

## Gospel Driven Relationships

### 1. Gospel overcomes pride (6:1-5)

- In Paul's letter to the Galatians he's been driving home a key message
  - No other gospel other than faith in Christ alone for your salvation
  - You cannot earn it ... cannot add to it
  - You cannot point to your morality or your religiosity to justify yourself before God
- Our salvation has nothing to do with what we do ... it's all about what Christ has done
  
- But what we've also seen is ... the gospel not only has implications for your eternal future ... it has implications for everyday life
- In particular ... the gospel has implications for our relationships
  
- Paul has been urging the Galatians to use their freedom in Christ to serve and love others (5:13-14)
- We saw in last week's passage that the only way we can truly love and serve others out of selflessness, rather than selfish ambition ... is if God does an internal work of transformation within in us
- And the way he does that is by giving us his Spirit to transform our sinful nature as it applies the gospel to our hearts
  
- What that means of course is that because this is an ongoing transformation ... there is a battle going on within the believer
  - A battle between the sinful nature and the Spirit
  - The sinful nature is generating competing desires that are contrary to the Spirit
  - There will be times when the believer gives into those desires

- And in this next section, Paul shows us how the gospel helps us to love and serve those who do give into their sinful desires
- And in v1-5 ... Paul says
  - *if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ...* <sup>3</sup> *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* <sup>4</sup> *Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
- Notice, Paul is not addressing the person who falls into sin
  - He's addressing other Christians and counselling them on how they ought to respond to the sinner
- First thing he urges the Galatians to do is to restore them gently
  - That is, the loving thing to do when someone is giving into sin ... is call them to account
  - One of the things that will help break a person's habit of sin is them knowing others know about it
  - You think about your own sinful struggles
    - The ones you do in secret are the ones you continue doing
    - The ones that are exposed ... you tend to turn away from
  - Why?
    - Because you know someone else knows your struggle and is holding you accountable and they're going to talk to you if you go there again
- Now there's a wisdom that needs to be applied here
  - It doesn't mean we're to point out every indiscretion or foible of one another
  - 1 Peter 4:8 says 'love covers over a multitude of sins'
  - Col 3:13 says 'bear with one another'
- So Christians need to be neither quick to criticise nor afraid to confront

- So Paul has this expectation that Christian brothers and sisters will help keep one another accountable as they face this spiritual battle between the sinful nature and the Spirit
  - They won't just turn a blind eye
  - They won't just say
    - "I don't want to get involved" .... or
    - "It's none of my business"
- Because when a brother or sister is struggling with sin ... the loving thing to do is to help, encourage and nurture them through it
  
- The purpose of doing this is to 'restore' the person
  - The word restore ... means to mend
  - It's the same word used to mend or restore a dislocated bone
  - When a doctor puts a dislocated bone back in place ... it's painful
  - But the pain inflicted to restore the bone is a healing pain
- The same is true when we confront someone who's caught in sin
  - The process may be painful... but the purpose is to restore them ... to help them get back on track following Jesus
  
- **Application**
- And so when we see one of us
  - failing to love or respect their spouse in the way they are treating them
  - has a pattern of being harsh with their kids
  - is coarse in our language or gossipy
  - drinking too much
  - making an idol of family or job or material wealth
- Then ... the loving thing to do is to speak to them about that ... not just let it slide
  
- How do you do that?
- Paul says you are to do it 'gently'

- **Illustration - Adjusting Ship's Course**

- Imagine a ship leaves Sydney and sets sail to San Francisco
  - If the ship gets off course ... the captain's job is to steering it back on course
  - But to do that ... he doesn't violently swing the wheel around
  - That would just cause the ship to lurch sideways and throw passengers and furniture all over the place
  - He does it gently ...
- Same for when you are helping restore a person in sin
  - You do it gently
  - Guiding them, walking alongside them, praying with them, caring for them
- This is particularly relevant for those with children ...
  - Those of you who are parents will see the sins of your children more than you see the sins of others
  - Paul's words are particularly relevant for you
- Our temptation as parents is to rouse, raise our voice and tell them to stop doing the wrong thing and do the right thing ... 'because I said so'
  - But that's not restorative ... and it's not gentle
- When your children are caught in sin (and they will) ... your aim is to restore them in their walk with the Lord and to do so gently
- And so whether a fellow believer or one of your kids ... as you care for them, love them and seek to restore them ...
  - You'll sharing the burden of that restorative process
  - You'll be helping them re-align themselves and their life without having to battle on alone
- Now Paul's very astute here

- He knows the human heart
- He knows that when 'someone is caught in sin' our tendency is to become conceited
- And so he warns them
  - *But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted*
  
- Our human pride will tempt us to look down on them ... be glad we're not like them and feel righteous about ourselves
  - Because when we compare ourselves to them ... we feel morally superior
  
- Jesus often rebuked the Pharisees for doing just this
  - Like the Pharisee who prayed
    - *God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.<sup>1</sup>*
  - They looked down on the sinners and tax collectors
  - They thought they were righteous before God because they didn't do the things those other people did
  - So they looked down on them from their pedestal of self-righteous pride
  
- Paul warns us ... be on your guard against this
- And here's how you guard yourself against such pride
  - <sup>3</sup> *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,*
- In other words
  - Don't think you're any better than them

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 18:11-12

- If you think you're morally superior to others ... Paul says you're deceiving yourself
- There's nothing about you or I that makes us more anymore righteous before God than the other person
- We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
- Therefore of our own accord ... we're nothing
  
- And so Paul is warning us against self-righteous pride
- And friends ... the only thing that's going to guard your heart against self-righteous pride is the gospel
  
- You see ... what does the gospel say?
  - The gospel says ... you're more sinful than you ever know or care to admit
  - So serious is your sin ... God had to give up his son to the cross for you
  - It meant that Jesus Christ would have to give up his rightful place in heaven
  - Humble himself ...
    - not just by coming to earth as a man
    - but by coming as a servant
    - and then suffering on the cross
- Why?
  - So that you didn't have to
  - So that through his humility, you could be lifted up
  - So that by his grace, you could be forgiven
  
- To the extent you and I get that ... **how could we** look down on anyone else?
  - What **grounds** have we got for our self-righteousness? None!
  - On what basis can we **ever** think we are better than others? Nothing!

- When the truth of the gospel melts your heart ... it humbles you
  - And because the gospel humbles you ...
  - It guards you against conceit and pride and looking down on others
- And so gospel enables you to get alongside your sinning brother or sister and restore them gently ... because you know ... you are a sinner like them who also needed restoring yourself
  
- The gospel overcomes pride ... it also overcomes selfishness

## 2. Gospel overcomes selfishness (6:7-10)

- In v7-10 Paul turns to the world of agriculture
- And uses the imagery of sowing and reaping
  - It's an obvious analogy
  - Farmers will only reap what they've sown
    - Sow tomato seeds, won't get a harvest of wheat > get tomatoes
    - Sow half the paddock, won't get full harvest > get half a harvest
  
- He applies the imagery to these Galatian Christians
  - If you sow to the sinful nature you will reap accordingly and face destruction
  - If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap accordingly and receive eternal life
- Now Paul's not saying ... your eternal destiny is determined by what you do
  - He's just spent the last 5 chapters saying this is not the case
  - You are saved by faith in Christ alone ... and **not** through your religiosity or morality
  
- So what's he saying here then?
- Remember the sinful nature is that part of our heart that wants to control our own life and reject Jesus as Saviour and Lord
  - The sinful nature rejects the gospel of free grace in Christ

- So to sow according to the sinful nature is to live and act out the conscious choice a person has made to reject God and the gospel
- And when a person sows like this ... they will reap destruction
  
- On the flip side ... to sow according to the Spirit is in effect the same as to 'live by the Spirit' or to 'walk in step with the Spirit that Paul was talking about in 5:25
  - It means to follow the leading and the prompting of the Spirit
  - To obey him, to listen to him
  
- Living by and walking in step with the Spirit ... only happens when the Spirit has convicted a person of the truth of the gospel and is applying to their heart
  - In other words, sowing to the Spirit flows out of a heart changed by gospel
  
- And in v9 we see the day by day sowing to please the Spirit requires the Christian 'not to become weary of doing good'
  
- And in particular in v10... it is doing *good to all people*
  - It's the same idea that Jesus teaches ... love your neighbour as yourself
  
- Two things to note about doing good
  - Firstly, love of others / doing good ... is to be directed to all people
    - Irrespective of race, education, age, gender, status
  - Secondly, so you don't get all overwhelmed by having to do good to ALL people, Paul adds
    - "as we have the opportunity"
    - We're not expected personally to meet the needs of everyone ...
    - But we are to those God puts around us
  
- **Application**
  
- In the short run ... this will cost you

- When you take the opportunity to do good and get alongside others who are going through hard times ... you experience the burden of their need, there is an emotional cost and distress that goes with that
- When you take the opportunity to do good by giving generously to church or mission ...
  - Yes ... you won't have as much money to do things others are spending money on
  - There is a financial cost to doing that
- When you take the opportunity to do good by serving at church or in the community
  - You reduce the time you have for other things
  - There is an time cost to doing that
- Now what's going to motivate you to do that?
  - What's going to give you the willingness to incur those emotional, financial and time costs?
  - Because let's face it ... life would be so much easier if I only had to care for myself and not worry about others
  - So what's going to move me / you to be self-less ... rather than selfish?
- Only the gospel is going to motivate you to
  - Do good to all people
  - Not get weary of doing it
- If I don't know the gospel and I'm not gripped by the grace of God ... either
  - I won't be bothered being selfless and doing good; or
  - I might be selfless and do good for a while ... but eventually I'll grow weary of it

- If you only do good to feel blessed ... very quickly you'll become tired because you'll soon find out not everyone appreciates your kindness
- If you only do good to gain recognition ... you'll soon start to weary when no-one notices
- If you only do good because you think you have to in order to be a Christian ... you'll grow weary and resentful and stop doing it ... or you will continue doing it joylessly and minimally
  
- But friends ... when the Spirit is applying the gospel of grace to your heart ... it actually gives you the power, joy and motivation to do good to all people and not grow weary
- And here's why
- Because ... the gospel says
  - At the cross, Christ was utterly selfless to you despite your selfishness to him
  - In sending Christ to die for you ... God showed he never grew weary of wanting to do good for you
  
- And to the extent you understand God's goodness to you in Christ
- And as much as you see Christ was utterly selfless towards you ...
- Then it means the good you are doing for other people ... is
  - Not so you're feel blessed
  - Not to earn other people's approval or recognition
  - Not to justify yourself before God
- Because you're doing it not for them ... but for God who's shown goodness, grace and kindness to you
  
- God's grace to us in the gospel means we do good not for our sake ... but for God's sake

- So rather than struggling with selfishness and struggling in our desire and motivation to do good to others ... the gospel overcomes our selfishness to want to do good to all people
- And we won't grow weary of it ... however tiring, unnoticed, or burden bearing it becomes
- Because I'm doing it out of love for the one who was utterly selfless towards me
  
- So the gospel overcomes our pride and our selfishness ...
- The gospel overcomes our boasting

### **3. Gospel overcomes boasting (6:12-15)**

- Finally, v12-15 show us how the gospel helps us overcome boasting
- In these verses, Paul exposes the motive of the false teachers in the area who've been trying to get the Galatian Christians to add these Jewish OT laws to faith in Jesus
  - v12 - *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*
- Their motive is they want to make a good impression outwardly
- In other words ... their motive is the approval of others
  
- The world appreciates 'religion' and 'morality' in general
  - The world thinks that moral religion is a good thing for society
  - But the world is offended by the gospel
  
- You see the gospel is offensive to most people
  - It's offensive to liberal-minded people who charge the gospel with intolerance, because it states that the only way to be saved is through the cross

- The gospel is offensive to conservative-minded people, because it states that without the cross, even 'good' people are in as much trouble as bad people
- Ultimately the gospel is offensive because the cross stands against all schemes of self-justification
  - And so those who love the cross (like Paul) are persecuted (v12)
- The false teachers in Galatia however are idolising 'approval'
  - That's what's going on under their legalistic teaching
  - *'The only reason they teach what they do, is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ'*
- And because the thing they desire is the approval of others ... the want to 'boast' in those who have converted to their way
  - "Look how many converts we have"
  - "You should have seen how many have been circumcised"
  - "Thank God we've helped them move on from that Christianity cult"
- Have you noticed that the thing people love and desire the most in life is the thing they talk about the most
  - The false teachers boasted in their ministry ... because this is the thing that gives them their value, security and satisfaction
  - They feel justified by the success of their ministry
- Friends ... often the thing we boast about most in life is
  - the thing we value
  - the thing that satisfies
  - the thing that gives us security
- What is it you boast about the most?
  - Your kids?

- Your job?
- How much you help others?
- Your holidays?
- Your hobby?
  
- Here's the thing
  - None of those things can ever give you the value or security or satisfaction you crave
  
- And what's more
  - None of those things are going to justify you before God
  - He doesn't take those things into account
  
- Paul knew, that when you understand the gospel ... there's only **one** thing you can boast in ... and that's in Christ
  - v14 – *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
  
- Two reasons why
  - Firstly ... the cross and all that Christ achieves for him ... is the greatest thing that has ever happened to him
    - So he boasts in it
    - He's so blown away that he's a sinner saved by grace ... he can't but help boast in the cross
  
  - Secondly ... because the cross is what gives Paul his true value, security and satisfaction
    - He's a child of God > a forgiven sinner > an heir of eternity > loved by the Father in heaven > assurance of eternal life > knowledge that in Christ he has more blessings, riches and joy than he could ever imagine

- As a result, Christ is the one he loves and desires the most ... and so he boasts in nothing except the cross of Christ
  
- **Application**
- You see friends ... the gospel overcomes worldly boasting because the gospel reminds me there's nothing other than the cross of Christ that can justify me before God
  - The gospel humbles me to see I have nothing to contribute to my salvation
  - It reminds me that there's nothing I can boast in ... except Christ who gives me everything
  
- And if there is nothing in the world that I boast in ...
  - then there's nothing in this world which controls me ...
  - I'm free from those other things because there's nothing I must have to justify or satisfy me
- All those other things ...
  - things we chase after
  - things we desire because we think they'll give us security, satisfaction or value
  - things like our moral goodness or our religiosity that we think will justify us before God
  - ... are nothing
- Because it's not about what I do ... it's always and only about what Christ has done through the cross

#### **4. Conclusion**

- Which is a good place to finish the book of Galatians
- There is no other gospel
- There's no other means of justifying ourselves before God

- When you add religion or morality to Christ as the means of your salvation ... you end up with no gospel at all
- But when you and I grasp the wonder and grace of the gospel ... and the privilege, forgiveness and blessing that come with it
  - It frees us from being slaves to all those things we think we need to seek after and do in life to justify ourselves
  - It empowers us to grow in character and godliness so that we can be truly selfless in our relationships as we serve and love one another
  - It overcomes our pride, our selfishness, and our boasting
- Why? Because at the cross
  - Christ loved you so you could love others
  - Christ served you so you could serve others

**PRAY**