

## **Burden-Bearing - Part 1**

Galatians 6:2-5

03/08/2025

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### TRANSCRIPT:

We're going to look together in Galatians Chapter 6, and I'd like to read from verse 1 through to verse 5. We're going to be looking at verse 2 this morning and dealing with verses 3 to 5 next week as we take up the doctrine of burden-bearing here presented in this text. Galatians Chapter 6, verse 1: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load."

We come to You, O God, in prayer, asking that You would open the eyes of our understanding and send forth Your Spirit to teach us things that we need to learn about our duties as Christians, but also, Lord, to learn about You and Your love for us in Christ. Guide us, we pray, into truth as You have promised to do, and we will look to You for Your power, for Your blessing, and we ask in Jesus' name, amen.

In Galatians Chapter 6, verses 1 through to verse number 10, we have instructions that visibly demonstrate what it means to walk in the Spirit. As if you remember, Chapter 5, verse 16 onward, Paul is teaching these believers what life in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit is like, theologically, or what it is like even practically. But when he gets to Chapter 6, verse 1 through, he begins to give some very visible demonstrations of what it looks like to walk in the Spirit. More than just the fruit of the Spirit, but what does the fruit of the Spirit look like in the life of the believer as one walks in the Spirit and practically demonstrates their obedience to the workings of the Spirit within their lives?

And so, we looked at verse number 1, where he develops the idea that the role of the believer, under the influence of the Spirit, he'll be moved to and will fulfill this duty of restoring one another. He will see those that

are overtaken in transgression, and he will not walk by them like the priest and the Levite, as it were, in that parable of the Good Samaritan, but will attend to the needs of other Christians that are bogged down, if we could say, and in need of assistance.

And today, we come to this second consideration of that visible demonstration, and that is the idea of burden-bearing. So that those who walk in the Spirit are not only those who restore the fallen, but they are also those who carry the burdens of others. Now, burdens are upon us all in various ways, and I believe what we are seeing in our day and generation, and will perhaps see in time to come, perhaps sooner than we expect, is an increased amount of burdens weighing heavy upon the lives of people, particularly in our church as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are presented with very unique challenges in our day. There are global unrest and pressures, there is political polarization, there is the inflation and cost of living that makes stress abound in so many homes, which in turn impacts marriages, the breakdown of families, the increase of divorce. We hear of the mental health, if we could say, epidemic, especially even among young people in their teenagers and even young adults and older people also. We see the rise of unemployment, and we look at the society around us, and we wonder, what does the future look like? The pressures are mounting, the problems seem to be increasing. What is the answer to this problem? Some say technological advancement. Will AI solve the problems of this generation? Well, no. I don't know about you, but everywhere on these headlines that I'm seeing is headlines that actually tend to say quite the opposite. It may help resolve certain issues, but headlines like this, I'm sure you've read them as well: "Microsoft reveals these are the jobs AI may soon replace," "Union says Commonwealth Bank replacing staff with AI," Sam Altman, the chief, as it were, of OpenAI, says, "totally gone," "AI boss warns jobs doomed." He lists categories of jobs that will probably cease to exist within years. Perhaps some of the jobs that you possess. I don't know. Not to put you in fear, but to make you think about the reality of increased pressures and the reality of burdens that are upon currently and will probably increase in time to come.

This passage of scripture helps us understand that the crisis of increased problems and pressures in the society that flows naturally into the lives of believers is not something that the government alone must resolve, nor is it something that God alone must take care of for individuals. It is something very practical that believers must embrace and understand their responsibilities in bearing the burdens of one another. The passage here in verse number two is quite clear where it says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." There's a call, there's a command to believers in Jesus to bear the burdens of one another. This exhortation simply could be put this way: You are to make the burdens of others your own. This

is what burden-bearing refers to. Someone is carrying a weight, and the person that bears that weight is a burden bearer, and they come alongside and they lift up, or they take upon themselves that which is weighing another down, so that the other might have a sense of reprieve, have a sense of comfort.

Now, what burdens are in view? Some would like to think that all the burdens that are in view in this passage are found in verse number one, relating to those that are bogged down in sin and trespass. To bear one another's burdens means help Christians out of sin when they are bogged in sin. That is the unique duty of the Christian, to help one another. But apart from that, we don't need to worry about the rest. Well, I don't believe that's what he's talking about here alone. Yes, no doubt there is a primary relationship between verse number one and verse number two that suggests that the bogged Christian is our responsibility, and by helping that Christian out of their situation and sin and struggle, that we are actually bearing their burden. That is no doubt, there is no question. But it is not limited to that. The New Testament shows that it's not limited to that. We see in the call of the deacons in Acts Chapter 6 to care for the widows in need, showing that there was a burden both upon the leaders of the church but also upon the widows and the culture and society in the church there, and the church answered the call by bearing the burdens of these widows that had need. So they appointed seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, to look after this business, and they did, and the word of God was magnified as there were people that were bearing burdens.

So it shouldn't be limited to the being overtaken in a trespass application, and I believe also because of the second part of verse number two, that's why it shouldn't be limited. "Bear one another's burdens, and what does it say there, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Which to me helps us understand that this is not limited to a particular struggle in sin and someone rescuing someone from the bog, as it were, but this extends to everything that looks like the fulfillment of the law of Christ. Burdens are weights, and the range of support and strengthening and encouraging believers is very broad. Burdens may be physical burdens. Someone has a serious injury, as it were, and can't attend to the basic things in their lives, and there is a real practical way to get alongside someone like that. There are emotional burdens, those that are stressed and weighed down, and perhaps dealing with worry and anxiety and doubt and depression. There are financial burdens that the New Testament speaks of. There were the poor saints at Jerusalem that the church readily came alongside and assisted and helped and took up an offering for them. There is the burdens of just general hardships. Anything really that weighs down a believer and crushes their spirit and brings them low and in need of help is to be regarded as a burden by which bearing it is a fulfillment of the law of Christ.

Now, when Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," we cannot move forward unless we look back at Chapter 5, because in Chapter 5, remember what he says in verse number 13. He says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty, and do not use liberty for an occasion or an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." And verse 14 says, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" This is the law of Christ. It is to through love serve one another, and it is to love your neighbor as yourself. It's interesting, isn't it? When you think about fulfilling the law of Christ, when you think about actually, when you think about serving God, what comes to mind? For many, serving God is about taking up some kind of position in the church, and it is. Some kind of ministry in the church, and it is. But it is not that alone. Serving one another through love and fulfilling the law of Christ is loving your neighbor as yourself, which translates to burden-bearing.

Ever felt like, "I'm not doing anything for God, and I need to do something for God"? Well, this sermon is for you. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." You can't do anything more, if I could say, grand and great for God than to fulfill the law of Christ. Bear one another's burdens. And so it is through love serving one another in such a way as you demonstrate fulfillment to the law of Christ, and it encompasses this idea of thoughtfulness and awareness. Because in the first place, if you see no other burdens but the ones that you have on your shoulder, you will never be in a position to help someone else. And so it requires thoughtfulness and awareness. Bearing someone else's burden assumes that you see the burden. And it assumes that you have a measure of compassion and sympathy and empathy; you're feeling for and with someone through their struggles. And then you enter into that struggle, enter into that challenge, and seek to try and relieve them and help them and guide them through that burden. And it's the kind of ministry that has sacrifice, with often times very little immediate felt benefits. It takes up your time. It takes up your energy. It takes up your resources. And of course, it stresses you out as you enter into the stresses of another and feel for them and pray with them and work through the issues that they're going through.

Philip Ryken said this, he said, "Needy people have a way of demanding our time, changing our plans, and rearranging our schedules." Demanding them requires the kinds of sacrifices that we will only make if we only consider them more important than ourselves. See, loving a neighbor as yourself has that idea, doesn't it? Where you're seeing them as valuable, as important, and that their problems are important to you, and you seek to enter into that and help them.

But burden-bearing will take up time and effort and energy. But we are called upon and commanded in this text of scripture to do it, as those who are walking in the Spirit, as those who are led by the Spirit.

Now, the best illustration of the fulfillment of the law of Christ with regards to burden-bearing is found and illustrated in the life of Christ. No other place to look as good as to look at Christ if you want to get a good vision of what it looks like to bear burdens. But in Acts Chapter 10, this is what Peter says of Christ: "He says how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. We need the Holy Spirit, and we need power. Listen to this, to even do burden-bearing. Who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

Jesus going about doing good. He's going about helping and assisting and healing and bearing and relieving and supporting and strengthening weak, feeble, broken, needy people. And he did it in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Isaiah Chapter 61, verses 1 to 2 says, that the spirit of the Lord was upon Him, and His ministry was to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord's favor.

You want to serve like Jesus? Burden bearer. There you have it. One who is set and fixed on helping others through their problems. Obviously, the most important part of that responsibility and duty was to preach the good news to the poor so that they might come to know a God who bears, as it were, their burden of sin, their troubles, their problems, their guilt, their shame. Jesus was one who was relentless in his bearing of burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ.

And we see this when he loosed the shackles of the bound. Do you remember that woman that had a disabling spirit that was weighed down and, as it were, bent down for 18 years? And the Pharisees were concerned about Jesus healing her on the Sabbath day. But Jesus goes on, and he's not concerned about the intricate extra applications of the Pharisees that undermine the very law of God itself. He's concerned about the fulfillment of the law of Christ. He's concerned about loving your neighbor as yourself. And this is what he said to them: "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

You see the priority of Christ in bearing burdens. Bearing the burdens of those who were down, and he delivered her from this evil spirit, and she

was relieved and healed on the Sabbath day. And the same is true with a man with a withered hand in Matthew Chapter 12, verses 11 to 13. It was amazing how the Pharisees were so concerned about their animals but not about people. Happy to untie their ox or their donkey to take it to water to drink because poor donkey's thirsty and poor ox is thirsty and hungry. But poor woman who is bound with an afflicting spirit for 18 years, they will threaten to take Christ's life because he would bear that burden. And so it was with a man with a withered hand, and he said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Or how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand," and he stretched it out, and it was restored as the other and was whole as the other.

You see what's happening here? Jesus is fulfilling the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of those that were oppressed. And it was the Pharisees who had a problem with the fulfillment of the law of Christ.

Now, this is perfectly demonstrated in the not only the life of Jesus but in the death of Jesus. Because where Jesus perfectly demonstrates burden-bearing is at the cross. Because there, at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find a man who is bearing, bearing our sin, bearing our guilt, bearing our shame, bearing our reproach, bearing our judgment, the wrath of God that was meant to fall on us, falling on Him so that we might escape that burden which would drive us down into the pits of hell were it to land completely and fully upon us.

And so, what did Jesus do? He sympathized with us. He empathized with us. He entered into our humanity through condescension from heaven. He came and sought her to be His holy bride. And with His life, He bought her, and for her life, He died. And Jesus here demonstrates burden-bearing in a way like none other. The greatest of burdens, that was the burden of all of the sins of His people throughout all the ages, that fell upon His shoulder, and He went in, as it were, to the darkest night, crying out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" And there was darkness upon the earth because there was a man who was bearing our sins.

The scripture uses this language to describe His death and His saving work: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; by His wounds, you have been healed." See what's happening here? Jesus is bearing our sins in His body upon the cross, in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. What is He doing? He's bearing our sins so that we might be free from sin and live to righteousness, which is that we might live to the fulfillment of the law of Christ. So that we might live as He lives. So that we might bear

the burdens of others. That we might preach the gospel to the poor. That we might bind the brokenhearted. That we might assist others that are weighed down with weights in their lives and get alongside them. That we might help those that are bogged down in sin and in transgression. That we might condescend as He condescended and enter into another's problems and come alongside that person and bear that burden and help them go on to comfort, to strength, to encouragement, and to victory.

And the Pharisees did exactly the opposite of what Jesus did. And this is what Jesus said of them in Matthew 23:4, "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move one of their fingers." They're happy to lay it on. Law upon law, commandment upon commandment, make more and more commandments to put people under pressure and stress to just feel, as it were, that they can never satisfy God's demands, and there's no grace, there's judgment and heaviness and weighed down, and they would bind burdens. But will they help anybody? Well, the way we help people is telling them what to do. Convenient, isn't it? That was in the time of Jesus. That still happens today and even happened in Acts Chapter 15 when the Pharisees were troubling the church with another gospel. It says, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear?" What the Pharisees are doing, what another gospel does, what a false gospel does, is that it lays law upon law upon a sinner without the hope of grace through faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. The Pharisees were doing the opposite of what Jesus was doing. He was demonstrating grace and power and deliverance and healing, and he was helping, he was loosing heavy burdens. They were stacking burdens upon the shoulders of others, and such are legalists and the proud. They do not bear burdens; they bind people under more burdens, and they will never move one of their fingers to help someone else that is struggling with anything in their lives. All they want to do is make sure that they say what they need to say. It's not understanding that being faithful to Christ is not just saying what needs to be said; it's doing what needs to be done.

It's fulfilling the law of Christ, not just speaking the law of Christ. Now, this text of scripture is not meant to be weaponized but rather to apply to us very personally. What I mean by that is you're not meant to come to a passage like this and say, "Bear one another's burdens," and now you go around to say, "Hey, so you, I have a problem; you're meant to help me." Because then what you're doing is what the Pharisees are doing; you're just putting more burdens on people, as it were. That's not the intention of the text. The text is not there to say, "Well, you know what, I've actually got a burden, which means I'm free from fulfilling the law of Christ." The law doesn't apply to me because I've actually got a burden. The text speaks to the personal application of every believer in the community to bear one

another's burdens, so to actively engage in helping and supporting and strengthening one another.

It is important that we are a people that are not described like the Pharisees but are rather described like our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's a question that we need to consider this morning: Is my life more like the Pharisaical binding of heavy burdens upon others, or is my life more like the Lord Jesus Christ's life, who is spent and is spending and being spent for the help and assistance and strengthening of others that are weighed down by heavy burdens?

You see, Christlikeness always is willing to be touched by the problems and pain of others. Christlikeness will always be willing, as it were, to feel for their recovery. Christlikeness will not have that hardness of spirit that will reject help and support for those in need, but rather, as the scripture says, if someone sees his brother in need and shuts up, as it were, his bowels of compassion or his compassionate heart, how dwells the love of God in him? That's how strong the language is. Essentially trying to help us understand that the gospel that saves us and makes us like Jesus is a gospel that causes us to enter into the problems of others and to assist them and to help them.

It is one of compassion and one of pity. We ought to be, as believers, laboring, praying, counseling, giving, helping, strengthening those around us. Christlikeness equals condescension, meaning it includes condescension. You cannot be on your high chair and high-minded and be like Jesus. The Christlikeness is God manifest in the flesh. We seeing Him condescend to us to redeem us, to help us, to bear our burdens. And therefore, condescension is not an option for the believer. It is a command.

The call here to bear one another's burdens is like, well, if I feel like it, I might do it when I get some extra time, when I just feel like I've got all the things that I want to get through sorted out first because it is about me first. That just sounds like the world out there, doesn't it? And it is important that we maintain our personal spiritual walk. It is important that we maintain our own spiritual vigor so that we might be in a better position to help others, as I looked at in chapter, in verse number one of this passage. But we must understand that Christianity includes condescension. The mind which was in Christ Jesus should also be in us, as Philippians Chapter 2, verses 1 through to verse number 10, says.

You might object to something like this and say, "Well, hang on a minute, Josh, you know, the Bible teaches us that God is the one who bears burdens. Didn't you preach some time ago, you know, from 1st Peter Chapter 5, verse 7, 'casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you'? Or Psalm



55, where it talks about, you know, 'cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you, and He will never let the, you know, the righteous be moved'? Well, we don't want to really take the place of God here, do we? I mean, people have burdens, but God is the one who bears burdens, and the best thing we can do is say, 'Pray.'"

The answer to that question could be many. This text alone answers it, but I want you to turn with me to 2nd Corinthians Chapter number 7, verses 5 to 7. I want to answer it in this way. Here we have in this passage of scripture a man that is burdened. Very godly and spiritual man named Paul. And look what he says in verse number 5 of this passage. He says, "For indeed, 2nd Corinthians 7:5, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears." Is that pretty burdened? Maybe you feel like that this morning. He's poor, laboring away, working hard, diligently serving God, and he goes, "My bodies have no rest; we're absolutely exhausted, and we are tired. If there's anyone who is burdened, it is us. We are actually troubled on every side. Outside there's conflicts, and it's not just that there's outside there's conflicts, and we are fearless."

No, outside are conflicts, and inside there's fears. "Oh, come on, Paul, don't you know how to cast your burden on the Lord? Why are you afraid?" Here is a man that is troubled in spirit. There's a sense in which he is weighed down by the things around him that are happening to him. And how does God comfort Paul? "Nevertheless, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the consolation, that's the comfort and encouragement, with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more."

How does a man rejoice when he is conflicted on the outside and his fears within? He's saying God comforted us, but how did God comfort him? Through the coming of Titus. Through the word of comfort that came through Titus, through seeing Titus, through hearing from Titus, through being blessed by Titus, and here is a man, Titus, that was used by God instrumentally to comfort the great apostle Paul. One who bore his burden and so fulfilled the law of Christ.

You see, the idea of casting all your burdens on the Lord, and He will sustain you, and casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you, cannot be removed from the Christian community by which God seeks to perform that work. God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus, and so it is that as you bear one another's burdens, God will comfort people, support and strengthen people by your instrumentation, by the Spirit working through you to be a blessing to others.

And this could look simply like a text message to someone who you know is down or you haven't seen in church for a while. I'm going to say this, and I'm not having a crack at anyone here, but just, I've got to say this. As a pastor, you often hear, "Where's so-and-so? You know, I haven't seen him in a long time," and I get it, that's a sign of care and concern, and that's beautiful. But almost immediately, you will hear me respond to you, "Have you reached out to that person?" Even though I know where they perhaps are because I've tried to reach out to them, and maybe sometimes I haven't, but the point is, even though we may know where they are, what are we seeking to do by saying something like that? Go bear his burden. Go help. Go strengthen. Find out. Enter in. As it were, do the work of a pastor in your capacity, in your little corner, in your little space, with the people that are around you in this little community. Bear one another's burdens. It could be a text message. It could be a phone call. It could be as simple as making a meal for someone who is in need because they've just had surgery or gone through a hard time. It could be as simple as a visit or say, "Let's catch up and have a coffee together." It could be a matter of just saying, "I'm praying for you," or "Let's get together and have some prayer together because I know you're going through a difficult time in your life right now." It could be just being present for someone that's going through a difficult time. You don't really have to say anything. You just need to be there with them. It could be as simple as giving them a gift. You know, someone might be in a bit of a financial situation. All you have to do is write their name in an envelope and pop it in the back box over there, and it will probably, not probably, it will get to them. If it doesn't, then we'll chase up Phil, but it will get there. It will get there. Lending your ear to someone means a lot.

It's all part of bearing one another's burdens, and this text of scripture absolutely crushes our society's egotistical individualism because it calls the high-minded spiritual elitist that will not get off his high chair and get his hands dirty because he's got a thousand preaching engagements around the country to condescend and bear someone's burden. Don't be too big for the problems of others. Bear burdens. The text teaches us this. Make the weights and problems of others as it were your own, and so this egotistical individualism that's found in the high-minded spiritual elite that won't be touched by the problems of others and roll up their sleeves and get dirty, they have to get down in the trenches also if they want to be fulfilling the law of Christ.

But it also crushes the private isolationist type. Maybe you're like that. The kind of person that's like, "I'm never going to share my problems with anybody." Well, it says to you that you need others in your life. Okay, so it's not about going around saying, "You need to help me; you need to help me." But it is about understanding that we belong to a community, isn't it?

And that God has designed a community in such a way that your problems, others should be somewhat entering into so as to help you and assist you, that you're not meant to do life alone.

And so the private person that never wants to share any problems with anybody, it says to that person, you need brothers and sisters in Christ to help you because God's designed it that way. And no matter all the spiritual words that you tack onto it to convince yourself that God is the one that will take care of my problems and my burdens, the text says to you, you need others also. And that God will help you through means of others.

This is how God has designed a community, a mutual burden-bearing people who have opportunity every day to fulfill the law of Christ. And it also crushes the self-centered complainer who thinks that their problem is the greatest problem and the only problem that the whole world should stop and see your problem. This text of scripture says, you bear someone else's burden. Don't make your problem the only problem; it's not the only problem. There are other people right now in this congregation that are going through the very same things or similar things than you're going through, or other things that are greater and more severe than what you are going through. And what the Bible is teaching us is, look everyone at another. And so it helps the person that is so introspective, only seeing the only problem that matters as their own, saying that, "Welcome to the world of burden-bearing. They are everywhere in the church of God, in the community, and it's not just a handful of a few to deal with this issue. You go and bear the burden of another." And you know what you might find? That when you start to bear the burden of another, you'll start to think that your burden is actually not that bad. It's often been that way.

I've got my problems, and I have my stresses and my anxieties, and I end up having a counseling session with someone, and I walk out of there thanking God and say, "Lord, not like the Pharisee, 'I'm not like other men are,' please, thank You, God, for Your mercy and for Your grace. Things could be much worse than what they are now. I want to be thankful so that I can practice, 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'" And the more isolated you are and introspective you are and not bearing the burden of others, the more self-centered you become, and you think that the world is falling around you, and you don't realize that there are others bearing burdens that you need to go and shoulder with them and help them and pray together, and maybe help each other out.

To bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Look at Jesus and be motivated to do the same. Let's pray.