

“Freed to Love” // Gal 5:25–6:18 // *Freedom in the In-Between #8*

NACP Announcement

Summit family, over the past couple years, **we’ve been on a journey together that we’ve called “Multiply.”**

- It’s how we, financially, offer ourselves to what we see God doing in our midst.
- **Multiply began with the conviction** that God generously gives us all the things that we have, not just so we can enrich our lives with them, but so we can offer them back to his kingdom.
- And **when we put what we have in God’s hands**, he multiplies it.

We’ve always said that our primary goal with Multiply is not to raise an amount of money, but to see **100% of our people engaged in the mission of God here.**

- Church is like a football game... we want to see everyone engaged.
- **And see, that’s because God doesn’t need our money.** We’re not raising money for him.
- **But as his people, this is how he works in our world—when we, his people, offer the first and the best of all that he has given us back to him, he multiplies the kingdom through us.**

Over the next few weeks you’re going to hear about some of the specific ways God has used Multiply to grow this church and reach people, and some of what we believe God has planned for us in the coming years.

Works Consulted:

“Boasting in Nothing Except the Cross,” Tim Keller

Galatians for You, Tim Keller

“Free to Share,” Chip Henderson

“Laws of the Harvest,” James MacDonald

And let me just comment really quickly on that video you just saw: some of you have an opportunity to multiply your lives in a unique way *this week*.

- On **Monday night, November 6**, we’re having interest meetings for 2 church plants—one to Austin, TX and one to Charlottesville, VA.
- So far, we have sent **448 people** to be part of our church plants, and I’d love to see us get to **500 this year**.
- **This isn’t just for us “ministry people.”** This is for professionals, students, and families, those entering retirement. It’s for *you*.
- **Lots of factors go into where you pursue your career.** Why not the largest of those factors be where you can be involved in the Kingdom of God?
- **New church plant: 3 people to reach 1 person for Christ...** so you have a chance to be a part of something really exciting.
- **“But I love this church.”**
- So, just **come to this interest meeting** and learn about what is going on and how you might be impacted.

Introduction

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, open them to Galatians 6.

- We are a BYOB church. (You say, “J.D., but you put it on the screen each week for us.” Yes, and I have a guilty conscience about that; I want you to learn to read and study your own Bible, so BYOB.)

We are almost at the end of our series on Galatians. (We’ve been studying the book of Galatians because Oct 31 marks the 500th year

Anniversary of the Reformation, started by a German monk named Martin Luther... Galatians was his favorite book...)

and we come now, Galatians 6, to Paul's final thoughts.

- At the beginning of this series, I told you that **every pastor has a speaking style**—how we like to start a sermon, how we like to end it.
- Some pastors like to end their sermons by revving up their audience to an applause line; certain youth camp speakers I grew up with always seemed to like to end with an emotional story about someone dying to get us all crying so we'd all come forward and volunteer to be missionaries.
- I was speaking once at a college retreat... (Worship leader would end every worship set by getting to an emotional peak where he'd jump around... at one of the sessions he got so worked up he just held up his guitar and fell back! "You're up next on the schedule.")

Well, when Paul gets to the end of his letters, his habit is to rattle off a litany of really practical instructions. At first, they read like a bunch of random, standalone proverbs. As if he's saying, "And remember this. And don't forget this." But they are really not random at all. These things are **practical out-workings** of the gospel.

Here's the thing to remember about Paul: **For Paul: imperatives always flow out of indicatives.** (And I know you say, "*Impera-dica-what?*")

- **Indicatives** = statements about what God has done in the gospel.
- **Imperatives** = how you should live in response.

Often, Paul signals that transition by the word "**therefore.**" Therefore, in light of all that you have heard...

- That's why **every good Bible teacher tells you** that whenever you see the word "therefore" in Paul's letters, you should always look and see what it's...
- **Before you undertake the imperative**, make sure you have a good hold on the indicative. Otherwise you end up in what we call legalism—where you've turned Christianity into a list of moral *do's* and *don't's* – the opposite of what Paul is wanting you to do.

Paul is urging you to respond to the gospel he's just explained. The third line of the **Gospel Prayer** I've given you say this: "**As you have been to me, so I will be to others.**" Chapter 6 is Paul unpacking that concept.

Let's **start our reading** at the end of chapter 5, because this, **IMO, is where he sets up the instructions** of chapter 6.

5 ²⁵ **If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.** (The Spirit has created for us a new reality in the gospel. In that gospel is resurrection power. But to experience that power, you have to live consistent with the gospel.) ²⁶ **Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

- This word "conceited" is really important. It's really not the best translation, we just don't have a perfect English word for the Greek word. The word really means "**false glory.**"¹ **KJV: Vain-glory. (empty glory)**
- The idea is that you are seeking glory according to a false premise.

Remember what Paul has taught us throughout this book: you and I were created to be complete in God. His love and presence were to be our glory.

- **Literally every part of you cries out** to hear God say: "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

¹ Drawing from the commentary work of F. F. Bruce, Donald Guthrie on Galatians. See Tim Keller, "Boasting in Nothing Except the Cross," preached at The Gospel Coalition National Conference on Apr 5, 2017

- Well, when we sinned, we were **stripped of that love and acceptance** and the result was we felt naked and ashamed.

So, we began to look for it from somewhere else. And one of the ways we did that was by comparing ourselves to others. We tried to show that we were better than others in some way.

This manifests itself in 2 ways we see in vs. 26:

- **provoking** = you have a **superiority complex**. There is something **about you** that makes you feel like you are better than others, that sets you apart—I am smarter, prettier, richer, more moral, more talented, with a better family—than you.
- **envying** is the other side of the coin. You have an **inferiority complex**—because when you compare yourself to others you don't match up, and you resent that.
- **What the superiority and inferiority complexes have in common** is that you enter into relationships from a sense of emptiness—you need glory from others.

The gospel does 3 things to you that transforms your relationships:

- **It humbles you:** it teaches you that there is really nothing about you that makes you better than someone else. All you have is a gift of grace.
- **It completes you:** You don't need glory or distinction from others, you have the approval of God
- **It redirects you:** rather than being a person focused on using others to meet your needs, you become a person who offers yourself to meet theirs.
 - **Before the gospel, you approach every relationship from a MARKET standpoint:** How can this relationship benefit me? How can they fulfill my life goals?
 - With every person, you have little PLUS/MINUS chart in your heart: What can they do for me or my family?

Watch how those things show up in this litany of instructions:

6 Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, (here we have someone overtaken in a sin) **you who are spiritual** (i.e. with the Holy Spirit—that is all Christians. You have the Spirit, yes you do), **restore** (Gr. *katartidzo*, to set a broken bone back in place) **such a person with a gentle** (humble, prautas) **spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted.**

How does a gospel-saturated person respond to someone in sin?

They approach them in empathy and compassion, knowing they they are made out of the same stuff they are, and the fact that they aren't overcome by this particular temptation is not because they are better.

- **The fact that I have not been overtaken in this sin** probably comes from the fact that I have been spared the circumstances this person was in. **Had you grown up like them,** or been put through the same temptations, I probably would have made the same dumb decisions.
- The gospel teaches you that any righteousness you have is a gift.
- **Thus, when you are around someone who has fallen, you approach them humbly**—I was a wretched, dark-hearted sinner just like you. Any righteousness I have is a gift.

A person who doesn't know the gospel assumes that their righteousness is something you've achieved, so they feel conceited and proud. And they **back AWAY** from that person.

- **You don't get involved,** because you think, "Why would I encumber myself with your mess?" You think, "I've spent my life keeping myself out of sinful messes; why would I enter into yours?"

Which leads me to the next verse: **²Carry one another's burdens; in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.**

- **Now, in context,** the burden he is talking about bearing is the burden someone brings on by their sinfulness. **If you get the**

gospel, you will enter into the burdens of others, burdens brought on by their sinfulness.

- **J. Edwards**, in his short little book *The Duty of Christian Charity*, said that one of the primary reasons Christians excuse **themselves from helping those in need** because they say about the needy person, “Well, they brought it on themselves.”
- **Edwards’ response: Do you not know the gospel?** Do you realize the misery Christ brought you out of? A misery you had brought on yourself?
- **You know the Golden Rule...** Here Paul upgrades it to the Platinum rule: do unto others as Christ has done to you.
- **As you do this, you will fulfill the “law of Christ”** : do to others as Christ has done to you.

The law of Christ is that you voluntarily share in the burdens of others.

Let me ask: Think about the burdens in your life that you are carrying right now. How many of them come from carrying the burdens of others?

Think about the metaphor: If I were trying to carry this table... what does it weigh? Maybe 350lbs? ... I’d turn it over and let you carry it.

IOW, in order to help them, some of the burden has to come on you.

Most of us want to give to others without it really costing us. We want to give without feeling the burden. But that’s not what people who have experienced the gospel should be like.

- **Edwards said the 2nd reason Christians don’t give is they say that they don’t have any excess, and they couldn’t give to the person in need without experiencing hardship themselves. **But isn’t this exactly what Paul is telling us to do?** To give to a point that some of the burden of those in need falls on us?**

- **Why C.S. Lewis said:** Only safe rule in giving; giving more than you think you can spare. Only then are you sharing a burden.
 - **A conceited person**, who has forgotten the gospel, thinks, “I’ve pulled myself up by my bootstraps. You should do the same...
 - ...In fact, I’ve spent my life trying to get myself to a place where I have no burdens. I’ve earned this position of privilege. I’m certainly not going to encumber myself with yours.”
 - **They are conceited**, unaware of the great need that they had when Christ saved them.

There are, of course, other ways to apply this principle beyond the financial.

- **You can do it with people emotionally**, hurting when they hurt. Making their concerns matters of personal prayer.
- **Trying to shoulder the load in really practical ways:** Taking them meals. Watching over their kids.
- **Helping people move. I hate moving. Everyone hates moving.** But that is a time when we literally bear one another's burdens. If you are in Christian community, you could expect, and not resent, when people ask you to help them move. **And if you have a truck**, I’d advise you conceal that fact; otherwise everyone in the church, and random strangers in the Triangle, will ask you to help them move.

Let me **apply this principle in one other way that is think is timely for us...** and if I could speak as a white guy here to those of you who are white, it’s one of the **major things I think we need to do in situations** of racial tension. To make every effort to bear the burdens born by some of our brothers and sisters of color, burdens we may never had to experience.

- **As we’ve talked about**, it is **easy for any of us not to think about things** that don’t affect us. But if we are gospel people, we will be aware of the pain others are going through, and aware of the privileges we experience that others don’t have access to, and we

will use any position of privilege or strength that we enjoy to serve others.

- We will spend time listening, and trying to see things from their perspective. Listening well is the first part of bearing someone else's burden.
- **Realize that when it comes to things like 'kneeling for the flag,'** for example, or even protesting and rioting after a shooting, that others often feel like they do because of experiences that they have had... and, **to be frank**, had you grown up in their situation you'd probably feel the same way.
- **That's not saying that they are all right and you are all wrong.** Just saying that you should realize that your perspective on those things is largely an opinion formed out of your own experiences, and that's all it is: **Opinion**.
- **We should listen to others** in our community, trying to see it from their perspective, and as we can, sharing the burdens that they live with as if they were our own.
- **Write this down:** *We are called to share the burdens our brothers and sisters live with as if they were our own.*
- **For the majority culture, this is the beginning of progress in a lot of this racial strife...**
- **That's not all that needs to be said on this—I get that—**but it is something we can do.
- **Maybe the 1st place this will show up is on your Facebook wall** (this applies to you all) Can I **suggest a verse** you should write on top of your computer? **Proverbs 18:2**, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." For some of you, this pretty much sums up the entire approach many of you take to Facebook. You jump on social media not to understand, but to offer your opinions on whatever subject. Maybe make this your screen saver.

Paul keeps developing this point: ³ For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

- **Do you see what he is saying?** He's still going after to this problem of being conceited.
- Do you really think **you are something?** Do you **not remember the gospel?**
- **Do you remember who you were when God saved you?** You were dead in trespasses and sin. Children of wrath.
 - You weren't a "**not so bad sinner,**" or "sinner who still **had a good heart,**" or "sinner with a **lot of potential.**"
 - God didn't look at you and say, "*There's still some good...*" That's Star Wars, not the gospel...
 - There is only one kind of sinner: **wretched, dark-hearted, spiritually dead.** You were so bad that Jesus had to die for us. He wasn't like, 'Now, some people are so bad I had to DIE for them. You, I just **had to sprain my ankle** for you.' No, you were so bad only his death could save you.
- **If you forget that**, and think you are something when you are actually nothing, you will be self-deceived, and then you'll be proud and ungenerous toward others.

⁴ Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else. ⁵ For each person will have to carry his own load.

Now, you read this and you think, "It sounds like Paul is contradicting himself." First, he tells us to bear each other's burdens; now, to bear your own?

- I get that, but keep in mind the context... he's **going after this problem of being conceited**.
- **He's saying it is foolish to feel proud that you aren't struggling with something** when someone else is, because the fact that someone else is struggling with a particular sin you are not probably has less to do with how inherently good or bad they are, and more to do with circumstances you've been spared, and graces you've been given. We all have different sizes loads.

- **Had you** been given the same load that person was given, you might struggle with it too.
 - Let me illustrate it this way: Sometimes in the church you encounter people who are just really difficult. We call them around here, 'EGR people.' You know who you are. I try to keep in mind that often that person is the way they are because of circumstances they experienced growing up. I don't have trust issues because I grew up in a home of security, where my parents were never abusive. **A lot of that person's struggles have to do with the fact that they were given a different load, so it's foolish for me to compare myself to them and feel superior,** because the fact that I don't have the same issues they do has to do with graces I received that had nothing to do with me.

So, there we are... in these first few verses he has shown us several ways the gospel reshapes how we approach broken and needy people.

- If you are conceited, you look disdainfully toward people struggling with sin because you think that your good life comes primarily from good choices you made because you were just inherently good.
- If you are conceited, you move away from people in need, because you don't live in the awareness of how much need you were in when Jesus got involved with you.
- If you are conceited, you approach every relationship from a MARKET standpoint... What will I get out of this? Will this person add value to my life? Will it cost too much to get involved? **Conceited people are basically on** a hunt for those whose lives are not a mess so that they can help us fulfill our goals for our lives.
 - **(Or, btw, in a little twist, sometimes they like to be around people whose lives** are a mess because it makes them feel good about being the savior. Their personal neediness is shown by how they need to be needed.

- That's why they get mad when you're not appreciated, or feel depressed when they're not really needed or the center of attention.
- You look like they are serving others; but you are actually using them.)

Gospel people do the opposite; they approach people with humility...

Compassion and empathy...

Eager to share each other's burdens... not because he needed us.

Because that's what Jesus did for you.

I read something this week about the Temple I've never thought about. We know that God architected every little detail about the Temple; he laid out the dimensions, the furniture, the designs. Jews believed the Temple to be the center of universe; on the very site of the Garden of Eden. For them, it was the center of reality. **At the very center of that Temple,** the most important piece—was what? Not an image, or a statue or a person. But an empty gold slab = **the Mercy Seat.** That slab was where the **blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled;** signifying, of course, Jesus' sacrificial death for us one day.

- **Get this: At the very center of reality**—the heart of creation and heart of redemption is an event, an action: **MY LIFE FOR YOURS.** **When we forget the gospel, and are conceited,** we operate according to the **opposite principle** – Your life exists to serve mine.

- **Those are the two ways you can live your life.** Every single hour. **Your life for mine, or my life for you...** My life to serve you. My life poured out for yours.²
 - **For example, Parents,** you have this wonderful plan for the day ... then something happens—your kid gets sick, has a melt-down, you need to spend time with your child. And you think, “I don’t deserve this. These kids are so inconvenient!”
 - **Which will it be?** Die and lay down your life for your child and the child will grow up feeling loved. If you never sacrifice; if you never die for your child ... your child will grow up broken.

Now, finally, Paul turns to the subject of giving. We’re going to spend more time on this in a few weeks, but let me address it briefly here: **Let the one who is taught the word share all his good things with the teacher.**

- (BTW, **you at TSC do this.** You take such good care of us, thank you. **But, he’s talking about more than taking care of the pastors.**)

See the word **share?** It’s significant that he used **the word “share”** here rather than “give.” The difference in sharing and giving is commitment.

- When all you do is give, you can say, “OK, I paid my dues, now you do the work of the ministry.” When you “share,” you’ve taken ownership of the mission. You say, “This church’s mission is my mission, I’ll bear some of the burden, and I’m willing to whatever God asks to see that mission multiply.”
 - **You are committed.** I’ve heard it described as the difference between how the pig and chicken contribute to your breakfast. If you eat a plate of eggs and bacon... chicken made an offering; pig was committed... SHARE.

- **We don’t want to be a place where pastors have a vision for ministry and you fund it. God is not going to hold me alone responsible for reaching this community...** This is our mission. This is your community, and your generation. Yes, as the leader of the church, I put forward a vision, but I want you to own it, to share in it.

This is timely for us: **We are coming up on the finish line of this journey of MULTIPLY—for the next few weeks we’re going to be considering** some of what God is doing in our church, and this strategic and critical moment that he has us in.

- And I want **you to share in it.**
- **It’s never been about raising money...**
 - Primary and secondary goal: 7000 families.

Next, he says some really important things about giving which we’re going to cover next week, but for now, let’s jump to **Paul’s grand conclusion:**

Look at what large letters I use as I write to you in my own handwriting. (Someone else was helping write this letter down, mostly likely because he had an eyesight problem. And here, at the end, Paul literally takes the pen from the guy he had transcribing for him. This is the email equivalent of going ALL CAPS on them.)

****12 Those who want to boast in the flesh are the ones who would compel you to be circumcised... 14 But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ... 15 For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation.**

Paul ends the book by coming back to the gospel. He says, “All I am about it is the gospel. All I want to leave you with is the gospel.”

² This from Tim Keller’s sermon on Gal 6.

Some people boast in how well they keep the law. Others boast in how talented or beautiful they are. Some boast in how much they know.

I don't boast in any of those things, he said. I only put forward the cross of Christ. "You may not think the message of the gospel is that impressive, but, **vs. 15**, it is the wisdom and glory of God and carries with it the power of a **new creation**!

And that power is greater than any technique, or knowledge, or ritual. It is stronger than the strongest power in the world. It is mightier than the mightier fortress. It is the power of resurrection.

Martin Luther got this. A few weeks ago, I told you how Luther had "rediscovered" salvation by faith alone and was called to appear before the religious and government authorities at the time.

They demanded that he recant. **Cardinal Cajetan** who oversaw the proceedings, kept saying to Luther, "We are going to burn you at the stake. You can make all this go away through one little word!" "Revoko"

Luther wouldn't. He said, "I can't turn my back on what God has said." And as he was returning home the Emperor sent out a decree to have him killed...

- **Pic of Wartburg**. And he wrote, *A Mighty Fortress is our God*.

*"And though this world will devils filled, will threaten to undo us, we will not fear for God has willed, his grace to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure, **one little word can fell him.**"*

- **The word of faith.** In **that word of faith is the power of God**. It makes the sinner righteous. It makes the lame walk, the blind see,

and the dead live. It can release you from the powers of addiction and heal the wounds of years of abuse. It can scrape off the dead parts of your heart hardened by a lifetime of selfishness. It is the power of salvation to all who believe it.

- **It gives hope to the hopeless, turns tragedy into triumph, and makes us more than conquerors through him who loves us.**
- **When we believe it, it releases in us the power of the Spirit, so much so that not even the gates of hell can withstand us.**

Luther looked at the Cardinal and said, "You can keep your offer of safety; I'd rather have this fortress of God's promises than any the fortresses of earthly power."

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them abideth.
The Spirit and the gifts are ours, through him who with us sideth.*

So, let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still. And he shall win the battle.

So, when it is all said and done, what we boast in, what we cling to, is the gospel. In it is the mighty fortress of God's power.

Luther on deathbed: "We are beggars."

That's it! My only boast is Christ.

And Paul says, **¹⁸ Brothers and sisters, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.** Then he drops the mic, and walks off. At this point, **I'm supposed to fall down** and a worship leader...

