room who don't know you, Jesus, who haven't, who wouldn't call themselves a Christian.

I pray that before anything. Lord, the invitation is that you're making to them is come. Lay down every identity. Lay down every burden at the foot of the cross and give it to me.

And you're saying to all of us, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And we thank you for that. So, Lord, as we pivot now and we hear the sound of freedom, we're reminded that we have the greatest freedom in you.

[ 26 : 19 ] And as we pause and we pivot, we are going to sing a song of praise and thanks for who you are. Amen.