

**Grace Didn't Die**  
**How Grace Confronts Pride**  
**Galatians 6:3-5**

**Introduction:** After generations of effort to provide women fair access to athletic competition, as well as the financial opportunities that come with it in scholarships, endorsements and professional salaries; women are now being told they have to forfeit those opportunities because male athletes who suffer from gender dysphoria need the affirmation of beating biological women to supposedly keep them from committing suicide. Ironically, the more liberal side of our society that fought the hardest to provide these opportunities for women is now leading the charge to take them away. For instance, recently a liberal judge in Minnesota shut down the US Power Lifting Federation in that State because they offered a trans division as opposed to allowing men, who even with hormone suppression are still at minimum 30% stronger than women, to compete against women!<sup>1</sup> Demanding that biological male athletes with gender dysphoria be allowed to compete against biological women is the equivalent of insisting a college baseball player suffering from gerascophobia<sup>2</sup> (a fear of growing or aging), should get to play in the Little League World Series.

And just so you'll understand, when you read news reports about states banning gender affirming health care for children, you shouldn't conclude that means states are banning opportunities for children to get insulin for diabetes or chemotherapy for cancer. They are prohibiting doctors from permanently removing the genitals of a child as well as banning hormone therapies that have potentially devastating long term health consequences. Ironically, most children who suffer from gender dysphoria eventually grow out of it as they become adults. However, the use of hormone suppressants keeps that from happening, and thus allows a child's dysphoria to become permanent.<sup>3</sup>

My point in all this is not to be political, but rather to point out one of the more recent manifestations of the ever-present narcissism inherent to humanity and the danger of justifying narcissism as anything other than sinfully destructive. And please understand, as we address this subject, never forget that Galatians clearly teaches us that religious thinking and practices only make narcissism worse because they feed our sense of righteous superiority, or inescapable inferiority, and as such, justify seeing ourselves and demanding that others see us, as significantly unique and deserving of special treatment. So, the answer to mankind's inherent narcissism can never be religion (as conservative or liberal as it may be), but that which nullifies religion – the GRACE of God in Jesus Christ!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2023/06/13/2687707/0/en/Independent-Council-on-Women-s-Sports-and-USA-Powerlifting-Urge-Public-Support-for-Women-Powerlifters-in-Historic-Minnesota-Lawsuit.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4283456/#:~:text=Gerascophobia%20is%20a%20fear%20of,and%20physiological%20components%20%5B2%5D>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://nypost.com/2017/06/20/hormone-therapy-is-a-horrible-risk-for-kids/>

As we continue our study of the letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches in the Roman province of Galatia, we find him continuing the application of the doctrine of Grace that he so passionately defended in the first five chapters. In Galatians 6:1, Paul shows how the doctrine of God's grace obligates us to restore others the way God's grace has restored us. In Galatians 6:2, he shows us that God's grace obligates us to bear one another's burdens as God has borne ours. Both of these applications of grace have a veiled effect on the sinful narcissistic pride within all of us, but now the Apostle is going to remove the veil and go right to it! He writes,

**3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. 5 For each will have to bear his own load. (Galatians 6:3-5)**

**Proposition: Galatians 6:3-5 teaches us three truths revealed by the doctrine of Grace that confront the inherent narcissism in all of us.**

**The first truth in Galatians 6:3-5 that confronts the inherent narcissism in all of us is that ...**

- (1) The doctrine of grace removes the deception of self-admiration (seeing yourself better than you are). (6:3)**
  - A. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**
  - B. Concerning the Greek word translated as "deceives," R. J. Utley writes, "This verb occurs only once in the entire NT, meaning to seduce oneself into error ... Self-deception is the worst kind of blindness."<sup>4</sup>**
  - C. To seduce somebody is to persuade somebody into believing or doing something they otherwise would not have done. The word is most often used of sexual seduction and means that you persuaded a person to want to have sex with you that otherwise would not have. They were not attracted to you and/or had no intention of having sex with you, but through your actions, you convinced them to do otherwise.**
  - D. In this case, however, the word is used to describe the self-seduction done by a person who has no reason to see themselves as being singled out for greatness but intentionally convinces themselves otherwise.**

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<sup>4</sup> Utley, R. J. (1997). *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians* (Vol. Volume 11, p. 65). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

- E. The Judaizers likely believed they were model Christians who were meeting God's standards and, as such, were living their lives in a way that deserved man's glory and God's blessings. Silva noted in his commentary on Galatians 5:1-6,

Note: **"The Judaism of Paul's day, generally speaking, did not fully understand this concept. Much of rabbinic interpretation consisted of attempts to relax the strict demands of the biblical commands, with the inevitable result that people thought they could indeed satisfy God's demands by their efforts."**<sup>5</sup>

- F. Martin Luther describe the point of verse three this way, **"Paul therefore in this place hath rightly painted out such severe and merciless saints, when he saith: 'They think themselves to be somewhat,' that is to say, being puffed up with their own foolish opinions and vain dreams, they have a marvellous persuasion of their own knowledge and holiness, and yet in very deed they are nothing, and do but deceive themselves. For it is a manifest beguiling when a man persuadeth himself that he is somewhat, when indeed he is nothing. Such men are well described in ... [the Book of Revelation]: 'Thou sayest: I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not how thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'"**<sup>6</sup>

- G. Therefore, when we refuse to allow the doctrine of grace to confront our narcissism, it pans out in how we treat those we love the most. Instead of being honest about shared failures and helping those we love as those who need God's grace as much as we do, we instead preach to them as if we have climbed to the top of the mountain of righteousness and are not only justified in looking down on them, but also justified in looking up to ourselves! When we see ourselves for something greater than we are, as Luther puts it, we see ourselves as "somewhat" when we are in fact nothing!

- H. How often have we all felt we were being denied the praise we are due from those who are "somewhat?" How frequently have we justified anger and bitterness towards God because we feel like He is not honoring us with the blessings and rewards that are due to somebody as righteously accomplished and deserving as ourselves?

- I. In all the outstanding spiritual achievements the Apostle Paul accomplished, and despite the inspirational faith he lived out, he still sincerely wrote, **"18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." (Romans 7:18)**

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<sup>5</sup> Silva, M. (1994). [Galatians](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1218). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>6</sup> Luther, M. (1997). [Commentary on Galatians](#) (p. 541). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- J. He explained this truth most directly in a passage many people are likely familiar with but may have never really pondered the implications of how we should view ourselves. Paul wrote, **1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9)**
- K. There won't be a single human being who spends eternity with God because they earned it, but quite the opposite, all who attempt to stand before God based on their own merit will find themselves under His eternal wrath! A person can believe themselves to be good and right and deserving all they want, but when measured against the one who is actually good and right and deserving, we all fall eternally short! Therefore, there is no solution to our pattern of self-deception other than a proper understanding of the doctrine of God's Grace, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that exposes our lies for what they are.

**The second truth in Galatians 6:3-5 that confronts the inherent narcissism in all of us is that ...**

- (2) The doctrine of grace removes any rationality of superiority over others. (6:4)**
- A. **4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.**
- B. At first, I concluded that the word "work" was referring to the religious work Paul had been bashing as being totally ineffective throughout the letter, however, after further considering it, I think Paul is not only referencing the works the Judaizers proclaim as means of grace, but also every other work including those done from true faith in Christ. James 2 makes it clear that those who have genuine faith in Christ will do works that demonstrate it, with such a guarantee that if a person has no works that demonstrate faith, it's because they have no faith.
- C. However, what Paul is getting at here is different. Paul is saying we need to closely examine all that we do, including the works we do out of faith in Christ. Because we are sinners, even our own works that we do from faith can be seen

by us as having more significance and sourced out of a more profound commitment to Christ than someone else's works, and as such, we feel justified in seeing ourselves as spiritually superior. To do this, Paul says to examine your works not against your neighbor's works but for what they actually are.

- D. But then he says to do this so that the reason to boast will be in context to himself. Now, that sounds incredibly opposite to what Paul just wrote in verse three – **“3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”** Verse three sounds like if we think we have something in and of ourselves to boast about, then we have deceived ourselves. How is it, then, that Paul writes in the very next verse that if we do an honest and objective evaluation of our works, we will no longer boast that we are worthy of praise based on how we compare to our neighbor, but rather we will be able to boast about what we find within ourselves? How can verse 3 and verse 4 exist side by side?
- E. Well, listen to what Paul wrote,
- F. **27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)**
- G. **9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)**
- H. The point is, as we look objectively at our works, we will see that every good thing we have done is to God's credit and not ours, and as such, we have no place to see ourselves as superior to anybody! The great works we accomplish are accomplished because God called us, saved us, gifted us, and anointed us to do them, and thus, all the glory goes to Him! When it comes to accomplishing the things of God, we are at best fools, yet God fills and uses us to do His will on this earth! This is the grace that Paul boasted in!
- I. This by no means implies you can't just say "thank you" when people encourage you about how the Lord used you in their life. You don't have to go into some religious speech to ensure God's reputation is intact. There was a time in my life if somebody told me the Lord used me in their life, I felt like I was supposed to deflect their encouragement and insist on the fact that I did nothing, even after

they just clearly stated they were so grateful for how the Lord used me in their life as a word of encouragement to me that it was God who was indeed using me.

- J. So understand, what Paul is saying here is that when we look at the works we are doing out of faith and obedience to the Lord, we need to remember number one they are still tainted with our sinful motives (we never do anything out of pure faith and love for God), and number two, apart from God and His grace to save me and use me for His glory, nothing I do would ever be worthy of His name being attached to it! Therefore, no matter how God uses us in the lives of others; no matter if what God does through us in this life is perceived as big or small by others; there is never any rational place to see the works God has called and gifted us to do as any reason to boast in anything other than the gracious mercy of the Lord who has saved us, called us, and equipped us to accomplish things worthy of His glory! It's why Paul wrote,
- K. **10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)**
- L. In a day an age where so many pastors are impressed with themselves and clearly want others to be impressed by them, I was blessed to have known some men who accomplished truly incredible things that have lasted beyond their life time, things that impacted people for Jesus all over the world, and yet, those men never boasted about their works because they were never impressed by them nor wanted anybody else to be impressed by them. All I have heard them boast in was Jesus because they knew it was GOD who had worked!

### **The third truth in Galatians 6:3-5 that confronts the inherent narcissism in all of us is that ...**

#### **(3) The doctrine of grace removes any concept that we are an exception. (6:5)**

- A. **5 For each will have to bear his own load.**
- B. The phrase "bear his own load" is also translated as "bear his own burden." As such, it would be understood that some might suggest Paul is once again contradicting himself. In verse two, he tells us to bear each other's burdens, but then in verse five, he tells us we must bear our own. Which is it?
- C. Well, the English Standard Version and so many other modern versions break from the King James Version in not translating verse 5 with the word "burden" because it is literally a different Greek word than the one used in verse two.
- D. D.K. Campbell noted, "**This does not contradict verse 2 because the reference there is to heavy, crushing, loads (*barē*)—more than a man could carry**

**without help. In this verse a different Greek word (*phortion*) is used to designate the pack usually carried by a marching soldier.”<sup>7</sup>**

- E.** So, what then is this about? Well, there are many interpretations, but I side with those who believe this scripture points us to the judgment seat of Christ, the accountability we will all have before Him, and, as such, the fact that there are no exceptions.
- F.** Now, a quick side note. The Roman Catholic Church teaches a doctrine known as Purgatory. In this teaching, every believer will spend time in purgatory based on their level of unfaithfulness to the Lord. The purpose of purgatory is for each believer to be purged of their sin through suffering as well as to make their salvation justified before God and others. This doctrine has no Biblical merit whatsoever and is understandably argued by some to be heretical. It stands in total opposition to everything the New Testament makes abundantly and repetitively clear about the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and glorification, so much so that if you want a Biblical reference that confronts the doctrine of Purgatory, then simply read the New Testament and you will easily find them in abundance! Every Scriptural reference used in developing the teaching of Purgatory is twisted beyond measure and are blatantly stripped of their original context and purpose in Scripture. It is such a convoluted argument that if a person applied the same interpretive principles used to suggest the doctrine of purgatory as a Biblical Doctrine to any other interpretive practice (i.e., Law), they would be immediately dismissed as illegitimate.
- G.** However, despite the error of the doctrine of Purgatory, there is nonetheless a very clear teaching in the New Testament that every child of God will stand before God and give an account of their own life and decisions as a follower of Christ. The doctrine of grace in no way means there is no accountability with God! That accountability is certainly nothing like the catholic doctrine of purgatory, which effectively ignores the blood of Christ as our justification to have eternal life. However, that justification is also not void of accountability for what we have done with it. Therefore, we will not be judged as a King judges his enemies, and as such, we will not be condemned. However, we will be judged as a good Father judges the actions of his children. Our status as one of His children will not be at stake, but all we did as His children will.
- H.** So, what does this have to do with our narcissism? Well, at some point in our lives, we all think we should be an exception to a rule! We all do! At some point in our lives, we will all end up doing something we know we shouldn't do, but we do so because we have convinced ourselves that some circumstance justifies it for us in that moment. **HOWEVER**, when it comes to you and me standing before

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Galatians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 609–610). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the judgment seat of Christ, we need to know there are NO exceptions to the rule!

- I. **10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12)**
  
- J. **11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw-- 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)**
  
- K. **9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)**
  
- L. There is an unmistakable personal responsibility theme here. There is a cross we must all bear! For some, it will look different; for others, it will feel different, but there is a cross we must all bear and be held responsible for! For instance:
  - 1. God has given you people to bear burdens with, and He will hold you accountable for doing it. Nobody else can be held responsible for what He gave you to do. It may get done by somebody else, but that will not detract from the fact that God called you to do it and you didn't!
  - 2. God expects you to wage a battle against your sin. It's a battle of faith, but you are expected to join Him in it, and as such, we will be held accountable for it.
  - 3. God expects us to love one another as Christ loves us. Jesus was adamantly clear that He expects us to bear that cross and will hold us accountable for doing it!
  - 4. In short, Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30), but it's still a yoke and burden that we will give an account to God for how we bear it.
  - 5. Charles Spurgeon summed it up this way,

6. **“No man can be a sponsor for another in spiritual things. Everyone must come, with his own sin, to his own Savior and, by his own act of faith, must find peace through the blood of Jesus Christ. Do not trust to any national religion, for it is utterly worthless. It is personal religion alone that can save you. If the blood of saints is flowing in your veins, it brings you nothing except greater responsibility, for salvation is not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, and of God alone.”<sup>8</sup>**

M. On that, one last quick thought on this subject, but it's a huge one. You can't carry the burden of your separation from God; only Jesus can carry that for you, but you must repent and surrender to Him for Him to do it. There are no exceptions. It doesn't matter how good or religious you are. It doesn't matter who your mom or daddy is. It doesn't matter how important you are to others or if you did extraordinary things. You alone have the burden of repenting and surrendering your life to Jesus. It's why Jesus said this to a large audience of people that was likely filled with narcissistic religious people who believed themselves to be exceptions before the Lord,

N. **21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (Matthew 7:21-23)**

### Challenge:

- (1) **How is the doctrine of Grace impacting your narcissism? Weigh the fruit of pride and arrogance in your life so you can properly evaluate your allegiance to sin and God.**
- (2) **Your relationship with God is YOUR responsibility. Stop blaming the church or others for your sin and weakness. Go to Jesus as your savior and healer then you will know how to let others bear it with you as well as how to help others bear theirs.**
  - A. Your burden is too much for me to bear with you if you're not going to yoke yourself to Jesus!
  - B. An addiction recovery ministry can't help you get over your addiction if you're not going to yoke yourself to Jesus.

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<sup>8</sup> Spurgeon, C. (2013). [Galatians](#). (E. Ritzema, Ed.). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- C.** A finance class can never help you fix your finances if you don't run to Jesus to find freedom from greed and materialism.
- D.** A marriage counselor is never going to fix your marriage if you don't yoke yourself to Jesus and let Him sanctify you and teach you how to truly love and receive love.
- E.** My preaching, nor anybody else's preaching, will ever impact your life unless you let it motivate you to run to Jesus!

The point I'm making is that Christian accountability and the love and support of the body of Christ are vitally important, but they are never a substitute for a personal relationship with Jesus; they are a support! Therefore, I'm not saying not to reach out to others for help, but rather to first reach out to Jesus!!! Place the blame for your sin and the mess sin causes on your lack of faith in HIM to live obediently surrendered to Him, then watch how others can help hold your arms up as you fight the fight of faith to trust and follow Him!