

The Spirit's Unburdening Power
Galatians 5:25-6:5
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Our text tonight is Galatians 5:25 through 6:5 -- Hear the word of the Lord.

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 yourselves, 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. T

This is the word of the Lord.

So, I want to start tonight by asking you a question.

I want you to picture something in your mind when I ask this question, it's a rhetorical question, so you don't have to answer out loud. I just want to create an image in your mind. What does it look like to be truly spiritual? What does a really holy person look like? What are the images that come into your mind when you think that guy is really holy.

Okay, everybody got their picture? How many of you pictured something like a monk? Something like John the Baptist, you know, camel hair coat, leather belt. You know, he enjoys his grasshopper and honey spread on his toast. That kind of guy. Like somebody who's just out in the wilderness, out in isolation. Your example may not have been as extreme as mine, but for a long time, that's what I thought of as being really spiritual. I thought you're really spiritual if you can go live in a cave somewhere and just spend your time in the Bible and in prayer, and that's what real, true spirituality looks like. And I think that most of our images of what spirituality is and what it means to truly be spiritual, are the common denominator between them is something like isolation.

We think what makes a person spiritual is isolation. Why is that? I think for one thing, we live in a really individualistic society. America is probably the most individualistic society to ever exist on earth. We're so individualistic that we've invented an entire genre. That's the American genre of entertainment called the Western and the Western hero. The cowboy is the epitome of just American rugged individualism. You see, we invented the cowboy because we believe in the in the dignity, indeed in the sacredness. So says Robert Bellah in his book Habits of the Heart. We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions and live our lives as

we see fit is not only morally wrong, it's sacrilegious. And nothing embodies this more than the cowboy. He's a rugged individual American hero. Again and again we see John Wayne or Clint Eastwood. They've got to come in from the wilderness to the edges of society and bring order into the chaotic world. They've got to bring order to the edges of society. They come from the wilderness where only the strongest survive in their time in the wilderness, has trained their nerves and given them a special set of skills. They're the fastest draw and the sharpest aim, and they've got a keen sense of justice that you can't learn in those genteel schools out east, right. It's frontier justice. And we invented this genre, this, this genre of literature, this genre of TV shows and movies, because it's the embodiment of our idea of what it means to be a hero, what it means to be a really capable person. The cowboy's (says Robert Bellah) destiny is to defend society without ever really joining it. He rides off alone into the sunset, like Shane or like the Lone Ranger moves on, accompanied only by his Indian companion.

The myth of the gunslinger says you can be a truly good person, worthy of admiration and love only if you resist fully joining the group. American cultural traditions define personality, achievement, and the purpose of a human life in ways that leave the individual suspended in glorious but terrifying isolation. And I would argue that much of our view of what it means to be really spiritual, we get more from Wyatt Earp than Jesus Christ. We get more of it from Marshal Dylan than from the Bible. A lot of times it functions on such a subconscious level.

In Galatians five and six Paul paints a different picture of true spirituality. True spirituality is about keeping in step with the spirit and keeping in step with the spirit is not just a private affair, it's about new creation, individuals interwoven into a new creation community. And this new creation spiritual community is characterized by four things that the passage tells us about. These four things are one. This new community, this new creation and spiritual community is characterized by a freedom from comparison, restoration of the broken, unburdening of the crushed, and freedom to test ourselves first. New creation community is characterized by freedom from comparison.

Look at Galatians 5:25 again. If we live by the spirit, let us also keep in step with the spirit. Verse 25 is an "if then" statement. And to think about an "if then" statement, we first have to find out if the "if" is true and then we can think about the "then." So what is the if?

What does Paul mean by *if you live by the spirit*? Well, earlier in the letter Paul reminded the Galatians of how they came to live by the spirit. He tells them in chapter 3 that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed, clearly portrayed before their eyes as crucified, and that they heard this image. So he's mixing metaphors here. They heard this image and they believed. And in believing the spirit was given to them as they believed, they believed, and so they received the spirit. It all happens in this one moment, this instant, where God pours out His spirit into them, seeing, believing, receiving the spirit, and coming to new life so that the Spirit of God comes into our hearts. We've all had this experience if we are Christians and we cry, ABBA, father! It's new life, new birth. And it's the spirit who makes that happen.

However, he goes on to say that this new life in the spirit, it starts an immediate conflict within us. The flesh doesn't want to go down without a fight. The Spirit of God, he evicts the previous tenant of your heart, your own flesh, and he sets up his own throne. But there's an insurgent power within you. Your flesh continues to rebel, and he gets into it. How do you actually start to deal with this? Well, you have to crucify the flesh, he says. You deal with the flesh in the same way that you came to believe in the first place. He doesn't say, here's a new set of commands. You believed in Jesus. You receive the gospel, you came to new life, and now you start to obey this new set of standards, he says. Now it's gospel through and through the same power that dethroned your flesh, the spirit penetrating your heart with the gospel continues to displace those old desires.

So that's the "if." You have that, if you've had that experience -- if you have believed in Jesus, if you have seen him with the eyes of your heart and believed in him, and the spirit has come in and given you new life.

Then Paul says, we must also "keep in step with the spirit." So how do we do that? What does that mean? This word translated keeping step means to stand or move in order to line up or to advance in ranks. Paul's drawn on this military image. In the ancient world you had what was called the phalanx. In the ancient world, soldiers lined up in ranks. They continued this on into the Revolutionary War and when you watch videos of the Revolutionary War, they're still doing phalanx maneuvers with guns, and it's kind of like, what are they thinking? Go hide behind a tree. You know, it's how we won the American Revolution in a lot of ways. But they stuck with this for so long because it was such a powerful and effective maneuver in the phalanx. You had these close ranks of people with overlapping shields, and they create this mobile wall, this wall that can move forward, that can move around. There was one Spartan king who was once asked, why don't Spartan cities that were famous for their phalanxes have walls? The king pointed around to the soldiers in his court and he said, these are Sparta's walls.

I think Paul's getting a very similar thing. Here we are, the walls of the New Jerusalem. We are the walls of the city, and we stand in this war shoulder to shoulder, shield to shield, protecting each other. So close ranks in the shields, they made the wall a moat. They made you a mobile wall. But there was something else that made the phalanx like the tank of the ancient world -- it was the drill instructor, the guy who called the commands. Every little unit would have their commander who would call the commands. He would say, move forward, and everybody would move forward as one and so it unified this group as they all listened to the same voice, to the same commander, telling them, shields up. All the shields go up as one. The commander would say "spears out" and spears go out as one.

So Paul is drawing on this image and he's saying, if you live by the spirit, you've been recruited, you've been put into this phalanx, and now you need to stay in step. You need to listen to the calls of the spirit together so that you, as a unit, can fight against the flesh.

The ability of each soldier to listen and to respond quickly to his captain's commands made the soldiers fight as a single, impenetrable unit. So marching to the rhythm of the spirit is not something you do individually. It's something we do together. It means killing sin. That means that killing sin is not just something I do within myself. Killing my sin is something I need your help with. Killing your sin is something you need my help and your brothers help with. If one person slacks off in the phalanx and falls down on the command, it opens up and makes everybody vulnerable to attack. We're dependent and interwoven with each other.

If you've maybe felt like you've been losing the war against your flesh lately, look around. Look to your left. Look to your right. Who's beside you? Who's fighting with you? Are you fighting alone? Because if you're out there alone, fighting on your own, you fall alone. God put us into a community to fight together. So true spirituality is like fighting together in a phalanx. We listen to the commands of the spirit, stand our ground beside one another, and move forward in the fight against sin as a unit.

But there's something that will destroy the unity of the phalanx, and that's comparison. But in the new creation community, we're free from comparison. Look at Galatians 5:26. *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.* Provoking one another. Conceit. Envy one another. Out of step with the spirit. It's ugly. It's brutish, it's self-serving. Life becomes a living hell outside of the spirit. It becomes a ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration on the self. And for all our efforts to feel full, we're only left with a greater hunger.

You see, the Greek word there translated conceit. I like the King James translation. It's a hybrid word in the Greek -- kenodoxia. It's two words jammed together. Paul loves to jam some words together. And in the King James Version this word was translated *vain glory*. And that really gets at the meaning of the Greek words. The Greek words are *empty glory*. Paul says, don't become empty of glory. Don't become hungry for glory, because then you're going to start to provoke each other. You're going to start to envy each other. You see, you were made to be a vessel for God's own infinite glory. You were made to be a vessel for God to pour his glory out into. And it was to fill you up and overflow and pour out of you into other people. That's what you were designed for. And you know this deep down. But you also know that you're empty. You also know that you're not full in that way. And so when you're not full in that way, you start to look around and think I don't have the infinite source of glory that I was made for. So I go to the next best thing, these image bearers around me, and I start to try to get glory from them instead of from God.

This comparison dominates us. We start to compare ourselves left and right. Social media has made it into something like an algorithmic machine. It runs on this drive to compare yourself to somehow fill the void of glory within yourself by comparing yourself to others.

I was once in a conversation about feeling trapped by comparison, and several of us were there. We were kind of commiserating on our tendency to do this. We look at Facebook and I say, oh

man, I don't have a boat. I don't have a this, I don't have a that. I'm comparing and think I'm such a failure. And it just makes us miserable. We're saying, why in the world do we even do this? And one guy chimes in and goes, you know, I don't really struggle that much with comparison relatively. And I said, relative to what? He said, you know, relative to other people. And it got him right there. And I said, oh, so you don't really struggle with comparison compared to other people, right? You see, it's a trap. We're trapped in it. As long as we're hungry for glory, we must compare ourselves to other people. We're so trapped in it that even as we're talking about our tendency to compare, we have to compare ourselves with other people.

There are two words he uses here -- provoking and envying. So two things can happen when you're comparing yourself to somebody else, right? I compare myself to my neighbor, and I can either be doing better than him, or I can be doing worse. If I'm doing better, I feel superior and I provoke (challenge) him. I throw down the gantlet and I go, well, let's see how you really stack up. Of course, it's a stacked game. It's a rigged game because when I'm comparing myself, I pick the things that I'm comparing right? So if I don't have a lot of money, I'm not going to compare my money to somebody else. I'm going to come off looking bad if I don't have a lot of, you know, speaking skills or this skill or that skill, I'm going to compare what I'm good at to what the other person is worse at. That right, or the other option is I compare myself to other people and I go, oh man, they are so much better than I am. Then what happens? You envy them, you're driven to wish you were like them. You're driven to wish I had that gift, I wish I had this gift, I wish I had the speaking gift, I wish I had the teaching gift. I wish I had the serving gift. I wish I had this instead of what I have. So you envy – you want what's not rightfully yours, or at least you don't want other people to have it. You'd be happy if they just didn't have it. And Paul says, you've got to get rid of this man. This will destroy the feelings. This will break apart the war against the flesh. This will break the unit apart. So essentially, he's saying, don't let your hunger for glory make you either despise or envy other people. Relationships outside of the spirit are just people scrambling and fighting over scraps of glory left in the fall out of sin. However, this whole dynamic changes if we get in line and lock shields with our brothers and sisters in the fight against our flesh. That's the second point.

New creation community will restore the broken. Look at Galatians 6:1.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watching yourselves, lest you too be tempted.

The typical way people have applied this in the past is that we saddle up, deputize ourselves as the sin police. And then we ride around the church looking for everybody sinning so we can lock them up. That is not what Paul is saying. We all know people like that. I've been a person like that. But that's the antithesis of this new creation community. That is the very definition of what it means to be conceited. You go around looking for people's sin to compare and to push them down. You're throwing down the gantlet left and right and challenging people. We're not called to be the sin police here. If anything, we're called to be the Sin Rescue Squad. And this idea of

transgression, he says, restore them from any transgression. A transgression means that we've stopped hearing the Spirit's directions and that we've wandered off the path. We've wandered from the phalanx – we've wandered from the group.

It's only a matter of time before that happens and you get caught in the bear traps that lie outside of the path. And when you see a brother or sister writhing in agony, caught in the teeth of the iron trap of sin, if you're spiritual, you can't stand by and do nothing.

Now, in the John Wayne view of spirituality, you might look at the fallen brother and say, you know, tough luck, pilgrim. You have gotten yourself into this mess. You better get yourself together, son.

And that's just feeding the glory. Hunger? That's just throwing down the challenge, that's lifting you up by putting other people down. Or if you're the inferior type, if you lean more on that side, you might just kind of leave the brother there. You might crave his approval so much that you won't challenge him. You won't go over and say anything. Well, I don't want to get involved. Who am I to judge? You know, I've gotten my foot trapped in this kind of sin before, too. I'll just let him get himself out on his own.

So what are we supposed to do? How do we do this? How do we do this work of restoration? Paul says that we must restore the fallen brother in a spirit of gentleness. So this word restore is a medical term. It means to set right to. It's used when a joint comes out of joint or a bone is broken and you reset the bone, or you relocate, you reset the joint that's out of joint. So it's a restoration. It's a healing mission. And it has to be done gently in a spirit of gentleness. Now, what does he mean by spirit of gentleness? In Galatians 5:22, Paul lists the fruit of the spirit. He says, this is the kind of thing that the spirit will produce in you. Characteristics that only a spirit can truly create is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, and self-control. This kind of gentleness, he calls a spirit of gentleness. And what he means is spiritual gentleness, not the kind of gentleness that's there because you just happen to be a gentle person.

My wife is a gentle person. Her disposition is very gentle. She has less ground to make up in this area. Me? Not so much. I've got, you know, the spirit has to make up a lot of ground in this particular piece of fruit. But the kind of gentleness that God is calling us to even my wife can't do on her own. She needs the spirit to have this kind of powerful gentleness. Now, this word for gentleness. It's hard to translate in the English. We don't have a good word for it. It's often translated as meekness. But meekness sounds like weakness, right? And that's not what this word means. There's no weakness in the Greek word. This kind of gentleness is a condition of mind and heart, which demonstrates itself in gentleness, not in weakness or timidity, but in power. It is a balance born in strength of character. Its power in perfect control, applied in the right degree, for the right purpose, at the right time. Jesus says, *come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I am gentle and lowly in heart.* Is he saying I'm weak? There is no more powerful being in the universe. What he is saying is that my power is in such

perfect control that the same hand, the same voice that called the universe into being can whisper to you in your ear and bring you comfort. The same hand that could destroy nations can hold your hand like you are a little child, and walk you along so you can learn to walk. When my girls were little and learning to walk they would hold my finger. You know, there's that one hand around that finger. It's like this hand is powerful enough to pick them up and throw them or hurl them, which we would also do, much to my wife's chagrin. The hands are powerful but in control and they become a source of comfort.

Here's what I mean. Some of you guys know I used to be a firefighter for ten years in South Carolina, and we went to call that really perfectly illustrates this point. We went to this call where this kid was riding his bike, maybe 12, 13 years old, and he veered out of the bike lane and into the road and got hit by a car. Now he's okay. He was okay. He made a full recovery but when we got there, he was in a whole lot of pain. He had broken his femur – that very strong bone and very hard bone to break. It was a nice clean break. And when you make a nice clean break on your femur, you get really strong muscles in your leg that pull it out of whack. Now to fix that, you have this thing called a traction splint. You hook it up one end up to the ankle and one the other end up above the break. And, and then you have something like a ratchet strap and you click, click click click click click click click click. And it pulls the bone back into place. Now when they teach you to use a ratchet and when they teach you to use traction splinting in fire school, do you think they teach you to hook them up and then go to town? Do they teach you to use all the strength and power you've got? No, they do not. They also don't teach you to one little click at a time and if the patient is really in pain, you just stop and let them rest for a minute and then go another click. No, they do not. That prolongs the pain, prolongs the suffering. And the guy is going to be screaming and crying and wailing anyway so they teach you to apply pressure in the perfect stress, in perfect control. They teach you that you apply pressure slowly and gently as you can, but at a nice, even pace. Now, do you think this boy when I'm cranking on that ratchet strap, do you think he thought, man, this guy's really gentle. What a gentle man. I guarantee you he did not. He was, you know, young man from the from the streets. And so he actually cursed me with some things that might have made a sailor blush. And I think he cursed my mother and my whole family back about ten generations while I was applying the pressure. But as the ratchet got there and as the bone got pulled back into place you should have seen the sigh relief on his face, The sweat on his brow started to dry up. He grinned at me and he said, thank you, thank you. I'm sorry I yelled at you. Thank you.

This is the picture of what Paul wants us to be doing for each other. He said, sin is like a severe break in your body. It will break you. And you've got to have the courage. You've got to have something that can give you the resources to go over, to leave the safety of the phalanx yourself and go over to your fallen brother. And do the hard work of restoring what was broken.

So spiritual gentleness is the calm, patient, and wise demeanor that colors everything that the Spirit of God does through his people. It's a distinguishing mark of true spirituality. There's this

Scottish pastor in the last century who's writing about this great revival in Scotland, and I love his quote because it just really hits at the heart of what spirit gentleness is all about, he says,

It is a solemn fact, brought out in the history of more than one revival, that when a whole neighborhood had been well watered with the showers of grace, no drop of blessing has descended where a spirit of controversy and strife had obtained a footing. The Spirit of God hovered around, but fled from, the scene of discord as from a doomed region where his dove-like temper could find no resting-place.... Always remember that "his work is sown in peace by them that make peace" ([James 3:18](#)), and no dwelling can be more distasteful, no vessel more unsuitable to him, than a heart which delights itself with matters that provoke contention and strife.

Gentleness is not weakness. It's also not brute strength. The Christian life is often compared to warfare, and when a wounded soldier is carried in on a stretcher, he's peppered with shrapnel. The medic may hate the twisted steel that shreds his comrade's flesh, but if he treats the wounds with rash brutality, he is likely to lose his brother in the very attempt to save him. Paul also warns us. He says it's going to be dangerous. This is dangerous work. So watch out for yourselves lest you two be tempted to fall into sin. I don't think he's necessarily saying that when you see a brother trapped in sin, in habitual sin, that's the idea. It's sin that's going on in somebody's life. And he says, when you see your brother trapped in that, you go over to him and you help him, but you keep a watch on yourself.

Now, as he's saying, if you see your brother trapped in the sin of, say, pornography, and you go over to him to help deliver him, to restore him, is he saying, now watch out, because you might fall into that sin? I don't think so. I think he's warning us about the sin we just talked about. Because what's the sin you're most likely to commit when you are on the rescue squad, swooping in on the on the white steed? I'm here to save you, friend. What's the sin you're going to be tempted to commit?? -- conceit, pride, vain glory provoking. I can save you because I'll be your savior. So he says, watch out for that.

But sin isn't the only problem that the new creation community deals with. We have truly spiritual people. They also unburden one another in all kinds of ways. The new creation community will unburden the crushed. Look at verse two, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Rather than crush others under the weight of our egos, we gladly forfeit our rights and privileges to see others unburdened. That's what it means to keep in step with the spirit. And it's beautiful.

To unpack the metaphor, let's say that you're boarding an airplane, and you see something. You see like a 90-year-old woman just really struggling to get her luggage up in the overhead compartment. How are you going to help her? Well, you got to get in real close. Almost too close. Uncomfortably close. Like right in her shoes. And then you have to get under the weight and let some of the weight fall on you so that you can unburden her. For example, this happens as we lift all kinds of burdens. For example, when a friend calls in tears, they're emotionally broken, they're burdened emotionally. And you're just listening. What happens as you listen? You begin to feel drained, but they begin to feel relieved because you're letting some of the

weight of their burden fall on you. You're getting in close and letting some of the weight fall on you. You haven't changed their circumstances, but as you feel their burden on your shoulders, they feel the relief you're standing in their place.

As another example, how do we deal with financial burdens? Do you see somebody struggling under a financial burden? How do you help lift that burden? We get in close and you have a disadvantage to yourself for the sake of your brother. You open your wallet. There's no way to help without hurting yourself. It'll cost you something. You'll have to choose to give up some of the things you want to do with your money, to see to it that your brother isn't crushed under the weight of his financial distress. And you don't say, well, I think you've gotten yourself into this mess. You can dig your way out. But you might say, I know I ought to help, but I can't really afford it. And that may be true. But what you really mean is I can't really afford it without burdening myself. So what you're really saying is I'll only bear his burden if I can do it without bearing any burden. And that's not God's love that he wants to make in us. That's not the new community. So where do we get the resources to actually love each other like this? Look at the second half of verse two. *Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.* Why does Paul say that bearing burdens fulfills the law of Christ? The law of Christ means that his life itself is a kind of law. It's the ideal pattern of human life, of human life. Our law is not a code or a creed. It's a person. You got to look at the burden he bore. He got close to us and he let his suffering fall on us right? No, no, no. Backwards. He got in close and let our suffering fall on him. He didn't just let some of our suffering fall on him. He took all of it. Christ took the whole burden of our guilt on himself. He let it crush him. *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed.*

We are restored. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've gotten out of step. We've walked off the path. But we and we have turned every one of us to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Jesus makes us courageous with burden, lifting love together as a church in the power of the spirit. What is the unburdening power of the spirit? You are? Spirit doesn't have hands to lift a burden. He doesn't have a bank account to lift the financial burden. He has your bank account. He doesn't have a face that can empathize with someone in their emotional suffering. He has your face, your presence. You are the unburdening power. The spirit. And how do we do this? How do we muster this strength? It's not enough. It's not enough just to know intellectually that Jesus bore our guilt, that he bore our sins. Like Paul says earlier on, it has to be clearly portrayed before the eyes of our heart. You have to see him doing it. You have to go to the Gospels. And when you see him in Gethsemani, you see him bleeding anxiety, and you look at him and you say, that's my anxiety he's bearing. He's bearing that for me. When you see him betrayed with a kiss, you say, that's my betrayal. I've been betrayed. But, you know, honestly, I kind of deserved it. But he was a friend that stuck closer to a brother, and he was betrayed from me. When you see him stripped and mocked, you say, that's the mocking I earned. I've done so many things that deserve mocking. But there he is, going to the cross,

wearing nothing but my shame. When you see them open up his flesh with whips, you say, that's my beating. I beat myself up all the time because I know I deserve it. But there he is, torn apart for me. Can you see him? You see him bearing the burden and you start to feel unburdened. And that strengthens you to be able to lift the burdens of others.

The gospel doesn't just remove the weight of guilt from our shoulders, it gives us the power to finally be free from comparison. It gives us the strength to be able to bear one another's burdens. And the gentleness to be able to restore each other when we're broken. But finally, the new creation community is made up of people who are free to test themselves.

This is a revolutionary idea about identity. Verses three through five. *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.* Paul tells us something revolutionary here about the gospel.

The way gospel deals with identity. There's this the self-esteem psychology has taken because it's sort of coddled my generation into a state of perpetual childhood. By telling us, you're significant, you're great, you got everything you need right here, just as you are. In many of us, we've tried to run out into the world with tin foil as our armor, and we've limped back to the field hospital, deeply wounded and bewildered. As soon as life landed one solid blow, we doubled over and discovered that maybe we're not as great as we thought we were.

Other people try to settle this issue of feeling empty. They try to sell it with religion. The secret to feeling confident is to get involved in more religious practices, to be a better person, all you have to do all religions have one thing in common. They tell you you're nothing. You don't matter. Give yourself to a higher cause to find your meaning. The problem with religion is, is that the meaning they offer is all impersonal and distant and unachievable. But what Paul gives us here is different than both and the same as both. Do you see it? He says in one verse. In verse three he says, you're nothing. Then in verse four he says, now start boasting. Boast in yourself. Well, which is it, Paul? He says, both, and it changes everything.

When you admit that you're nothing, you can go to Jesus Christ, and his righteousness is in Christ is credited to you, which means that you realize that you're nothing in yourself, and yet in him you have everything. You see your nothingness and your completeness at the same time. Everyone else is testing themselves and comparing themselves to other people. They're boasting in their neighbor. So they're stuck on this rollercoaster of feeling like they're nothing and then feeling like they're the greatest thing in the world, back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. You have the power and the resources to get off the roller coaster in the gospel, knowing we are nothing. It empties us. We were empty so that we can be filled with Christ. We can be filled with that glory. We have this glory in jars of clay. You've got to have an empty jar to be filled. The more nothing we know ourselves to be, the emptier we are, the more space we leave to be filled with Christ.

So the gospel, because it does this, that says you're nothing and you've got everything in him. You're totally broken, but you're totally complete in him. It should make us the most self-reliant people in the world. We should be able to face our failures, face our sins honestly. Look at how we're measuring up because we're not measuring against other people. We're measuring against our own load.

And I want to now wrap up this way. That word load -- you'll be able to carry your own load. A load is different than a burden. The word burden is something so big that you can't carry it on your own. Think refrigerator or washing machine. It might not be as heavy but it's too big and awkward for you to actually carry it alone.

But a load is your kit. It's your pack, it's your equipment. It's what you have been given and equipped with. It's your backpack. It's your gear, and it's unique to you. So the point is that whatever God calls you to do, it's a genuinely livable life. He calls you to carry your own load, not someone else's. And he'll leave you with the margins in your life. If you can carry your own load to unburden others, you're not responsible for how the next person carries their load. You are responsible to bear your own pack of duties and obligations obediently and joyfully.

After the resurrection, Jesus says Peter, listen, one day your load is going to be a martyr's death. Peter looks around. He goes, what about him as he looks at John. What about him? And Jesus goes, if I desire him to live until I return, that's up to me. You follow me. That's what it means to bear your own load.

Don't worry about what he requires of the next guy. Worry about what he requires of you and do what you can. This gospel identity of you are nothing and you are complete gives us the grit and the determination that is also humble and gentle. So, we get up day after day. We work doggedly, ruggedly, faithfully to make the world a better, less burdened place. Gospel identity does not create high maintenance crybabies. It creates low maintenance adults who not only carry what God has laid on them but are freed up and empowered to serve others. Yes, Jesus Christ accepts us as the messes that we are, but he does not leave us there. He wants us to flourish. It's easy to waste your life pursuing empty glory. But when you hand your life over to Jesus you can trust that he's not going to waste it. He'll make you a burden bearer, a partner in the work of making all things new.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. I pray that you would bless us, that you would strengthen us through it, that you would keep us so that we may, bear each other's burdens, fight together in the fight against sin in our lives.

Thank you, father. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.