

July 31, 2016 by Steve Brandon



Bear One Another's Burdens

Galatians 6:1-5

- 1. The Command (verse 2)**
- 2. An Application (verse 1)**
- 3. A Warning (verses 3-5)**

At 3am tomorrow morning, the Brandon family is planning to leave our home for our annual drive out to California to visit Yvonne's parents for a much needed vacation. It's a vacation that we all have been looking forward to. We are looking forward to spending some time on a remote property in northern California. The kids are looking forward to seeing their cousins and swimming in the pool. We all are looking forward to some nice days in the sun.

Near the end of the trip, the older half of our family will be taking a backpacking trip along the Tahoe Rim Trail, which circles Lake Tahoe. The entire trail is 160 miles. We don't have time to do the entire thing. So, we are planning about 30 miles, with three nights on the trail. We did this last summer and had a wonderful time. But, I want to tell you a story of what happened last year.

We were on our second day of hiking, and Hanna ran out of gas. She simply had no energy to walk any more. And so, we stopped, right along the trail, and gave Hanna a rest. It was a rather scary time for us. And we were miles from civilization. We had no idea what was wrong with her. All we knew is that she was very lethargic and could barely walk for lack of energy. We knew that we had to get her to the next camp-site, about 5 miles away.

So, after a time of rest, and some power bars, we did the only thing that we could do. We took her backpack upon our shoulders, taking turns with who would wear two backpacks. And we walked with her slowly down the path.

When Hanna needed to go slower, we went slower. When she needed a rest, we rested. When she needed to lie down, we stopped.

Finally, we arrived at camp, and had a good dinner. And Hanna was just fine. As it turns out, she simply didn't have enough food. But, we didn't know this at the time. All we knew is that we had to get her to camp. And to do so, we took her burden upon our back and cared for her down the hill.

That story is a good illustration of our text this morning. My message is entitled, "Bear One Another's Burdens." And the picture we receive from this text is the picture of taking someone's burden, and carrying it yourself. It comes from Galatians, chapter 6, verses 1-5. That is where we will be this morning.

My message this morning is a continuation of our summer series of looking at the "One Anothers" of the New Testament. These are the commands that God has given to us to do with "One Another." I have preached these messages in an effort to paint a picture of the church that God calls us to be. So far, we have looked at the commands to Encourage One Another, Pray for One Another, Serve One Another, Love One Another, Show Hospitality to One Another, Honor One Another, Forgive One Another, and Accept One Another. And this morning, "Bear One Another's Burdens."

I trust that you can see the command clearly there in verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Let's begin by reading the entire text.

Galatians 6:1-5

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

I want to begin in verse 2, as it is really the heart of the text. Verse 2 is the command. Verse 1 is an application of that command. Verses 3-5 is the warning we all must heed in applying this command. In fact, this is my outline this morning:

- 1. The Command (verse 2)**
- 2. An Application (verse 1)**
- 3. A Warning (verses 3-5)**

First, ...

1. The Command (verse 2)

The command comes in verse 2, ...

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This verse talks about everything that I have been trying to communicate this past summer. It speaks about seeing someone in need and doing what you can to help them—taking the burden off of their shoulders and placing it upon your own. Doing so is an expression of love. It may take the form of encouragement. It may take the form of hospitality. It may take the form of service. It may take the form of prayer.

Let me share with you an example. God has blessed our family with some wonderful neighbors on both sides of us (the east and the west). Indeed, they are an answer to our prayers, as we prayed for them before they ever moved in.

Anyway, in recent weeks, we have been incredibly busy as I have been gone and my kids have been gone. My kids have been working. My neighbor has noticed our grass getting a bit long, and so, when he has been mowing his grass, he has continued right on into our lawn and mowed ours. And as he has done this, he has made it clear that he doesn't want for us to think that we need to reciprocate with some sort of favor in return.

Now, our neighbor is retired and has some time on his hands. And he knows that I'm a pastor. And he has taken the burden of our lawn onto his own shoulders. And he has done it with joy. I think that he knows that his service to our family frees us up to minister to you. And he likes that.

A few days ago I visited him and asked if he would like to continue to serve us like this. He got a big smile on his face and said, "I would be glad to do so." Our neighbor is "bearing our burden."

Our neighbor on the other side of us is cut has a similar heart to help. He has mowed our lawn. He has taken his snow blower to our driveway on multiple occasions. For the past few summers, it has worked out this way, that I have bought the supplies. And he has seal-coated our driveway while we are gone on vacation. Indeed, he is "bearing our burden."

This is similar to my dad's situation. My dad has often said that he, "Retired to serve his grandchildren." He is ready and willing to help them whenever they are in need. He comes and helps us often, and uses his time to bear our burdens and the burdens of his other grandchildren.

This sort of thing ought to happen in the church all the time. When you see a need that you can meet, take the burden off your brother's back, and place it on your back. Paul says that as you do this, you "fulfill the law of Christ." This is the law of love that Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount, ...

Matthew 7:12

Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is the law of love that Paul mentions in chapter 5 and verse 14,...

Galatians 5:14

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

And this is so not what the Pharisees of Jesus' day did. Rather than taking burdens upon their own shoulders, they laid it upon others. Jesus said, ...

Matthew 23:2-4

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do.

For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

That's the way of the selfish legalist, always requiring of others what they, themselves are not willing to lift. That's not the way of a follower of Christ.

Like all of the other "one another" commands, this command is utterly others-centered. When someone has a need and you can help, the follower of Christ will help! A follower of Christ will take the burden upon himself. And even when you don't have the resources to meet the need, you can always pray. Thereby taking up a burden of prayer for the hurting party.

Now, stepping back from verse 2, we see that a particular application that Paul is laying out here in Galatians 6 is the burden of sin. This is my second point, ...

2. An Application (verse 1)

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep

watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Here's the picture: someone is going along in life, and they fall into some sin. The idea here is that sin has captured them. It's not so much that they had deliberately planned on sinning, and executed their plan. As if they had been repeatedly warned by their godly friends not to go there, but they did anyway. The picture here is that someone has acted, and before they really realized it, they had fallen into the sin. And now they had been caught.

It's a bit like a parent catching a child looking at porn. It's a bit like being in a social setting, when someone blurts forth some profanity. It's a bit like some teenagers being caught by their parents doing something wrong. It's a bit like someone being caught in a lie. It's a bit like someone becoming so angry with another that he takes a swing at you.

Paul, here, is instructing those in Galatia how to respond to such a one. He says that they should be "restored." Rather than pointing out the sin for all the world to see, the sin is to be confessed and relationships are to be mended. That's the idea of this word translated, "restored." In secular Greek, this word is used to describe the setting of a fractured bone.

In Biblical Greek, this word is used of the disciples who were mending their nets (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). It's a "fixing" word. In the context of a sinning brother, it means "fixing" what is broken. It's confessing sin before the Lord. It's forgiving the hurt that the sin has caused. It's repairing any broken relationships.

Paul calls upon those who are "spiritual" to engage in such a work. You can see it right there in verse 1, ...

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

That's a loaded word, because Paul has been talking about the "spiritual" ones toward the end of chapter 5. The best way to capture this is to go back into Galatians 5. Let's begin reading in verse 16, and as we work through these verses. I simply want to comment lightly on them.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Paul is setting up here the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh. Walking by the Spirit is walking in the ways of God, controlled by the Spirit of God. Walking in the flesh is walking in your own ways, controlled by your own passions and desires (which we see in verse 17).

Galatians 5:17-18

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

In other words, if the Spirit of God is leading you, you will walk in the ways of God. But if you are not being led by the Spirit of God, you will walk in the ways of your flesh. Then Paul continues on in verse 19 to describe the deeds of the flesh. And it's not pretty.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These are social sins. They are sins against others. Sins that are hurtful to others. These are selfish sins. They are sins that want something, and will hurt others to get it. That's why there is strife and fits of anger. Because, you are not getting what you want. And so, you amp up the pressure to get what you want.

The Spirit-led life, however, is much different. Verse 22, ...

Galatians 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

In other words, those who are led by the Spirit of God will not be seeking their own desires, but will be seeking the good of others. And so, they will be patient with others and kind and gentle and loving. And so, the summary comes in verses 25 and 26.

Galatians 5:25-26

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

And so, we see at the end of chapter 5 a contrast. It is a contrast between those living by the Spirit, and those living by the flesh. And when we come to chapter 6, Paul is calling upon those who are being led by the Spirit of God to restore the one "caught in a transgression." Now, I trust that you can see why Paul wants those who are "spiritual" to help in the restoration. Because it must be done "in a spirit of gentleness." Look again at verse 1, ...

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. ...

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. And gentleness is what you need to "restore" a sinning brother.

The perfect picture of this is John, chapter 8, which tells the story of the woman caught in adultery. The scribes and Pharisees were ready to stone the woman. But Jesus was gentle. The Pharisees may well have had stones in their hands with their arms cocked! But Jesus was bending down, writing with his finger on the ground (John 8:6). The Pharisees continued to press Jesus, "So what do you say?"

Finally, Jesus stood up and said to them, ...

John 8:7-8

... "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.

The scribes and Pharisees dropped their stones and left, one by one (John 8:9). When all were gone and Jesus was alone with the woman, Jesus stood up and said to her, ...

John 8:10-11

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

What a perfect picture of application of Galatians 6:1.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. ...

Now, this isn't an excuse for any of you to say, "I'm not spiritual, so I don't have such a responsibility." Parents, you have a responsibility to restore your sinning children. If you seek to do so in the by yelling at your children, you will do it badly. But if you do it in the Spirit, things will go differently.

A couple of weeks ago I was at Southern Seminary. I took a lunch in the cafeteria. I had my food and was looking for a place to sit down. I found a guy all by himself and set down next to him. I said, "Can I sit here?" He said, "Yes, but I'm waiting for my wife, who is planning to join me." I said, "That's fine with me if its OK with you."

About 10 minutes later, the wife came. And they had a little girl with them, about two years old. When they found out that I have 5 children, they turned the conversation to the matter of disciplining their child. And they asked me about it.

And so, I told them of how Proverbs puts forth two categories of children: wise and foolish. I told them of how the rod removes foolishness from a child (Proverbs 22:15). I told them of how the rod gives wisdom (Proverbs 29:15). And so, I directed them to discipline their child for foolish behavior--not childish behavior, but foolish behavior. Because, in the end, that's what you are aiming for: wise children.

And as I reflected upon my own parenting, I said, "You know, I really enjoyed disciplining my children. Not that I ever enjoyed inflicting hurt upon them. But that after disciplining them, and praying with them, they almost always left my presence happy. They felt secure in my love. They felt joy that the sin was dealt with. It wasn't going to come back and haunt them."

And what took place in the confines of my home ought to take place in the life of a church. As people are caught in transgressions, spiritual people ought to come around them and help restore them. This is the primary application of verse 2, bearing burdens. As we help people deal with the burden of sin in their lives, we are helping to bear their burdens.

Now, it's not that we take their sin off of their shoulders and onto ours. Because, that does no good. In fact, we need to help them place their burdens on the shoulders of Jesus who "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

The good news is this: Jesus wants to take our burdens. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us to "cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Jesus cares for us. Jesus is a willing burden-carrier. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you." And when burdens are cast upon Jesus, they go away. That's the reality of the gospel. Jesus takes our burden of sin upon himself. It will never come back.

And so, at Rock Valley Bible Church, we ought to come alongside of those with their burdens of sin and direct them to Jesus. And here's the glory: when it's done, the burden is lifted. Sins are forgiven. And relationships are restored. And when it's done, it is a great thing.

But, it does come with a warning. The warning comes at the end of verse 1.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

"Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." In other words, if you see yourself as the spiritual one in the process of restoration, you have a particular danger. You have the danger of pride and arrogance, thinking that you are the righteous one.

Oh, be careful, lest you become a scribe or a Pharisee. The Bible says in Luke 18:9 that such people, "trust in themselves that they are righteous and treat others with contempt." And Paul says to beware of this danger. We have seen The Command (verse 2) and An Application (verse 1). And now we come to ...

3. A Warning (verses 3-5)

Galatians 6:3-5

For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

Over the years, this is what I have noticed. Those who most loudly condemn the sinner are often those with the most sin to hide.

Josh Duggar comes to my mind. He was working for the Family Research Council, advocating pro-family, pro-Christian values, all the while having skeletons in his closet.

Jesse Jackson comes to my mind. In the midst of counseling President Clinton after his affair with Monica Lewinski was made public; at the same time, he fathered an illegitimate child.

Beware of those who look to the sin of others, but fail to look at their own lives. Jesus said it this way, ...

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

So, as we bear the burdens of others let us look carefully to ourselves. Because, it is so easy to succumb to spiritual pride. Especially when you see things go well with your restoration work. When you see your children turn from their sin. When you see your friend turn from their sin. You can be so happy. Because, it's a joyous thing when you are used of God in this way.

But sadly, there are times when this doesn't work so well. A question that Galatians 6:1 doesn't answer is this: "What happens when you seek to help others caught in their transgression and they ignore your counsel? "What happens when people refuse to repent." The answer to that question comes in Matthew 18. Turn there in your Bible.

We were here a few weeks ago when I was preaching on "Forgiving One Another," because of the encounter that Peter had with Jesus. "Lord, ... how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times" (Matthew 18:21). Jesus says, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy sevens of times" (Matthew 18:22). What prompted the question? Jesus' discussion upon what to do when the restoration project doesn't work so well. Let's begin in verse 12, ...

Matthew 18:12-14

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Here you see the joy of restoration. Jesus couches it in a parable of a shepherd rejoicing at a found sheep. The sheep is the one who as "caught in a transgression" (Galatians 6:1). The joy is real! When someone turns from their sin back to God, there is great joy. As Jesus said in Luke 15:7, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Verse 14 tells us the heart of God--that he takes no pleasure when a little one perishes in sin. In the same way, we too ought to take no pleasure when a brother goes astray. Jesus instructs us, ...

Matthew 18:15

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

This is Galatians 6:1. You have come in a spirit of gentleness in private, seeking to deal with the matter alone. And when there is restoration, a brother is gained. Verse 16 tells you what to do if this is not the case:

Matthew 18:16

But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

The idea here is that you want to establish that it's not a personal vendetta that you have against your brother. Instead, there are others who come along side and can testify not only to the facts of the sin, but also to the spirit of the restoration attempt. The progression continues in verse 17, ...

Matthew 18:17

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

The idea here is of ever-increasing circle. It's not only one person who seeks to restore a brother caught in a transgression. It's not only two or three people. It's not ten or twelve. It's the entire church, who is called to pursue the sinning brother.

The goal of this entire process is Galatians 6:1, "restoration," calling the straying brother back. If the brother confesses his sin and comes back, there is great rejoicing. Because the gospel has been made evident! And people gather around in joy. And angels in heaven rejoice.

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For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
