

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Text

Galatians 6:2-5

Commentary

From Martin Luther on Galatians

What does it mean to bear one another's burdens? Does this mean I lend a helping hand if I can? Does it mean I take out my neighbor's trash or is it something more... heavy? What do I do if my friend tells me his/her spouse just left or if someone comes to me who admits to being stuck in habitual sin? How can I deal with this wisely? This section of text provides some guidance from the Apostle Paul. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." What is this law of Christ? Martin Luther explains it well in the following:¹

"The Law of Christ is the Law of love. Christ gave us no other law than this law of mutual love: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." To love means to bear another's burdens. Christians must have strong shoulders to bear the burdens of their fellow Christians. Faithful pastors recognize many errors and offenses in the church, which they oversee. In civil affairs an official has to overlook much if he is fit to rule. If we can overlook our own shortcomings and wrong-doings, we ought to overlook the shortcomings of others in accordance with the words, "Bear one another's burdens."

Love your neighbor as yourself. Christ loved us when we did not love him. He came and bore our burdens. He paid for our sins with his blood. Because of this we can bear one another's burdens. However we must take care with the manner within which we deal with one another. We must remember that outside of Christ we have no righteous standing before God and it is in this humble dependence upon God's grace that we help each other in our burdens.

How can we approach others and fight against pride in ourselves to be too harsh or indifferent? John Piper comments using Galatians 2:20:² "I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." What we need to break out of the shackles of our assertive pride and our timid pride is not the bolstering of self-esteem, but a radical confidence in the incomparable Christ who came into the world to save utterly unworthy sinners! When you are looking wholly to Christ for your forgiveness,

¹ CCEL, *Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians (minor edits)*

² <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-law-of-christ>

guidance, love, and joy, the sinner you admonish and restore will know you do not come in the spirit of pride.”

This also aids us in assessing our own motives in the way we live our day-to-day lives. Paul cautions us to not look to the praises of others for any value in our works, nor to measure ourselves against the merits of others. When we face God after our life, we will answer for our own life’s work, not for that of anyone else’s. So it is because of Christ we are enabled to fulfill his law and by his grace we are empowered to display it with others through their lives!

Personal Reflection

1. What stood out to you while reading the verses provided? Write out your observations.
2. What does it mean to fulfill the law of Christ and how does one approach it according to these verses? Write it out in your own words.
3. How can you bear another’s burdens while keeping yourself from pride in doing so?

Group Questions

1. Read Leviticus 19:18, John 13:34 and Galatians 5:14. What do these verses say about living life with one another?
2. Why would Paul follow the command to “bear one another’s burdens” by stating if anyone thinks they are something, when they are nothing, they deceive themselves?”
3. Have you ever been tempted to compare things in your life (i.e. work ethic, sin struggles, parenting style etc.) to someone else’s life? If so, what has resulted from these thoughts and/or actions?
4. Read Matthew 12:36-37; 16:27 and Romans 14:12. How do these verses compare with Galatians 6:5? Does this conflict with the command to bear one another’s burdens? Explain.
5. How can we posture ourselves to provide support to each other and lovingly fight sin in each other’s lives for the right reasons?

Prayer

Pray that each of us would be given the grace to bear one another's burdens from a pure and right heart seeking to fulfill the law of Christ. Pray that the outside world sees this and is drawn to the beauty of Christ because of what they see in his church.

PURSUE ONE ANOTHER

Text

Galatians 6:1

Commentary

From Martin Luther on Galatians:

Let the ministers of the Gospel learn from Paul how to deal with those who have sinned. “Brethren,” he says, “if any man be overtaken with a fault, do not aggravate his grief, do not scold him, do not condemn him, but lift him up and gently restore his faith. If you see a brother despondent over a sin he has committed, run up to him, reach out your hand to him, comfort him with the Gospel and embrace him like a mother. When you meet a willful sinner who does not care, go after him and rebuke him sharply.” But this is not the treatment for one who has been overtaken by a sin and is sorry. He must be dealt with in the spirit of meekness and not in the spirit of severity. A repentant sinner is not to be given gall and vinegar to drink.

Verse 1: Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

This consideration is very much needed to put a stop to the severity of some pastors who show the fallen no mercy. St. Augustine says: “There is no sin which one person has committed, that another person may not commit it also.” We stand in slippery places. If we become overbearing and neglect our duty, it is easy enough to fall into sin. In the book entitled “The Lives of Our Fathers,” one of the Fathers is reported to have said when informed that a brother had fallen into adultery: “He fell yesterday; I may fall today.” Paul therefore warns the pastors not to be too rigorous and unmerciful towards offenders, but to show them every affection, always remembering: “This man fell into sin; I may fall into worse sin. If those who are always so eager to condemn others would investigate themselves they would find that the sins of others are motes in comparison to their own.”

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). If David who was a hero of faith and did so many great things for the Lord, could fall so badly that in spite of his advanced age he was overcome by youthful lust after he had withstood so many different temptations with which the Lord had tested his faith, who are we to think that we are more stable? These object lessons of God should convince us that of all things God hates pride.

Personal Reflection

1. How easily do you share your time and skills with others? How do you feel when you offer to serve but are turned down? How do you feel when you aren't thanked for going out of your way to serve somebody?
2. What is the best approach to helping a Christian brother caught in sin?
3. What happens to our relationships when we don't confront each other in sin because we're afraid of hurting each other's feelings, or afraid of losing the relationship?

Group Questions

1. What should those who are "spiritual" be willing to do? (vrs. 1)
2. Paul says "you who are spiritual" should help. To whom does this refer? (6:1, 4:6)
3. What attitudes should accompany them in what they do? (vrs. 1)
4. What are three dangers of correcting someone else's sin or wrong? (vrs. 1)
5. Why is it important to have Christian friends? Wouldn't it be easier to live as a hermit or monk?
6. What does it do to relationships and faith when we confront other's sins with severity and rigidity and a lack of grace?
7. What practical instruction or encouragement would you give to someone today on how to gracefully confront and restore a fellow believer caught in sin or struggling with sin? In other words, how do you "gently" restore a brother?
8. How does this pursuit of one another, even in our sins, point us to the grace of the gospel of Jesus?
9. What aspects of the gospel (who Jesus is; what Jesus accomplished; and how He accomplished it-His attitude/demeanor/etc.) are shown when we pursue one another this way?

CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Text

Galatians 6:6-8, Romans 8:1-17, Romans 7 & 8:18-39

Commentary

One of the major themes of the book of Galatians is the freedom we have in Jesus Christ through the Gospel. Paul is relentless in illuminating that Jesus is the only one who can set us free from the two things that can enslave us - our sin nature (also called the flesh) and the Law (specifically the Law of Moses).

Paul demonstrates that the Law cannot save us (Galatians 3:10-11), but that the Law's good purpose is to expose our sin and point us to Christ (3:23-26). Therefore, he urges the believers in Galatia - and us today - to not submit to a law that distracts us from Christ, that cannot save us, and will enslave us (5:1). But Paul also knows that our hearts are inclined to sin, rather than love for God and our neighbors (5:13), so he points to a third way.

What is that third way? Paul doesn't just spell out a new list rules for Christians to follow (that would be any different than the Law) and he doesn't allow us to indulge our sinful nature and desires. Instead, the third way he calls us to is to walk by the Holy Spirit and to be led by the Spirit (5:16-25). In these verses, he also describes the fruit of the life of a believer who is walking according to the Spirit.

In chapter 6, Paul provides some practical examples of the kinds of actions believers engage in when led by the Spirit. In verse 6, he reminds and instructs believers to reciprocate goodness to those who are called to teach in the Church. Paul wrote this to a church where there were leaders who were preaching a false gospel (the gospel of keeping the Law), so it was important that believers identify those who were truly preaching Christ and support them. The writer of Hebrews echoes this exhortation, writing that leaders will give an account to God for how they cared for their flock (Heb 13:17). Leaders today are held to the same standard - and it is right for the church to honor good teachers (also see 1 Thess 5:11-13).

In verses 7 and 8, Paul begins to come to the conclusion of his letter with a warning that reflects what he previously wrote in chapter 5. He warns believers to not "sow to the flesh" - do not allow sin to have any space in your life. Very few people would say that they think they can trick God, but we have a tendency to deceive ourselves and forget that God knows our hearts. It can be really easy to make excuses for sin, and Paul warns us to not abuse the freedom we have from the old Law. There are consequences for sin. A more subtle way of sowing to the flesh is what the false

teachers in Galatia were advocating - seeking to gain righteousness by keeping the Law. The danger in what they were doing was this: they were trying to accomplish through human effort what was already finished in Christ's work in His death and resurrection. Intentional or not, this counterfeit gospel sought to add to God's plan, which would diminish His glory. When we try to reach God through any other way beside Christ, we actually distance ourselves from Him. But if we rely entirely on Christ, and if our obedience to Him is born out of submitting to His Spirit, we will find life in Him.

Personal Reflection

1. How do both sin and the Law end up enslaving us?
2. How does Christ set us free?
3. As free people, how do we walk in the Spirit?

Group Discussion

1. What does it mean to honor leaders and teachers in the Church?
2. Why is it significant that Paul included this in his letter to the Galatians?
3. How is the pattern Paul describes in Galatians 6:7-8 different than karma?
4. What does it mean to sow to the Spirit or to walk by the Spirit?
5. How will you live in freedom through Christ this week?

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

Text

Galatians 6:9-1, Matthew 25:34-40, Matthew 10:42, Acts 4:32-35

Commentary

“Believers only are expressly recommended to our notice; not that he bids us altogether despise others, but because the more nearly a man approaches to God, he ought to be more highly esteemed by us; for though there is a common tie that binds all the children of Adam, there is still a more sacred union among the children of God” (John Calvin’s Commentary on Matthew 25).

Jesus reiterates this particular love that we are to have for one another as well as the reason behind it in John 13:35 “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” This particular love for fellow believers, revealed in service, is not just for its own sake. Rather it is testimonial and it is an act of worship. By it we proclaim to the world that we belong to Jesus Christ.

Likewise consider Jesus’s command to Peter “Do you love me?...Feed my sheep” It is an easy thing to love someone because they appear to you worthy of love or because to love them would benefit you somehow but to love someone (in spite of their flaws) for no other reason than who they are in Christ (i.e. a child of God)...that is glorifying to God and is part of what it means to walk by faith.

The second point we must not miss from this passage is the phrase: “as we have opportunity”. I have a fellow co-worker at my office who told me that once he retires he want to get more involved in church and mission work, the unspoken half of that statement is “but for now I need to focus entirely on work instead.” Part of me wants to ask him “what if you die next week?”

Practically speaking, inconvenience and discomfort causes us sometimes to avoid an “opportunity” which God has given us to serve and show love to our fellow believers. Yet this week’s passage seems to indicate that we will each have such “opportunities”.

A great example from The Bible of a person who seized their “opportunity” was Mary when she anointed Jesus’s feet with perfume. Her opportunity was not convenient, it was not comfortable, it cost her dearly from a monetary sense, and it caused the religious leaders (even some disciples) to scorn her and call her act of service “a waste” (see Mark 14:4). Yet that was the only opportunity for Jesus to be anointed for his burial. When women who at a later, more convenient and “appropriate” time tried to do so, the tomb was already empty.

And of this awkward, inconvenient, opportunity which Mary took advantage of, Jesus found it beautiful: “She has done a beautiful thing to me...She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” Mark 14:6-9

Do not miss an opportunity, which God has given you. And don't be discouraged from seeking opportunities. If Mary had listened to secular or religious wisdom of her day she would have been told, “you are planning nothing of importance, indeed what you are planning is a foolish waste.” So when you see an opportunity and you hear a voice that says “that is meaningless or it would be a waste” recognize that it may be the world that is telling you that, and examine your intentions and the opportunity in light of Scripture. Because what the world once called “waste” Jesus called “beautiful”.

Personal Questions

1. Please read Mark 9:41, 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, and Matthew 25:37-40.

- Have you ever had opportunities to serve and chosen not based upon the belief that it would be ineffectual or meaningless or a “waste”? Please examine your thought in light of the three passages listed above.

2. Have you ever seen a Christian brother or sister with a specific need, and you had the ability to alleviate that specific need and you consciously chose not to do so? Why?

- Try and be specific, the point here is not to induce guilt but rather to discern if such choice was caused by believing lies of the enemy and if it was then we need to know what those lies are that we may be on guard against them in the future.

Group Question

1. List and discuss the various reasons behind each exhortation to serve one another, which one stood out to you most, why?

2. Have you personally ever had a need and chosen not to share it with your church family? Why?

3. Ask if there is a need that anyone would like to bring before the CG. (Examples could be a meal train, prayer, mowing a yard, etc.)

- As you share needs or as you hear needs be on guard against thoughts like “it would be a waste to share this” or “it would be a waste to spend time on that”. Examine such thought in the light of Scripture.

Prayer

God fill my heart with the love that you have for the church. Let me see the body of believers as you see them: as your bride that you are making holy and beautiful for your wedding day. Open my eyes to opportunities to serve and make known your love and let me take them. Protect me from the lies of the world, the flesh, and the enemy that would lead me away from such opportunities.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Text

Galatians 6:11-18

Commentary

From Martin Luther on Galatians:

“Since circumcision and uncircumcision are contrary matters we would expect the Apostle to say that one or the other might accomplish some good. But he denies that either of them do any good. Both are of no value because in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything.

Reason fails to understand this, “for the natural man receive not the things of the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 2:14). It therefore seeks righteousness in externals. However, we learn from the Word of God that there is nothing under the sun that can make us righteous before God and a new creature except Christ Jesus.

A new creature is one in whom the image of God has been renewed. Such a creature cannot be brought into life by good works, but by Christ alone. Good works may improve the outward appearance, but they cannot produce a new creature. A new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, who imbues our hearts with faith, love, and other Christian virtues, grants us the strength to subdue the flesh and to reject the righteousness of the world.”

Personal Reflection

1. Do you ever struggle with wanting to go back to your old ways of living and thinking? If so, how?
2. Do you ever find yourself trying to manipulate other believers into joining you in your old ways for whatever reason? If so, how and why?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what is at the root of these inclinations.

Group Questions

1. What motivation does Paul ascribe to those who would compel circumcision? (vrs. 12-13)
2. What was the inconsistency of those compelling circumcision? (vrs. 13)
3. In what did Paul glory? (vrs. 14)
4. In Christ Jesus, what is it that avails anything? (vrs. 15)
5. Upon whom did Paul pray for peace and mercy? (vrs. 16)
6. Why did Paul ask that no one trouble him? (vrs. 17)
7. What was Paul's final benediction to the Galatians? (vrs. 18)
8. As a closing question, are you holding on to any old ways of thinking or living that are preventing you from fully accepting and enjoying the freedom you have in Jesus Christ? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what keeps you from boasting in Christ.

WORSHIP JESUS

Text

John 14:6, Exodus 20:1-4

Commentary

On April 29, 2016, John Piper was asked, “What is worship?” The following was taken from his response.

We worship God authentically when we know him truly and treasure him duly. Then the word “worship” refers to that valuing, that inner valuing, becoming visible in the world in two basic ways in the New Testament. One is acts of the mouth: acts of praise and repentance in worship services or small group gatherings. And the other is acts of love with the body and the hands and the feet: acts of love that show the supreme value of God by what we are willing to sacrifice for the good of others. And I get those two things from Hebrews 13:15–16. Listen to this amazing summary. It says, “Through him, then,” — through Christ — “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

Those two verses begin and end with the term “sacrifice.” And, of course, the sacrifice is an echo from the Old Testament sacrifices which were at the center of the worship and were to display the value of God as we gave up a bull or a goat and showed that God is precious to us, and we value his redemption that comes to us through the sacrifice and now through these sacrifice of Christ. So through Christ two things become worshipful sacrifices in our life: the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name; that is, worship services in singing and praying and repenting and confessing, and secondly, the fruit of deeds. Don’t neglect to do good. Share what you have. Such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Both of those are acts of worship. You see it again in Romans 12:1: “I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your spiritual service of worship.” So all of our bodily life done in love for other and in reliance upon God display the worth of God above all things and make us worshipers in our daily life.

So, here is my summary: The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.

Personal Reflection

1. Read John 14:6 & Exodus 20:1-4 What did you observe in the verses?
2. How does God describe himself in these two passages?
3. What relevance does this passage have in your life? Do you have any idols in your life?

Group Discussion

1. God demands that we worship nothing besides him. Why do we have to obey this commandment? (consider Gen 1.27 and Isa 42.8 Heb 6.13)
2. An idol is anything we worship in life that isn't Jesus. What idols do you see in society?
3. How can you identify idols in your own heart?
4. How is Jesus better than any thing else that could be worshiped?
5. The gospel is the most inclusive and exclusive news ever told. How so?

Prayer

Heavenly Father: You alone are God. You have revealed this truth to us and command us to worship you alone. We praise you for being the way, the truth, and the life. Only through you can we approach the Father. We pray that you would grant us faithfulness to the truth of your words, especially as we take your gospel to world who rejects you. Give us boldness to proclaim your truth without shame or timidity. Amen.

LOVE THE BIBLE

Text

Luke 24:27, John 5:39-40

Commentary

As a Church we love The Bible because we love Jesus. The Bible is a about Jesus. Unfortunately, it is possible to read The Bible and miss Jesus, I know I have, the religious leaders in Jesus day did, and chances are you have too. Jesus says The Bible is about himself. It is important to know and understand this because it helps us interpret and accurately apply The Bible to our lives.

Jesus himself was very clear that He was God The Bible was about him. This angered many and still does today. When Jesus declared that he was God and that The Father has given him ultimate authority, the crowds grew frustrated. Some have actually plotted to kill Jesus. Jesus explains the reason they are frustrated is because they have been reading their Bibles wrong.

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me “ (John 5:39 ESV).

Later, following his resurrection, Jesus opens the Old Testament and teaches that everything in it was about him.

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27 ESV).

When we miss Jesus, we miss the point of The Bible. Jesus is God, Jesus is the ultimate authority, and The Bible is about Jesus. This is marvelous and freeing. But if you read The Bible as if it's about you and what you must do to be loved by God you will be trapped and without hope. The Bible teaches us that we are not the hero, Jesus is. Trust him. Believe in Jesus. And read The Bible like Jesus read The Bible.

Personal Reflection

1. What did you observe or notice while reading Luke 24:27 & John 5:39-4?
2. Who does Jesus say The Old Testament is about?
3. How does understanding The Bible is about Jesus change the way you read The Bible?

Group Discussion

1. Who does Jesus say The Bible is about?
2. The Bible is about Jesus, why is knowing this important to how we read in interpret the scriptures?
3. Is knowing The Bible is about Jesus more freeing or frustrating to you, why?
4. How does knowing The Bible is about Jesus change they way your read it?

Prayer

Jesus, help our hearts see and savor you above all things.