

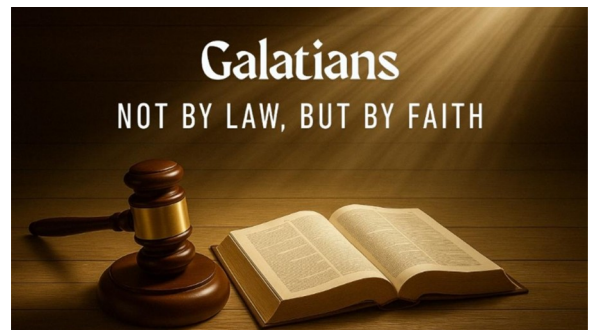
***This morning we are going to read a longer passage than we typically do as we read from Galatians 5:13-6:10.***

And the reason we're doing that is because all the points in this whole passage are interrelated, and it'll be good for us to keep the whole passage in view, even as we consider each one of the points separately.

Remember that when we started in chapter five, chapter five opens with this statement:

Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

**Galatians 5:13-6:10**, is laying out what it means to live in Christ's freedom -- to stand firm in Christ, to live by the Spirit, and how our personal freedom results in our bearing good fruit that benefits us and others.



**We will not be able to go through this whole passage in one week or even three weeks.** So for the next few weeks -- and I don't know how many -- for the next few weeks we will read this passage, the whole passage each time, and then focus on a few verses at a time. So let's start to read:

Gal 5:13 NIV You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Gal 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Gal 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.

Gal 6:4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else,

Gal 6:5 for each one should carry their own load.

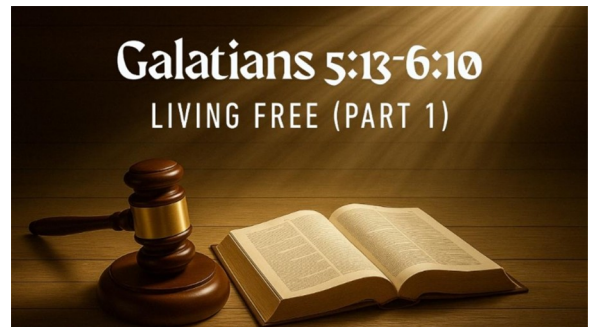
Gal 6:6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Gal 6:8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.



### ***Our focus this morning is on Galatians 5:13-15:***

Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Gal 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

As Paul describes what it means to live in Christ's freedom, he reiterates a point he has already made.

### ***In being set free from our sin, we are not to presume that we are now free to do whatever we please.***

Paul specifically warns that we are not to indulge the flesh. **We are not to return to our past sinful behavior.**

As we learn from **Galatians 5:2-12**, we're set free from our sin for a purpose -- **to stand firm in our freedom**. We are repeatedly warned not to return to our sin. But notice what we are to do, now that we are free to do anything. Notice what comes after the word **rather** in verse 13:

Gal 5:13 ... rather, serve one another humbly in love.

When Jesus sets us free from all our sins -- big sins, small sins, short-term sins, long-term sins, obvious sins, secret sins, sins that are readily abandoned, and others that so heavily entangle us that it takes surgical precision and a long time to excise those sins -- when Christ sets us free from **all our sins**, and we are able to

breathe freely, to run freely, to laugh freely, to see and hear and feel alive, our tendency is to enjoy it. Enjoy all of what the Lord has done. And we focus on ourselves.

**And yes, there is a genuine joy in the Lord and in the life he has made possible.** And our loving heavenly Father takes pleasure in our delight, our wonder, and our freedom. But notice that the antidote for our temptation to once again indulge our flesh, after we have been set free from our flesh, **the antidote to that temptation is not to focus solely on self but rather to also focus on others -- to serve one another humbly in love.**

### ***There's a difference between healthy self-care, and sinful self-indulgence.***

And the godly means of maintaining that difference is **to be other-centered versus being self-centered.**

Throughout the passage we read, Paul refers to this other-centered way of living free, of living by the Spirit. In **Galatians 5:26**, he warns us against becoming conceited or proud and provoking, or envying others.

In other words, as stated in **Galatians 5:15**: don't bite and devour others through comparisons and self-centered boasting. That's how we do that, right? Where we sort of snipe at each other. We sort of make these snide remarks. And it is our way -- and what the Bible is describing -- of biting and devouring each other because we're not other-centered, we are self-centered.

**And instead of doing all of that, instead serve others humbly in love.**

In **Galatians 6:9-10**, Paul encourages us "not to grow weary in doing good for others," even if they don't acknowledge our service or reciprocate our love.

So he's constantly making these statements, not because there's a very positive, very great outcome, or receptivity to what we do. "I did this and everybody received it so well, I'll keep doing it." No -- **he's saying keep doing these things, continue to be other-centered, even if they don't respond correctly.**

We have to keep doing good for others, not because of what the object of our love -- other people -- will provide. **We are to keep doing good for others because of what the source of our love -- our Lord -- will provide: a harvest of love, and fruit, and eternal life, and continuing freedom.**

So we don't say, "I will show love to others, and those people that I am showing love to, let's see what they do for me." We're saying, "We will show love to others because the source of my love -- this love that I'm able to share -- is because of what I have received." The source, the person who gives this love to me, who sheds abroad his love to me in abundance -- he's the one who will provide. **He's the one who has said that this is what he will do, that we will reap the harvest according to his word.**

See, if we look to others to satisfy us, we will be disappointed, and we will give up doing good for them. If we look to the Lord to satisfy us, we will draw strength, and help, and blessings, from an infinite source that will meet our every need. Because when we look to others, there will be some limit. **But when we look to the Lord, there are no limits.**

### ***So what does it mean then for us to serve one another humbly in love?***

Or what does it mean in **Galatians 5:14**, that the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: *Love your neighbor as yourself*?

**Galatians 5:14**, may remind you of **Matthew 22:34-40**, which states this:

Mat 22:34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

Mat 22:35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

So they've gotten together, they've hatched a plan. They've said, "This is the way that we'll trap Jesus. This is the way that we're going to find fault with him." And one of them says to Jesus,

Mat 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Mat 22:37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Mat 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

Mat 22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Mat 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

So it reminds you of the psalm (**Psalms 62:11**)

Psa 62:11 One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to you, God,

...when David says, One thing have you spoken, two things have I heard. -- They asked one question, he gave two responses. But it's the first and greatest commandment that the Lord alludes to or points to.

**It's based on God's absolute love for us and our love for him expressed in absolute terms --**

- to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind.
- It is to surrender completely:
- our will,
- our emotion,
- our desires, and
- our actions
- to the lordship of the Lord Jesus, to the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- That we would say, "It's all given to him."

So that's what he's talking about. Now...

***If you don't know this unconditional saving love of God, then your first priority, before you consider loving others, is to experience God's love for you.***

So first and foremost, the order of what the Word of God is saying is: **come into the relationship with God, experience his love for you, understand how he loves you unconditionally, and with such extravagance, that you would be overwhelmed by his love.** It's only after that, that you can even consider loving others.

And so here we go -- before all the things that we would say, "Oh, you got to serve others, you got to love others, what does it mean," and so on -- first and foremost, as Jesus reiterates:

★ **Understand the love of God.**

★ **Experience his love.**

When you have at least in part begun to comprehend the Lord's incredible love for you, and you have at least in part begun to respond to that incredible love of the Lord, then you are better able to comprehend the second commandment.

And as for that second commandment, both Jesus in **Matthew 22**, and Paul in **Galatians 5**, they are quoting **Leviticus 19:18**, which states:

Lev 19:18 "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

The context of **Leviticus 19:18** is to **love your neighbor instead of seeking revenge or bearing a grudge for their wrongdoing**. So it's not saying everything is going well, your neighbor loves you, and they're taking care of you -- love them back. They're saying -- the Word is saying -- **you have an opportunity**, you have the reason to take revenge because your neighbor just did something wrong against you. They've acted wrongly towards you. **And yet, love your neighbor as yourself.**

### ***It is a command to love, when we have a valid reason not to love.***

The command is not to love others only when they are worthy of our love, when they have first loved us, or when there is something to be gained by loving them. **The command is to love others despite their sin.**

And you can see why knowing or experiencing God's unconditional love first, is essential. **It is a prerequisite to loving others who are unlovable.** We are afraid to love others because we are afraid they will hurt us, or as they've already done in the past, hurt us again. We don't want to love others because they don't love us.

But the option is not to withhold our love from those who we deem to be unlovable. Withholding our love from others ultimately hurts us. In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis writes:

***To love at all is to be vulnerable.** Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, keeping your heart intact, you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up -- lock up your heart safe in the casket, or coffin, of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.*

**Let me be clear. Being vulnerable and loving others despite their sin does not mean that you place yourself in harm's way, that you endure abuse, or that you condone violence, or that you ignore anything illegal.** It's not to do anything like that. We are called to be wise and discerning. We have to be subject to the laws of the land, and **we have to be led by the Lord to only say and do what is right and necessary.** But we're still called to love, and to be vulnerable, and to be ready to suffer great harm.

We read **Leviticus 19:18**. According to **Leviticus 19:9-17**, loving others like yourself would include:

- sharing with the poor and the alien,
- showing compassion,
- being honest and just,
- impartial, not gossiping or slandering.
- And when we have an issue with anyone, making every effort to set things right by first going to them directly.

There are all these ways in which the Lord is telling us:

★ **"This is how you are to love someone, as you would love yourself."**

"Loving others, like yourself" means you would love them with the same level of

- compassion,
- respect, and
- sacrificial assistance

**that you have experienced from God and from others.**

★ **Because you have received freely, you are willing to give freely.**

- ★ “Loving others like yourself” is to treat others as you would want to be treated by them, even if they don't treat you that way.
- ★ And loving others like you would love yourself is to extend to others the same forgiveness, compassion, and care that you extend to yourself.

And this is an important point that I want to make sure that we realize about ourselves. Sometimes -- and maybe many times -- even if we have experienced God's love for us, even if we realize that God is not condemning us for our sins but has forgiven us and is willing to, and able, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness as we confess our sins to him, and even if we know that God loves us as his children, God has done all this -- “Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know it.”

***Even if we know all of that -- we may not have forgiven ourselves. We may not have fully received, and embraced, the healing that the Lord works, and the restoration that the Lord provides.***

We are hurting inside, and we are struggling with our identity because we are plagued by the condemning voices from the past. We are ashamed of our past. We say, “Yeah, God forgave me, but you don't know what I did. You don't know what I've been through. You don't know what has happened.” And we feel like we just don't deserve God's favor in the present.

- ★ The irony of that is no one deserves his favor in the present.
- ★ But we receive it freely, by grace, because of the grace of God.

But we condemn ourselves. We say, “Oh, you don't know my past, and I don't think God can do this for me in the present.” And then we are despairing of the future. We are uncertain about the future because of all that we are holding on to.

- The Lord has cleansed.
- The Lord has forgiven.
- The Lord has removed our sin from us as far as the east is from the west.
- But we hang on to it. We hold it.

**And so here's the thing: if that's where you are, you won't be able to love others like yourself because you don't love yourself.** Before you try to love others, especially before you try to love others like yourself, your point of application today is **to get all the help that you need to get to a healthy relationship with God and yourself.**

If you wake up each morning, look in the mirror, and say, “Awww... I think God loves me. I know God loves me. I hope God loves me. But I don't love myself” -- and maybe you don't use those words, maybe that's not your dialogue, but it shows up in all sorts of ways in terms of how you live your life.

And if that's you, **there is therefore no condemnation for you.**

***There is nothing that separates you from the love of God.***

“There is no sin that you are carrying” because you say, “Oh, this is too much, this is too big. My small sins the Lord has forgiven -- this one, I don't know.”

No, this is the opportunity. This is the time. This is the place. This is the work of the Lord to say,

***“Lord, I bring my life to you, and I lay it down completely. I surrender all.”***



Because even as we sang, **if Jesus paid it all**, he's not saying, "There are certain things that were not covered." He's saying, **"I have covered over all of your sins."**

So we come to the Lord and we say,

*"Lord God, thank you for what you have done."*

*Thank you for what you have accomplished.*

*Thank you for the cleansing that you have worked in me.*

*Thank you that I stand as a new creation in Christ Jesus."*

**Because I stand anew before the Lord, I can love myself.**

This is not an unhealthy, self-indulgent love of self and desires -- and all of that -- we'll get into desires in the coming weeks too. It's not about that. It's not what the world will say, "Be a better you." It's not about being selfish and self-centered.

**It's about rightly understanding "who you are in Christ Jesus" and saying:**

- ★ "I'm a child of God.
- ★ I have been set free.
- ★ I have been renewed in Christ Jesus."

But if that's you this morning, don't leave from here. Don't leave this reconciliation with the Lord and this realization of who you are, for another day. **Today is the day of salvation.**

**Now, when we receive what the Lord has done for us** -- his salvation, his setting us free, his freedom -- when we receive that in our minds, we start to grasp, we start to receive the truth of the Word of God. And when we believe in our hearts and we say,

*"Oh Lord God, my life has been changed, I am transformed by the renewing of my mind and the cleansing of my heart,"*


...and we confess with our mouths and we testify in baptism, when we do these things to respond to the gospel message -- the good news that we are saved from our sins by grace through faith because the Lord loves us.

**Then -- then -- we can respond and apply the Word of God we have heard by serving others humbly in love.**

It shouldn't come as a surprise that the Lord's command to love others as ourselves is not limited to a great heart attitude: "Oh, I love everybody, I love everyone, I don't discriminate at all, I love them all." It's not about a heart attitude. And it's not just about an open mind.

**Our love for others is manifest**

- in our actions, and
- in our serving them,
- in our humility when serving them, and
- in our loving them regardless of the outcome.



We respond and apply by  
serving others humbly in love

It shouldn't come as a surprise that at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, at the Last Supper, when he said to his disciples in **John 13:34-35**:

Joh 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Joh 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

**By the time Jesus had said that, or by the time he was saying that to his disciples, he had already demonstrated his love for them by washing their feet.** Jesus had already set the example of serving others humbly in love before he commanded his disciples -- and each one of us -- to love one another.

He didn't say, "Well, here, I haven't lived this way, but I'm telling you to live this way."

He said,

- "Look, this is what I have done.
- I have laid down my life for others.
- I want you to do the same.
- I want you to love one another.
- I want you to love because you have been loved, and
- I want you to love in such a way that the world around you will know that there's a true and living God when they see your love for one another.
- The world around you will know that you are disciples of Christ, that you are becoming more and more like your Savior and Lord and the one that you follow.
- The world around you will know that that is happening not because you can spout Scripture, but because you love one another."

Throughout his life, Jesus set the example of serving others, humbly in love, by living out the description of love in **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**. Listen, and listen for all the themes, the points that showed up even in the passage we read.

1Co 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

1Co 13:5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1Co 13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

1Co 13:7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1Co 13:8 Love never fails. ...

- So. Who do you need to love?
- Who do you need to love by serving them?
- Who do you need to love by serving them humbly?
- Who do you need to love by serving them humbly, without any expectations?

I can't tell you who that should be and what it would look like. There is no more specific direction I could give you from here. I can only point you to the Word, and I can only say: **let the Holy Spirit speak to you**, even today, even this week, through the rest of this month and the year and everything else that's before you.

## ***Who do you need to love?***

In the coming weeks, we'll go through the list of obvious sins we should avoid, and the list of abundant fruit we should bear. But if we focus on the list of sins -- "Just tell me what I shouldn't do, just let's get to that list and



tell me what I shouldn't do" -- we'll try to live by keeping the rules, by keeping the law. We'll say, "Just tell me the rules, and I'll keep them." And we've seen consistently, through the last -- even as we've been in the book of Galatians, but you know this from other books that we've studied, and you know this in your own life -- **you will not be able to keep the law. You will not be able to say, "Just tell me the rules, and I'll obey them." You will not be able to do it.**

And if we focus on the fruit of the Spirit -- you say, "Well, I don't think I can keep the rules, but here's a great list of the fruit of the Spirit, just tell me what I should do" -- **we'll try to be good by our strength.** We will become self-righteous when we start to exhibit at least some fruit. That's small fruit. Maybe it's just not even as tasty as it should be, but we say, "Look at me! Look at me! Look at all the fruit of the Spirit that I am bearing!" **And we will become self-righteous and proud, and we will be proud of our success and judgmental of others' failures.**

***So before we get to sins, and before we get to fruit, we have to get to love.***

**Because if we don't understand love, if we don't comprehend the love of God, if we don't understand what it means to love others like ourselves, we will not be able to get the rest.**

We can deal with our obvious sins and bear the fruit of the Spirit only if we love God and love others -- including ourselves. **We can deal with our obvious sins and bear the fruit of the Spirit only when we are rightly united with the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This morning, again, like I said, we're going to go through the same passage for multiple weeks. I encourage you: **read through the whole book of Galatians, but read through this passage again and again and again.** And just keep asking the Lord,

***"Lord, what is it that I need to apply?"***

***What is it that you need to speak to me personally?"***

***What is it that I need to respond to -- the work of the Holy Spirit in me?"***

But particularly today, I want to encourage you, I want to challenge you, **that you would come back to this particular truth: that we would love others like we love ourselves.**

**Heavenly Father, we thank you so much** for your goodness, your grace, and your mercy in our lives. We thank you, Lord, for your Word. We thank you, Lord, that it cuts deep into us like a double-edged sword, and it reveals our hearts, our thoughts, our intents. And it, Lord, shows us where we have held on to our own ways of thinking.

Instead of doing that, Lord, we pray that you would truly excise from us all that holds us back, all the sin that keeps us from receiving your Word and applying your Word. And that, most importantly, by your power, by your grace, by Lord, your mercy to us, by faith, we ask you, Lord, that we may put this Word into practice, that we may live according to this Word, that, Lord, the love of God will so transform us that it will be noticeable to people around us.

That, Lord, our own families -- the ones closest to us in relation and proximity, in care, Lord, the ones who will easily see through our hypocrisy -- let them see that our hearts have been changed for you. That we love you, we love ourselves, and therefore we love others.

Lord, come. We praise you, we worship you, we glorify you, that you are willing and able to make this change in us. And so, Lord, we commit ourselves to you, **praying all this in Jesus' name, Amen.**