

Galatians 5:26-6:5

Bearing Burdens

Previously in Galatians we saw the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. And we learned that we gain victory over sin and the flesh as we walk in the Spirit and allow God's Spirit to produce its fruit in our lives. Our present section of this letter deals with the practical results of our having the fruit of the Spirit.

In other words what does love, longsuffering, kindness and so on, look like in the church, in our relationships? It is very easy to talk about love in flowery and sentimental ways. But what does love look like when it wears overalls and work boots? Let's find out.

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.
(Galatians 5:25, 26)

We read this verse in the last chapter. But there is more to say on it as it relates to our loving one another. If we walk in the Spirit we will not be conceited and provoking and envying one another. What we are being told here (and it is very important) is that our conduct toward others is shaped by our opinion of ourselves.

It is when we think too highly of ourselves that our relationships suffer. The Greek word translated "conceited" is *kenodoxos* and it refers to someone whose opinion of himself or herself is an illusion. People who are walking in the Spirit have a sober view of who they are and what they can do. The apostle wrote about this in Romans as well.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.
⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually

members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:3-8)

When I think too highly of myself I will not use my God-given gift or gifts in the right manner. All of us are gifted to serve, but we are not all gifted in the same way. And if I envy you and your gift, I will never use mine. Or if I am conceited about my abilities I may provoke you.

Walking in the Spirit does not mean that I am always focusing on me or on what others have. It means my heart is focused on the needs of others—how best can I serve? When the fruit of the Spirit is being produced in your life you think about other people in this way: “God loves you and Jesus Christ gave his life for you. It is now my God given delight and privilege to serve you in any way that I can.” Now, let's return to Galatians 6.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

(Galatians 6:1)

To be overtaken or caught in a sin can be very humiliating. Perhaps the best known example in the New Testament is in John 8 when the Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman caught in the very act of adultery. What did Jesus do in that situation? He said that if anyone was without sin that person could condemn and punish the woman. No one did. And then Jesus told the woman that he did not condemn her. But to go and sin no more; he restored her.

Any one of us could be caught in sin. And when we see someone who has fallen he or she does not need isolation or amputation but restoration. The fallen brother or sister needs encouragement to repent and to do the right thing. And the one to do the work of restoration is the believer who is spiritual, walking in the Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. He or she is humble, gentle and loving. In kindness helping, helping the one who has fallen in sin, because this is

how God treated us in Christ. Being harsh or judgmental is a sign of spiritual immaturity.

Bear one another's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ.
(Galatians 6:2)

The implication here is that all of us will have burdens at times—even pastors. And God does not want us to always feel like we have to deal with them alone. There are people who attempt to do just that. They believe it is a sign of great faith in God not to bother other believers with their concerns. On the other hand there are some Christians who are like Job's miserable comforters, who remind us of Psalm 55:22, where we are told to "cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you."

And yes, God will care for you!¹ But that does not mean He won't use you or me to help someone. We need to realize that often the hand of God is our hands. God has given us one another. Our burden can be emotional or physical or spiritual. And when the heavy burden is on our hearts it can be devastating. But people who have a rather high opinion of themselves either won't see the needs other people have. Or they will not be willing to help. They will think, "Well if that person who is in trouble was more godly like me, then he or she would not have the burden they carry."

We are to help one another by prayer, by hugs, by listening, by helping to fix the problem, by bringing a meal, by helping financially; however the burden needs to be lifted. The only way to love our neighbor as ourselves is to understand that our brother or sister in need is as valuable in God's sight as we are. To be a burden bearer is a great ministry and any believer can do it.

For if anyone thinks himself to be
something, when he is nothing,
he deceives himself.
(Galatians 6:3)

The idea here is that if we do not and will not help bear one another's burdens it is because we think we are above it all—too good to get involved. If the person was more like me then he or she wouldn't be in need. This is just another way of spelling out Galatians 5:26: that our relationships with others is determined by our opinion of ourselves. What if Jesus Christ declined to give his life for sinners, for you and me? Love never fails to act, to serve, to give, to be tender, compassionate and kind.

¹ 1 peter 5:7

But let each one examine his own work,
and then he will have rejoicing in himself
alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one
shall bear his own load.
(Galatians 6:4, 5)

Instead of judging other believers and comparing ourselves to them, keep your eye on how you measure up to Jesus Christ. One day, when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ we will have to give an accounting of how we lived. Let's read this in 1 Corinthians.

According to the grace of God which
was given to me, as a wise master builder
I have laid the foundation, and another
builds on it. But let each one take heed
how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other
foundation can anyone lay than that
which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation
with gold, silver, precious stones, wood,
hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become
clear; for the Day will declare it, because it
will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test
each one's work, of what sort it is.

¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it*
endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If
anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss;
but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
(1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

All of us are called to do good to others and to represent Christ to the world and the church. Every day we have opportunities, both big and small, to do this. And we can build our lives on the foundation of Christ with quality materials like faith, hope, love, kindness; the precious stones. Or we can waste our lives and time doing things that are built with wood, hay and straw. On the day of judgment the things that we have wasted our time and money and energy on will be burned up, we will suffer loss. We will still be saved, but we will have wasted our lives. But all of the good works we have done will be rewarded for eternity.

But let each one examine his own work,
and then he will have rejoicing in himself

alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.
(Galatians 6:4, 5)

Don't waste your time comparing yourself to others. If you need to compare yourself to someone look at Jesus Christ. And there is really no contradiction between verse 2 where we are told to bear one another's burdens and here in verse 5 where we are told to bear our own load.

In verse 2 the Greek word for "burden" is baros which means a very heavy weight, something that would bend you over. In verse 5 the word for "load" is phortion which was used for a light back pack. God has given all of us a unique gift or set of gifts, or tasks to bless us and to benefit others. And you won't have to answer for how I used my gift or did my job. But you will have to answer for how you carried out your responsibilities.

Maturing in our faith, walking in the Spirit and loving and serving one another is what it means to be spiritual. All of us are called to serve in love, in some way, for the glory of God and the good of others. And when we do, we fulfill the law of Christ.