LSB Galatians 5:25 - 6:6 Pt. 1

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become those with vain glory, challenging one another, envying one another. 1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each of you looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load. 6 And the one who is instructed in the word is to share in all good things with the one who instructs him.

There are no chapter breaks in the original texts. Chapter and verse numbers are aids for us who would study God's words. But they don't always fall in perfect synchronism with the paragraphs and thoughts.

I've read beginning with chapter 5 vs. 25 this morning and continued through verse 6 of chapter 6 because it seems to be a complete thought together.

Paul is very formulaic and we'll see this over and over as we work through his letters to the different churches. He never asks christians to do stuff until he explains to them their theological resources. Otherwise we might say, I'm happy you can pull that off Paul but obviously I cannot.

Paul destroys that straw man by doctrinally teaching us who we are and the wealth we all hold in common, before he compels us to act.

We can see his same method every time. This is who you are. Therefore, this is how you walk. Positional truth. This is who you are in Christ. Practical truth. Therefore, this is how we live. First the explanation of the wealth. Second the expectation of the walk. This is your father, this is your family, these tools are available to you, therefore, this is what is

expected of you in order to honor your father and the rest of your brothers and sisters.

But we don't walk as christians in a vacuum. God designed us to be relational. In immediate family and in God's elect church, we never live in a vacuum. We are all interelated. We are interdependent on one another. No solo christians.

Some years ago a guy made a visual learning aid of all of the "one anothers" in the Bible. Circles intersecting circles. It's quite telling to see all of them together in one visual aid kind of a thing. I've included a copy in the bulletin.

These things are the "one anothers" we find in the new testament and beyond. And the reason I remembered this little quick aid was because of our text this morning.

26 Let us not become those with vain glory, ***challenging one another, envying one another****. 1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each of you looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2* ***Bear one another's burdens****, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Two negatives offset by a big positive. Don't do these things to one another, instead do this with one another. Don't challenge or envy one another, Instead help each other bear your burdens.

Oddly, only the first one is included in my little aid. Which means there are probably many more of these one another's we could harvest if we went looking and canvassing.

The idea of our text this morning though is this. We need to be caring for one another. We are no more independent of one another than my hand is independent from my arm, and the muscles inside, and the brain that actuates my fingers as I type this study.

Together we are the body of Christ. For the world to see Christ in us, all of these interrelationships must be healthy and working. Brain, muscles, arms, hands, fingers, eyes, a bum to sit in the chair with, and some legs to balance me. All of that just to type words on a screen.

And yet just like my interdependent body parts, these words are my gift to the greater body of Christ in Tonopah in order to strengthen you with spiritual food and make you strong to do your different works. We are interrelated and completely dependent upon one another.

Listen to the wisdom of Solomon in the old testament;

Eccl. 4:9,10 *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if one falls down, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to help him up*!

In the first part there is synergy. The combined sum exceeds the sum of the two independent parts alone. And in the second part there is help for the partner who falls.

That's kind of the perfect opening scenario for our text this morning. Lifting up someone who has fallen.

On my shelf above me I have a book titled The Complete Official Road Guide Of The Lincoln Highway. 1913. 110 years ago. And people in that time frame considered it foolish to try to go on a highway trip across the continent, alone.

In one particularly colorful note, the proprietor of a little tiny place in the Utah desert, the J. J. Thomas Ranch, writes, "if trouble is experienced build a sage brush fire and Mr. Thomas will come with a team. He can see you 20 miles off."

We fall in ditches we can't get out of alone. Still true. Miss Pam worries

about me gathering fire wood 65 miles from home because I stubbornly like to do it alone. I just enjoy my day away alone. I'm downright selfish about it. But I always give Jeff coordinates that can get him within a visual range in case something happens and I don't make it back home in time.

We need each other. We need to have others who are knowledgeable about our spiritual wellness and who can help us out of a spiritual ditch if we should fall into one. We aren't on this road alone.

In Pilgrims Progress, the main character is Christian and how wonderful it is when after the valley of the shadow of death, he meets faithful, who is his traveling companion until Faithful is murdered by the citizens of Vanity Fair. Christian escapes and soon meets Hopeful who travels with him the rest of the way to the Celestial City.

Bunyan realized the importance of companions who can help each other during the trip through this life. We don't do this alone. We rely on other christians to rescue us, and they in turn rely on us rescuing them. This is God's design for us.

So this morning, we get into instructions from Paul, to the Galatians, about rescuing each other when we inevitably fall into different ditches. And in this case, the ditch is sin. A brother becomes bogged down, or trapped by some sin that has stopped or stalled his progress.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become those with vain glory, challenging one another, envying one another. 1 Brothers,

Our context is that Paul has rescued these folks from a damning heresy which was brought into their churches by false teachers. A throwback to judaism. And false judaism at that. A **self** achieved righteousness by the keeping of Moses laws, devoid of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

A return to phariseeism if you will. Righteousness generated by your own

flesh. You pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. They gave lip service to Christ, but they taught that you achieve a righteousness acceptable to Christ by keeping the laws of Moses. In your flesh.

Paul has restored them to a salvation purchased by Christ alone, and a christian walk that is dependent on Christ in You. The Spirit empowers us to walk, separated from this world which only has falleness to walk in.

Deeds of the flesh (listed in vss 19 - 21) are all that is possible without the indwelling Holy Spirit. So we first live by the Spirit who calls us out of this world and gives us the gift of faith to believe. Then as christians we walk in step with the Spirit, overcoming our sinful fleshly desires by the Spirits power in us.

Old things which are natural to Adams race, like challenging one another in pride, and envying what one another have that we don't have which is covetousness, are gone. People who walk with the Spirit, in step with the Spirit, in the power and filling of the Spirit with the fruits of the Spirit, have left the deeds of the flesh behind.

But look at the first word in Chapter 6 verse 1. Brothers. Brothers. And by association, mothers and fathers and sisters. We are a family. We are interrelated to one another by the Spirit who has called us out of this fallen world and placed us together with one another, in the church.

The Spirit makes us a family. We all have something unique in common with each other that the world does not have. We were all called out of the world by the Holy Spirit. We were all given a like faith. We all have been placed together with each other, in Christ's church, His body. And like it or not, we are a family that depends on each other. Jesus did that. Brothers.

1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,

The first place Paul goes, after he has restored proper order of salvation and

walking spiritually within salvation, is here. Sin. We're going to fall into ditches. That's just who we are. We get busy grazing and wander some place and we look up and . . . what happened to the rest of the sheep. Where am I? It ***will*** happen. Count on it.

And when it does, you're going to need some help getting out of the ditch. The pride that says, I can get myself back out of any ditch I may fall into, that pride might actually be the ditch. God designed this deal so that it is necessary to set pride aside and receive help from each other.

Hey, He came out of heaven and helped us get out of the ditch we were hopelessly stuck in. Death. And likewise, in our new life, we are all accountable to each other and we rely on each other in this journey together. Pride has no place in this journey.

So, we fall into ditches. And we have to help each other get back out. Sin. And the word in that first verse that we want to look at, the theme here, is restore. Restoration.

Hey, the whole purpose of the book to the Galatians is that they all fell into the same ditch. They're flailing away in a mud bog of quick sand. Salvation by self righteousness. A death sentence if Paul didn't come to their aid.

Paul's letter restored them back to where they fell from in the first place. Restoration. We pull each other out of ditches. We throw each other life lines when we wander into quick sand. Rescue. And after rescue, restoration.

The first time Jesus uses the word church is in Matthew 16 when He says "Upon this Rock I will build my church". But the second time He uses the word, He's already addressing what we're studying this morning. Restoration of folks who fall in ditches. Fall into serious sin.

In Matthew 18 it says this about restoring sinners who are stumbling and

falling, in the church;

15 "Now if your brother sins, go and show him his fault, between you and him alone; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 And 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 the Gentile and the tax collector.

Paul just says, go restore your brothers. Jesus gives us some actual details about how to do it. There is a logical sequence.

You find someone in a sin; You go to him alone and try to help. If he repents, thats as far as it ever needs to go.

But then next level, you go to him and he says, I'm not going to repent, you don't leave him in the ditch. You take one or two more with you to aid in the rescue.

The parallel reason for this is that it takes more than a single witness of a problem to adjudicate it if that becomes necessary. First choice is that would not be necessary. Even with the two or three, if the guy repents, that's where it stops. Then you simply help the guy be restored.

But worst case scenario, after the two or three go to him and he won't repent, then you send the whole church after him. The entire church tries to help the guy see his sin and repent.

One further step we hope is never necessary. If the guy won't listen to the church, then it's time to remove him instead of restore him. You can't leave cancer cells in the body. That's dangerous for the health of the rest of the body. A sinning member who will not repent and respond must be removed.

I hope we never have to go there. Truely. That was the catalyst that caused

me to finally say goodbye to the folks we loved at our other church here in Tonopah. An unmarried couple living together and the leadership there was unwilling to confront that. Plus they refused to get serious about teaching this book. So I felt compelled to leave.

This is serious business beloved. Otherwise we're like the priest and the pharisee in the story of the good Samaritan. Some guy's been captured by sin and he's half dead and we cross over to the other side of the road and hurry on our way.

That cannot happen in family. Paul obviates that by beginning the discussion with the obvious compelling factor, brothers. We are a family that cares for each other. We don't leave each other broken to pieces in ditches. Jesus doesn't allow that. We are family. *Brothers*.

1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,

Paul doesn't go into the sequential details that Jesus did. He doesn't need to. Jesus words are available to them. The gospel of Matthew is written. They hopefully would have had a copy. Paul doesn't need to restate everything.

But DO notice what Paul says here. You know people read that account that Jesus laid down for us in Matthew 18 and they say, Oh this is about excommunicating people. Shunning was the old word. Shame them and then shun them. Throw them out. No.

Paul never mentions excommunication. All he mentions here is restoration. Get your brother out of the ditch. That's our priority. Separation is only the last ditch solution we hope is never going to be necessary.

And even in that worst case scenario, Jesus says consider them to be like tax collectors and gentiles. What do we do with tax collectors and gentiles? We don't hate them! They're not our enemies. Those folks are the mission

field. Hold them separate from you but treat them like anyone else in your mission field.

1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,

You who are spiritual. Who is that. Anyone who is living in step, walking with the Spirit. Those who are enjoying all of the fruit of the Spirit. Those who are ministering in the power of the Spirit.

That isn't a separated holier than everyone else group beloved. That is normative for all christians. Topped up with the Spirit. Filled up with the Spirit. That's our default folks. This isn't for a few holier than everyone else 2nd tier. This is everyone in the family, that isn't in a ditch somewhere. Everyone in the family of believers has this responsibility over everyone else in the family.

This is so foreign in our world as to sound bizarre. Our culture has degraded into this idea of absolute personal autonomy where the worst sin possible for them is for someone to say, I think you may be on a dangerous path. What you're doing is unlawful. You're sinning. What you're doing is not only unlawful in God's kingdom but you're in danger.

What???!!! How dare you judge me!! That's sin number one in our culture. And it gets carried over into the modern church. We are loathe to go tell our brother, hey friend, I see you're stuck in a ditch, can I throw you a rope? Our culture has made us christians fearful of doing that. That's just an impossible taboo in this culture. It affects us in the church.

OTOH, this coin obviously has two sides. And I really don't want brothers showing up and saying, I notice you're a little overweight Mr. Galli. And I also notice you're driving around in a jaunty little antique roadster that could have been sold and the money gone to foreign mission fields instead of you indulging your pleasures. "*Sparking around in some little hot rod*." (L. E. Maxwell) How do you feel about your priorities?? Hmmmm?

We aren't talking about gray areas here. At all! In fact I'm probably guilty of leaning way too far the other direction. It had better be a pretty blatant and dangerous black and white sinful situation if I'm going to get involved trying to help.

A final thought in this section. Restore with a spirit of gentleness.

I just finished a little book about sheep people. 1930, the very end of an era when people could homestead some land and raise sheep. Sheep wander. You have to count them and know them by name and when they wander off, grazing, not paying attention, they're quickly and easily lost. And they have no instinct how to get back to the rest of the flock. They're just lost.

So the shepherd has to go find the ones who wandered into the next canyon. You don't beat the sheep for wandering. That's just what sheep do. You restore with gentleness.

The rest of the verse aids my reservations; *1 Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, <u>each of you looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted</u>.*

It's always dangerous trying to help someone out of a ditch. They can pull you into the ditch. A teenage girl's going to help a teenage boy with his lust problem. Gonna go have a Bible study with him in order to help. Bad idea. And a thousand more where that one came from.

Plus there's the problem of pride. I pull you out of a ditch and you have to listen to me boast about it in every sermon for the next year. Pride is usually the more dangerous ditch to fall in.

I would venture to say that this entire problem is so difficult to navigate as to be almost impossible to successfully deal with, with one exception. The Holy Spirit helps and empowers the one who goes to throw a rope in the

ditch.

That's why Paul says, you who are spiritual. That's the only viable possibility. But . . . that's supposed to be our default. That's supposed to be normative. For all of us. Spirit filled. If you aren't, why not? That's our default, unless we're in the ditch, right?

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The first thing that came to my mind about this verse is the antithesis. The opposite thing, which Jesus pointed to when He was pronouncing woes upon the pharisee's.

And they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. Mt. 23:4

The church is called to be the polar opposite of these pharisee's. We are told to carry each other's burdens.

In the dog eat dog world of Adam's race, we don't help each other. We're envious of someone who's gotten farther in the race than we have. So if they fall in a ditch and it swallows them up, we're sort of glad. Don't have to worry about that competition any more. See ya.

This idea in vs. 2 is completely foreign to lost people. Bear each other's burdens? Who does that? How am I going to claw my way to the top if I'm helping the competition, carrying his load? It's non sensical to the world around us.

I'm trying to get this underpowered truck of mine to the top of the grade and you want me to pull over and throw a chain around this guy's bumper and give him a tow as well. I was barely getting there in the first place. And you're asking me to double down? Really?? Who does that?

Christians do that, and in fact, it's the single draw that pulls the world in.

We love each other in a way that the world either finds ludicrous, or for some, it becomes the siren call.

See the last seven words in that verse 2? *2 Bear one another's burdens,* ***and so fulfill the law of Christ****.*

What is the law of Christ? In a word, agape. The word the christians invented. It's this love that the Spirit gives us to pour out on everyone else. It's this unique love that is selfless. Interested in others first, self second.

It's the love that gives with no expectation of anything in return. It's the love that the world can't figure out.

The world isn't impressed with a church that looks just like them. The world takes notice when we have a love for each other that is . . . otherworldly. That's the law of Christ.

The "law of Christ" would have been a term in use by the early christians that needed no explanation. James refers to this "law" in James 2:8

8 *If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well*.

He just says, the royal law, and they immediately knew what he was talking about. It's the law of agape, the love that the world knows nothing of.

Jesus instructs the disciples, in the upper room discourse, the very night of His arrest. This is the final last minute instructions while He's with them. He says;

14 *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you*.

Wash each others feet. Ewwww. Who does that?? We do. At the

shepherds conference, the modern equivalent. The students at the seminary there have a shoe shine stand, like you used to see in depression era pictures. One step away from slavery. A guy who shines your shoes for a nickel. Well, $15 in Biden money, but . . .

At the conference those kids shine your shoes for free. Totally weird. To our world. Who does that? It's the flame that draws the moths in. A love unique to us alone. Christs love. Poured out in our hearts. For one another.

After Jesus washes their feet and explains that idea to them, He says;
34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*."

That's fulfilling the law of Christ. The law of Christ is this otherworldly love that the world has no reference to or experience of.

I was a moth that flew into that flame. 53 years ago. With a group of christian kids and all I could think was, whatever these kids have, I want it. They were fulfilling the law of Christ and I wanted to be part of what they had. And here I am, 53 years later. Because the law of Christ captured me.