

Galatians 5:24-26

Gal 5:24 (NKJV) **And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

Tonight we want to complete [Galatians 5](#) and look at v26. Paul has just finished talking about living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, and then in v26 he provides us with what on the surface appears to be three specific encouragements. So, grammatically, v26 is linked back to v25 which encourages us to both “**live in the Spirit**” and to “**walk in the Spirit**”, or as we saw in the last study – “to keep in step with the Spirit”. So, v26 is the negative counterpart to v25 – “**let us keep in step with the Spirit (v25)...let us not become conceited (v26)**”.¹ Paul has already alluded to some of the problems that seemed to be prevalent among the churches in Galatia in [Galatians 5:15](#),

Gal 5:15 (NKJV) **But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!**

Unfortunately, that must have been a reality among some of the believers and some of the churches in the regions of Galatia. This kind of internal feuding that so often characterizes churches is so unspiritual and so demeaning to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It really seems that there is only one encouragement and not three – that we would not “**become conceited**”. If I can interpret it in a little different way, hopefully it will clarify what I believe Paul is actually saying: “**Do not let us become conceited as evidenced by our provoking one another and our being envious of one another**”. I.e., it really is just one encouragement – to not “**become conceited**” about our spiritual life and about our personal value to the Body of Christ. The NASB reads “**to not become boastful**”. The AMP reads to “**not become vainglorious and self-conceited**”. The ISV reads “**let us stop being arrogant**”. The obvious problem is that the flesh always wants to make a name for itself and to be esteemed and highly regarded by others.

I am totally, 100% convinced that God does not need me. His work will go on unhindered without me, so anything that God allows any of us to do is something that we should cherish, but not with reveling or glorying in that reality. We should be grateful that God even allows us to be useful to His work. I think that what Paul is saying here, and this is a very important observation about this verse, is that how we treat and conduct ourselves around other people is directly related to and linked to our opinion about ourselves.² I.e., the higher opinion that we have of ourselves the lower opinion we will have of other people. [Philippians 2:3-4](#) says it this way,

Php 2:3 (NKJV) **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**

As your pastor, I am so grateful for each of you – for your faithfulness, for your love for God and His church, for your grace and kindness to the other believers that surround you, and to the incredible impact that each of you have had on my life personally. I could not ask to pastor a better congregation. I was

¹ George, 406.

² George, 406.

with a pastor recently who works with Covington and he was sharing how disrespected he is by his church, and how difficult it is to minister there. He has been there for 24 years and is an excellent expository teacher of the Word. He has been a faithful shepherd to his church, yet there are just a handful of people in his congregation that just seemed determined on having everything their way. They are constantly stirring up strife and undermining his ministry. My heart just grieved for this man. I know another pastor who teaches for Covington who has been a pastor at his church for 25 years and his church just recently split because his minister of music did not like how this pastor had handled a very difficult circumstance that had developed in their church. I just love this pastor. He is so gentle, so kind and so gracious that it is spiritually magnetic. So, his minister of music just split the church over the issue, resigned, and went out and started his own church and continues to stir up strife in the church that he left. Conceited, arrogant, boastful – there is no place for this in God’s church. The greatest hindrance to true righteousness is self-righteousness, and this is exactly the kind of attitude and demeanor that Paul is addressing.

So, the one thing that often reveals that we may be somewhat conceited about our spirituality is in how we relate to other believers in a negative way. If we find ourselves provoking them and challenging them, and if we are jealous and envious of how God is using other believers, then those are genuine evidences of our own personal conceit. If on the other hand, we are showing grace and mercy and kindness to other believers, as well as a deep level of forgiveness when they may fail in their lives, that is what would reveal that we have not become arrogant about our spirituality. To the contrary, that is what reveals that we are walking in the Spirit.

The obvious reason that none of us should become somewhat arrogant about where we think that we may be in our Christian life is simply because of v16-25. Whatever deeper spiritual work is completed in our life is the direct result of the Holy Spirit working in us. It is because of His presence, His leading, and His fruit being developed in our life that any of us are where we may be spiritually. If the truth were really known, none of us have anything in which we should boast. Each of our lives is a direct by-product of the Holy Spirit’s work in us, and even if we may have cooperated with Him more than someone else, it still is only because of His grace and not some innate spiritual quality we have that makes us more successful than someone else.

The word for “**conceited**” is “*kenodoxos*” and it simply means to be desirous of vain-glory. The prefix “*keno*” simply means empty, and the root word is “*doxa*” which means glory or praise. We could say that it is describing a person who wants empty praise. I.e., they have not really earned the right to be praised. It is just a form of empty boasting by someone who wants to be admired by others, but they are void of any real worth. It is the idea of wanting to be appear to others as more than we really are. It is not that someone is just worthless, but that they want more praise and recognition than they most likely deserve.³ [Proverbs 27:2](#) says it this way,

Pr 27:2 (NKJV) **Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.**

³ Zodhiates, 856.

What Paul is simply saying is that when a believer becomes desirous of being recognized that it becomes a very real hindrance to them walking in the Spirit. The desire of every believer, no matter what position they may hold or be in, is to bring praise and honor to Christ and not to themselves.

What Paul is doing in [Galatians 5:26](#) is speaking against a kind of spiritual pride and arrogance that can inflict any believer, and what he is ultimately describing is what happens when that pride and arrogance are evident in a believer's life. They will be prone to irritating people and to annoying them because of their arrogance. Make no mistake about it, what Paul is addressing is the kind of personal relationships that we have and develop with other believers. When someone is always contentious, always stirring up emotions, always argumentative and almost combative about things, it simply means that they are completely "out of step" with the Holy Spirit. That is what the word "**walk**" in v25 actually meant – to stay in step with what the Holy Spirit desires for our life. Some people just seem inclined to be quarrelsome and contentious about every issue that arises. Some believers just lack even a minimal amount of self-control when it comes to provoking people, being confrontational, and insulting people by flaunting their ideas and feelings above others. It is almost as if they enjoy it. What an absolutely terrible place to find ourselves – lacking mercy, lacking grace, lacking kindness. Anyone who has any level of spiritual content in their life is someone who has an obvious and working standard and practice of humility in their life. They are not conceited, not arrogant, not argumentative. To the contrary, they are kind and gracious and caring about other people.

When Paul talks about "**provoking one another**", the word that he used is "*prokaleo*" and by implication it means to irritate someone, to challenge them and carries the idea of simply stirring up something.⁴ We might call it "causing trouble" or "making life difficult" for someone. Because it is in the present tense and the middle voice, it carries the further idea of it simply being the way that the person is. We might call it their personality type or their temperament type. I am personally convinced that our personalities and temperaments are to be brought under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit, and that we can do that without actually undermining our personalities. The middle voice could be translated as "**we ourselves provoking one another**" and is drawing attention to the reality that what is happening is a very conscious act of provoking another person. I.e., the believer is fully aware of the fact that their words and attitudes and lack of self-control are actually provoking the other person. This happens all the time when someone gets very angry at someone else. They know exactly how their words and actions are impacting the other person,, but rarely does it seem to even make a difference to them. F.F. Bruce in his commentary says that this particular word was used to intimate a combative element in the person - a propensity to challenge people, to argue, to debate.⁵ It is the idea that we simply think that our own personal opinions and arguments are better and more important than someone else. From Paul's perspective, he clearly sees that as personal conceit and arrogance. This kind of person is the person who becomes a threat to the peace and unity of the local church. If this is a tendency of my life, of irritating and aggravating other people with a proud attitude, it simply reveals that my life is not in step with the Holy Spirit. It should be the clue that I need to allow the Holy Spirit to make some major adjustments in this area of my life.

⁴ Zodhiates, 1220.

⁵ Bruce, 257.

Lastly, Paul talks about becoming envious of others. It simply means that we become jealous of someone, envious of what they have or what they are doing. Please understand that when someone becomes jealous and envious of someone else, that it will eventually lead to resentment, dislike, and even hatred of that person. It is a very serious issue spiritually. It can actually lead to having an ill-will, or malice, as well as holding a grudge against someone, and it always carries with it a kind of evil significance.⁶ [Proverbs 14:30](#) says this about envy,

Pr 14:30 (NKJV) **A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.**

[Proverbs 27:4](#) says,

Pr 27:4 (NKJV) **Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?**

Whenever I think of jealousy, my mind always races back to Joseph's brothers and how jealous and angry they were of him, even to the point of being willing to kill him. If it had not been for God's divine providence in sending a caravan and using the greed of Joseph's brothers, in all likelihood, he would have died a gruesome death in the pit into which he was thrown. Saul was so jealous of David that he chased him continually to try and kill him.

Next week we will begin with [Galatians 6](#).

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⁶ Harris, #5191, ep.