

“Brotherly Love: Our Calling In Christ”

Christian Liberty
Galatians 6:1-5
Bishop John Rodgers
December 16, 2016

Bishop Rodgers: Good morning!

Men: Good morning!

Bishop Rodgers: Don, are you going to lead us into the presence of the Lord through music? Thank you. *(Music)*

O come, let us adore Him!

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: Lord, we do adore You. We do surrender our hearts and lives to You. We'd ask that You'd so move with Your Spirit in us that we might do that more and more to Your glory, and to the well-being of those around us, and even to ourselves. We praise You, Lord. We magnify Your holy name, Lord Jesus. And we bless you particularly at this time of year as we think of Your humbling Yourself to be born amongst us, and ultimately to die the death of the cross. We give You all our praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: It's a powerful thing. When I was a kid we'd go shopping around Christmastime and all the stores would be playing the Christmas carols. And I kept wondering if people ever heard what these great carols say, because they preach the gospel, right? Of course they did, and so the owners quit playing them for a while. I think now they're coming back.

Has everybody got a sheet? I hope we're just going to work our way down. Don't get me off in some strange directions. We're going to work our way down the sheet.

With Bruce we've been in chapter five of Galatians. We're going to move into chapter six. You might open your Bibles if you wish. And we're going to do the first five verses of chapter six. The reason is that Bruce is going to finish. He'd said that he'd finish unpacking and expounding the fruit of the Spirit, and so the last thing I want to do is to stop him and get in his way. So we're going to just move on just a little bit into the first five verses of chapter six.

These five verses, as you'll see from your outline, kind of break down into three parts. Verse 1 has to do with restoring an erring brother. Verse 2 has to do with sharing one another's loads. And verse 3 has to do with the importance of self-awareness, gospel self-awareness. So we'll try to unpack that a bit this morning. So let me read Galatians 6:1-5.

“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.”

So I do want to get to that last little bit because that's sort of mysterious. It's not immediately obvious what Paul is saying. However, this is kind of a loaded few verses. So we'll get after it.

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Verse 1: *restoring an erring brother. “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.”*

Now this is Paul addressing the entire congregation. And it begins, “Brothers.” Now it would be very easy for us to just kind of skip by that address. But it’s a loaded thing, and I think we should pause.

The word *brothers* is one of the most used words in the New Testament. It appears 346 times. It comes naturally to the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when He addresses us. It comes naturally to the apostles and to the apostle Paul. So he addresses us this way, addressing the congregation and us through them that way.

So we ought to ask ourselves why? Why are we called brothers? It seems to me that there are two rather significant implications behind that usage.

First, *it’s a family term*. Brothers and sisters exist in a family. By contrast, for example, the Communists in their early days, and probably still in certain contexts, refer to one another as *comrades*. They were united in a state and in a call to overcome the economic depression of workers by force, if necessary. Comrades!

In the bloody French Revolution, they called one another *citizens*—Citizen Jones, Citizen Smith, thereby rejecting all royalty and any inherited positions of superiority and authority in society, often killing those who bore those titles, if you remember. It was the bloody revolution. But the Lord, however, and His apostles, call us brothers.

Now in creation the family is an end in itself. We are created for belonging to each other. We are made for a relationship to God and to one another. That’s part of it. So it’s not just a task. It’s a reality to be enjoyed in and for itself in creation. It’s an end in itself.

It’s also an agent of society. You’ve often heard it. A sound family is essential to a sound society, for it’s in the family that the next generation is born and civilized or not. But it’s meant to be civilized. That’s where kids come in. They matter, but also they have to participate. They go to work, have chores, learn what it is to be human beings in society.

In Christ it is the same, only more so. In Christ we are personally related to God and to all others who are related to God, to all the brothers and sisters whom we get through Christ. Whether we like them or not, they’re our brothers and sisters. Hopefully, we get to the point where we like them. We’re family and hence we belong to one another, and have both the joy of having this.

Think of yourself. You have moved to some strange city and you go to church. And suddenly you’ve got a family! I mean, it’s a very different thing than going there and kind of finding somebody who might nod and say, “Hello.”

Anywhere in the world (and you may have to sneak and do it at night in some cultures lest you get your head cut off.) But what if you were somewhere? Would you not begin to nose around trying to find where the brothers and the sisters gathered? What a blessing to have such, but it’s also an obligation to be a brother.

And we as a church are an end in ourselves. Paul sometimes refers to us as a colony of heaven. We’re a foretaste of the heavenly glory, a life lived together in the Spirit. That’s what we’re called to be, and what God is working in and through us as we’ve been reading in chapter five about the life in the Spirit. We’re now spelling out some of the things that the life of the Spirit calls us into and enables.

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So to be brothers is a remarkable blessing. But also we as a Christian church, both globally and in our areas where we join congregations, are meant to be a blessing to the societies in which we’re sent. We produce the best citizens, if we’re doing well. We have a call to citizenship. We have a mission. So we’re also an agent of God, not just an end in ourselves. We’re both.

But it’s easy to lose sight of one or the other. If we lose sight of the mission, then we become selfish. If we’re only on mission, then we’ve lost the dynamism of life together in Christ. Both are important. And both are a blessing.

So being brothers is a remarkable blessing and also a serious call to ministry, to be brotherly.

And the second thing about brothers is that this word *brothers*, which was translated in the old was as *brethren*, is very clearly masculine—brothers. And that’s exactly what the Greek is—*adelphoi*—brothers. And the ESV has the guts to translate it as such.

What does that imply? This is true all the way through the Bible. Women are included with, in and under the men. That’s just the way it is, wives under husbands. In the church it’s men and women under male elders. We’re talking about male headship. It’s true both in the family and in the church.

This pattern which pervades both the entire Old and New Testament also pervaded Western society and culture which has been shaped by the Biblical faith, probably all the way up till 1960, in our lifetime. It even shaped our English. The King James Version translates this. It shaped our English. It used *man* to include all of us up until about the 1960s. And then we lost that in our culture. Now we feel a burden to say not “brothers,” but “brothers and sisters.”

The Bible doesn’t do that. We do that. That’s because we have lost this pattern, and probably the practice that goes behind it.

I think it’s do to at least two factors. Why have we lost this? One is our inordinate individualism. I am the master of my fate. Nobody is going to be over me, male or female. I alone know the truth and I will define it. My reason alone grasps the fullness of truth. That’s part of this. Nobody is going to tell me what to do.

We’ve even gotten to the point where we say, “my truth and your truth.” That’s really ridiculous! But we get driven in that direction.

Most of all I think it’s due to the impact of extreme strident feminism, which is offended at any role distinction between men and women. Now we’re even having trouble using “boy” and “girl” for our children in some areas. Can you believe it? Yes, Jim?

Jim: It was just in the papers this week that Oxford is requesting that students no longer use pronouns *he* or *she*, but *zee* so they won’t offend transgender people.

Bishop Rodgers: Oh!

Participant: Zee, he says?

Jim: Zee. They’re requesting that they no longer use those pronouns.

Bishop Rodgers: I’m not a patient man. (*Laughter*) I’m going to go ahead and use *boy, girl, male* and *female*. God made us.

With what it’s saying we have to be a little careful. The Bible does give women and men equal dignity. We’re not talking about male superiority. We’re talking about role distinctions that God assigns to us by creation. So we do want to be very careful.

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Part of the task of male headship, for instance, is making certain that our wives and that the women in the congregation are treasured, their opinions considered, and their gifts and opportunities expressed. It’s a far cry from male chauvinism.

Some feminism is a legitimate rejection of male chauvinism. Fallen males can abuse male headship, of course.

And of course Jesus Himself sets the standard for us. He gave women their due in the most remarkable way. He departed from His Jewish culture—not from the Old Testament basic image, but from what happened in Judaism. He defied it.

But at the same time He did not appoint any female apostles. And the apostles did not appoint any female elders. It gets a little confusing because the culture gets a little confusing. (*Laughter*) Now I’m getting it. (*Laughter*)

Transcriber’s Note: The Bishop meant to say that Jesus did not appoint any male apostles and the apostles did not appoint any male elders.

Bishop Rodgers: So it seems to me that what this means is that by calling us *brothers*, it’s a reminder to us that we are to take our male responsibility of headship in the family and in the church seriously. It’s the way that God has created and made us and what He intends for us. And it’s expressed when we talk about the different ministries in the church. But it’s implied when He, and the apostles following Jesus, calls us *brothers*. It’s a blessing to have brothers and sisters, of course. But it’s also a vocation and calling.

Well now, Paul goes on to talk about what it is to act like a brother. Verse 1 is the first calling. And that’s about restoring some erring brother or sister caught in transgression. If anyone, brother or sister, “*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 be tempted.*”

Anyone. That’s anyone in the congregation, anyone who is a brother or sister in Christ. We’re talking about a known transgression from God’s word, God’s standard. So you’ve got to know something to transgress it in one sense. So if you’re caught in any transgression, *anyone* refers to a brother or a sister in Christ.

Caught in a trespass; that’s sin. Now the word *caught* means overtaken. It’s somewhat wide in meaning. In Greek, which is *paralabado*, it does not necessarily mean caught like Mom caught me with my hand in the cookie jar. It can also mean *caught up in sin*. Here’s a brother or a sister being driven by a sinful pattern that I see. Here’s a brother or a sister who needs help.

Now of course it also means that we’ve spotted it. Otherwise we wouldn’t be talking about this at all. You’ve noticed that a sister or a brother is being caught up in a bondage to sin, or in an action and a pattern of sin. What are we to do?

Well we’re not to ignore the matter, which is my tendency. I mean we’re talking about a difficult ministry here. We’ll talk about that in a minute. We’re not to ignore the need of our brother or sister, or the need of the family, the church of which they are a part.

And we can’t say, “Well this is none of my business,” because this is a brother or a sister. And the family is being affected, both the nuclear family and the congregation.

Also, we are not the sin police. Hang on; I’ll get to you. We’re not the sin police, called to judge our brother and sister from some morally superior position. Nor are we to gossip about our brother or sister.

As brothers, Paul says that we are spiritually prepared to be of help. You who are spiritual, you who see this brother or sister in need. Now who are “the spiritual?” Well he means all of us, really—all of us who are walking in the Spirit. He has been talking about

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that in chapter five. It’s unlikely that he’s been talking about some super-sanctified group. He’s talking about all of us insofar as we’re walking in the Spirit. Then we are spiritually enabled and ready to do this ministry. So you who are spiritual, you who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who have this new freedom that we have in Christ and this new care for one another, which is part of the fruit of the Spirit, are to restore the person.

Restore. It’s a word used to mend the net and to perfect. Both of those meanings are used in the New Testament with *restore*—*kartotidzo*. It’s unusual. It’s in an imperative mood. So we’re to do this. He’s saying, “Do it! Mend the net! Go help this person back into the life of the Spirit.”

And also mend the network of the congregation that sees this member. 1 Peter 5:10 says, “*After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*” So here’s somebody who needs to be restored back to his walk in the Lord and into the fellowship in the way that he deserves and that meets him.

We’re not to condemn, or to think ourselves better, like the Pharisee in the temple. We are mindful that “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” A brother or a sister is not condemned in Christ Jesus. If God doesn’t condemn the brother or sister, certainly we shouldn’t.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: So he says that we’re talking about gentle ministry, to come alongside, to restore with gentleness, in a spirit of humility and meekness and love.

Gentleness is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit which we’ll be hearing about from Bruce.

Think basically in the background of your mind about the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 18:15-17.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 18:15-17. “*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*”

Bishop Rodgers: If you go to your brother one on one. He’s talking about that kind of ministry—brotherliness in the sense of quietly going and trying to work something through with your brother for his good, or your sister. It would probably be better to let the sisters deal with the sisters more. But it may be even two on one if necessary, if the first time doesn’t work.

I don’t think we’re yet down to the point where you take it to the church with the possibility of the unrepentant guy being kicked out. Paul does say that there are certain things that are going on that people can do who can’t just be immediately restored. They have to be led to repentance. They have to actually be out of the congregation for a while. But I think that here we’re talking about a quieter, humble ministry, in that we spot a brother or sister in a pattern that’s unhealthy for that person. It’s sinful.

You know, you’re married, and you treasure your wife. And you see a brother and he seems to be mean to his wife or uncaring to his wife, spending way too much time with the boys and not enough time with his family. And then you’ve got to think. How do I get alongside of this conflict, to be a help? The family needs it. He needs it. The

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congregation needs it. The Lord wants it. My heart calls for it. How do we do this? That’s next.

Now I want to just simply tell you that this is hard, I think. I fear. I don’t like to be—what’s the word?—judgmental. I don’t want to be thought judgmental.

Participant: Condescending.

Bishop Rodgers: I don’t want to be rejected by the person, who might well not take this very happily. I mean it’s not an easy thing. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit has got to lead us in this.

Books say that whatever you say, say five positive things before you raise this problem. (*Laughter*) It’s very hard to hear this. We don’t hear rebuke easily. It’s all through the New Testament, though. We’re to rebuke one another. And here Paul is applying it to us as brothers. Does anybody have any clues as to how to do this in a gentle way? Bill?

Bill: I think if you read those verses in Matthew, we use in prayer a lot that wherever two or more are gathered together.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Bill: That’s only used in that context. If I’m going to go and talk to my brother about his adultery, I want the special assurance that Jesus is going to be there with me.

Bishop Rodgers: Right. A lot of good prayer goes into this. We need the Holy Spirit guiding and enabling.

Bill: And He promises that.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes. Good.

Participant: I think that if you read what Paul says, he could have very easily said, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” But he says, “you who are spiritual.” In other words, you’re depending on the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Rodgers: Right.

Participant: And it’s not how you feel. It’s how God wants you to work.

Bishop Rodgers: That’s true. And I resist doing what he wants me to do. (*Laughter*) You know, I don’t find that easy. (*Laughter*) Yes. Go ahead.

Participant: I think that sometimes we, especially in the church, men can be a bunch of sissies. I’ll call it what it is.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Second Participant: What?

First Participant: A bunch of sissies!

Second Participant: Oh, thank you! (*Laughter*)

First Participant: Because if you look at it, the disciples were scared to ask Jesus certain things.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, they certainly were.

Participant: He was extremely powerful. And we won’t boldly go up to men and call it as it is. However, if we have that loving concern for our brother, sometimes you need to be bold and call people out for what they are, knowing that if people see us—I mean, I think every single brother here would look at another brother and say, “I truly genuinely love you. And because of that I’m going to call you out on the mat and help you be the man you’re to be.” And I think if we start being truthful, stop the euphemisms. Stop, you

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know, I don't want to hurt people's feelings. But in love hug them and tell them, “Listen! We've got to fix this.” I think we need to be more bold.

Bishop Rodgers: We do.

Participant: I really commend you—

Bishop Rodgers: Paul is telling us to be more bold. Right. Yes?

Participant: I think that what you went over initially is the key, and that is that we're brothers. If we don't have a good relationship with a person on all levels,—

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, right.

Participant: It's not going to happen, you know?

Bishop Rodgers: And you know, if you really love a person, that helps, doesn't it, because you care about what's happening to them and through them. So if it's somebody you really are about, that makes it so much easier. You feel the pull so much more strongly. Yes?

Participant: Yes, and to link to brothers, I mean the whole time you were speaking I was looking at how much time it takes to stand and catch somebody, how much time it takes to be with someone, to restore somebody,—

Bishop Rodgers: Right.

Participant: This isn't Friday morning restoration.

Bishop Rodgers: Right.

Participant: This is Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday and Saturday.

Bishop Rodgers: It takes many visits, not just one.

Participant: And every time you spoke, I kept thinking, “Well, which brothers of mine do I have a relationship with, that I'm around them enough to catch them? And after I catch them, then I can—It's not that I don't care about them. I love and I'm there. But if I'm not even around you enough to love you, how do I love you? How do I restore you?”

Bishop Rodgers: Right.

Participant: So I think what the word *brother* is lending to is relationship.

Bishop Rodgers: It certainly is.

Participant: You know, we're brothers.

Bishop Rodgers: Paul is envisioning a congregation in which people know each other and care about each other and are related to each other. Yes?

Participant: Just an initial thought about what we just said, hence the need for smaller congregations where people can be intimate.

Bishop Rodgers: Hang in, because I'm going to talk about that in the next point.

Participant: We don't have programs that offer this opportunity.

Bishop Rodgers: I agree. You can't do the whole Christian living in New Testament brotherliness in the great assembly. You know, you just can't.

Participant: But I've found that the most effective exhortation and admonition in directing the sins of my life was when that guy showed up at my house, cut my grass, proceeded to wash my car. (*Laughter*) And he came in and he said, “Doug, I'm going to Giant Eagle. What do you need?” (*Laughter*)

When he got back, I said, “Jimmy, what are you up to?”

He said, “Well, I saw you looking at that porno there.” (*Laughter*)

Bishop Rodgers: All right.

Participant: It's a story. It never happened. But I guarantee you right now, it worked. (*Laughter*)

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Bishop Rodgers: Ted, sorry. I didn’t mean to cut you off.

Ted: What I wanted to say was that this is such a difficult thing because I myself am easily affected.

Bishop Rodgers: Right.

Ted: And so I—

Bishop Rodgers: Project that on the other guy.

Ted: And we ran into this at our church. We had a situation where a member was very disruptive. And I was very put out by that. So rather than going to that person, I went to the pastors and asked their counsel, and they spoke to the member about that.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Ted: I’m just saying that we all can get very bold because we’re all very easily offended. And so, before you know it, everybody is shooting each other. *(Laughter)* And the person receiving the counsel says, “What are you talking about? It’s not that big of a deal.” So it’s like chaos, and we’re back to this thing you said about individualism.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Ted: We’re all kind of like autonomous with each other, doing our own kind of righteous thing. *(Laughter)*

Bishop Rodgers: Well it’s clear that we’re talking about loving the brethren at this point, and relationships. Yes?

Participant: I think it seems like the consensus is with the word *brother* that this obviously would be a close member in the church. How do we deal with the people that wouldn’t be a member at a church? I guess you couldn’t really apply this to an unbeliever.

Bishop Rodgers: The first thing you do is to show them. You’re even supposed to love your enemies. But there we need to lead them to the Lord. I mean that’s our chief obligation.

With a number of counselors that I know, the first thing is that they sit down with the person and say, “Let’s talk about your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, because unless we get that squared away, anything I’m going to say isn’t going to be of any help.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: Well, let’s move on. It says, “*Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*” And I was trying to reflect. What sort of temptations would occur as we seek to rebuke and restore a brother or sister?

First, if you’ve spotted them doing something that you’re tempted to do, then you have to be careful that this doesn’t tempt you so you join the brother rather than restoring the brother. So that could be one point.

But I think we could also be tempted to a kind of pride. We could be tempted to do this in a censorious matter. We come across putting the person down rather than mending the net, restoring them. These are things we have to be very cautious about, with great humility, it seems to me.

So the first thing,. Then, the first thing in terms of our brotherly one anotherness that Paul has for us is to restore someone who I would say has been caught up in the power of sin.

Second, he moves on now to what is more the daily part of the ministry in the life of the congregation. That, hopefully, is somewhat seldom. This is much more of a daily part of the quality of our common life. In verse 2 it says, “*Bear one another’s burdens and so*

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fulfill the law of Christ.” He’s talking now about the way we live out our lives together as brothers.

To *bear* is to carry, to help carry. A burden is anything that weighs heavily on someone. The law of Christ is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, even your enemy. And in the body of Christ, within the family, it’s to love one another as Christ has loved us. And you can’t help but ask yourself. Well, how did Christ love us?

Well, undeservedly, perceptively, relevantly, that is, constantly, and in the end, ultimately sacrificially. And we get that text in 1 John 3:16. *“By this we know love: that He laid down His life for us. And so we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”*

I can hear Bruce say, “This is not natural.”

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: This is not done in a fallen world. This is by grace alone. But it’s meant to be done.

And Paul says that we need to show this love by bearing one another’s burdens. Now notice that he says that we all have burdens.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: We all have burdens. We’re pretty good at not showing our burdens. We all put on a smile. And that’s not a bad thing. You know, here comes Joe. He always depresses me. *(Laughter)* But it’s assumed that we have burdens. It’s also assumed that we’re not necessarily to bear them alone.

I don’t know what your tendencies are. I don’t like to ask people for help. Now in so doing, then, you know, this is probably pride.

I mean if I really need the help, and it can be as Doug was saying, physical help, you know, just like “I need a ride.” And I don’t like to ask for that.

My wife is now in skilled nursing. She can’t drive me. And I had to have an operation, and they wouldn’t let me drive. So I had to ask somebody. But fortunately I didn’t have to ask. Somebody knew about it and called up and volunteered. “Oh, I don’t have to ask!” But that’s probably my pride.

We are meant to be able to bear one another’s burdens. If I don’t admit that I have a burden, then I rob somebody of the opportunity and ministry of that brotherliness to help bear that burden. I just don’t think we’re particularly good at that as men in our culture. We’re going to tough it out, you know.

Now some of that is good, but not all. We’re taught in Scripture to cast our burdens on Christ. His yoke is easy. But one of the ways that He bears our burdens is to give us brothers and sisters. And one of the ways we serve Him is to be a brother or sister to someone with a burden.

Now this is the context. How do we get to know the burdens? Here’s where I think personal friendship. We share our burdens with people that we’ve been led by the Lord in a deep way to meet. We’re not equally close to everybody in the congregation. So we have that.

But also the small groups and the smaller congregations are contexts in which this ministry is effectively done. I’ve been in a small group ever since I graduated from seminary. We didn’t have any small groups in the church I went to as an assistant. And it was a brand new thought.

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We didn't have that. We didn't think that way. Our view of the church was going to a service. I guess maybe that was basically it, you know. When do you go to church? When are you the church? You go and maybe you sit next to somebody you may or may not know, and you go home.

So we established groups, and people took to it like ducks to water. And when I went off to get my doctoral degree, I got there and everybody seemed to be so preoccupied with this doctorate that I thought it was idolatrous. I was scared. What if people don't get it? What if they can't do it? Are you then to commit hari-kari? (*Laughter*) Is that God?

Well, it was becoming God in their eyes. I could see it. I didn't want to get into that. So we started a small group.

One time we were on sabbatical in Denmark. I couldn't speak Danish. And we were missing something in our budget. I missed having the doughnuts. We didn't have a small group, a Bible study group where we could pray for each other. Eventually it became two groups. We got together, but we couldn't apply it without getting to know each other, getting to know the burdens.

She goes to take one of the kids to school. And there's a red VW there with an American plate on it. She goes over to say, "Hi!" and the person said, "HI! Where's so and so?"

"Oh, she's over here."

"Oh," they said, "would you like to read the Bible together with us?"

So God raised up a small group in Denmark for crying out loud!

Participant: Wow! Nice!

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, Don?

Don: Yes, Bishop. I remember when I was growing up that in the church background that I came from, you went to church on Sunday and that was it. And people could hardly wait to get home.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Don: No sense of intimacy, or whatever.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes.

Don: And when I came to the church that I'm currently a member of, my goodness! I mean, we have small groups. People stay an hour or so after church just to get together and find out how everybody was doing during the week, and all kinds of different opportunities for fellowship. That's the way that it should be.

Bishop Rodgers: It is indeed what Paul has in mind.

Don: Absolutely.

Bishop Rodgers: And this is a ministry to which we're being called. Paul's spelling it out. You've been given the Holy Spirit indwelling you. And you've moved into a freedom now that is not generally available now throughout the culture. We are to manifest to this culture the quality of life together as brothers and sisters. And this is a ministry that we've been given.

However, we're to do this in humility and with care for one another. When am I supposed to end?

Participant: Any time you want to.

Second Participant: In two minutes.

Bishop Rodgers: In two minutes. Let me just quickly do these last three verses. They go quicker. *"For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives*

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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.”

There’s an assumption behind these three verses. The assumption is this. How you regard yourself, your self-awareness, will influence your relationship to others, and your ability to help restore or bear others’ burdens. Self-awareness is significant.

And he begins verse 3 with a warning. *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* Seeing someone caught in a sin or a brother or sister bearing a load, which seems to suggest that they’re in a weakened state, could lead you to a sense of pride and superiority. You think you’re morally superior or spiritually advanced.

I remember one young man dating a beautiful woman. We were all trying to help him get off the seat and go ahead and propose.

He said, “But I’m not sure that she’s spiritually advanced enough.” *(Laughter)*

And I said to myself, “Wait a minute, brother! You’re nothing but a broken sinner yourself.” *(Laughter)* So we had to point that out to him. Also, she said, “Either propose or not. I’m not getting any younger.” *(Laughter)* He did propose and they have a great marriage.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: So I can just hear Bruce say, “Do not compare yourself to other people.”

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: This is the application. Don’t compare yourselves to other people. It only leads to one of two bad results. It either leads you to pride, because you pick somebody that you think you can beat on this one, or you’ll be led to depression.

So that’s not the point. You begin to think something in particular about pride. If you think you’re something, he says that actually, apart from Christ, you’re nothing.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: You cannot do anything spiritually helpful for another person apart from Christ. You can’t restore a person to Christ. You can’t be brotherly in any spiritual power apart from Christ. *“Apart from Me you can do nothing.”* John 15:15. So comparison with other people is out. That’s what Paul is saying. That’s the warning.

He offers an antidote. That’s verse 4. *“But let each one test his own work, and then the reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.”*

So if you’re not comparing yourself, how do you assess yourself? In the light of the love of God in Christ. If we’re going to fulfill the law of Christ, we do it by seeing His love as the standard. And then if we see in ourselves any little peeking fruit of the Spirit starting, then we say, “Look! Thank God! Out of this soil which is me God is at work in me. And I’m a better man than I was before than I would be on my own.” So if we boast, we’re really boasting in the Lord. We’re just saying that God’s Spirit is actually powerful. But in and of myself I am a sinner saved by grace alone.

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: And so that humbles me. I go as a humble person. So if I compare, I should compare myself to the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

He finally concludes, *“Each one will have to bear his own load.”* He uses a particular word for burdens—*bares*. Burdens can be shared. The load, which is a different word—*proteín*—the only load is our personal accountability to Christ.

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It's ours alone. In the end we must stand before Christ and render an account. Have we built with gold and silver? Or have we built with hay and straw? No condemnation. But we will render an account.

And one of the things that we render an account about is this. Have we been a brother?

Participant: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: And one of the blessings we should celebrate is that we have been given brothers.

Participant: Amen. Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: Let's pray. O Lord, how great is Your call to us. It humbles us. But how thankful we are that You have made us part of Your family, that You indeed are our Brother. You are our Savior, our Lord and our Brother. You've made us part of Your family and given us dear friends that have helped us along the way and continue to do so. And Lord, please help us to pass this grace and mercy and love on. Help us to be brothers. For we ask it in Your holy name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)