

## GALATIANS - SERMON 39

### GALATIANS 6 :2 — BEARING THE BURDENS OF OTHERS

Pastor Max Doner, Sovereign Grace Bible Church Lebanon, Oregon  
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INTRODUCTION: Read Galatians 6:1-5  
*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

It is not uncommon for believers to suffer periods of time 'under burdens.' These burdens can be from personal temptations and sin or chronic ailments and illness. There are also burdens related to broken relationships. A difficult marriage can be a burden. Financial distress is a burden. Grief and sorrow is burdensome. Whatever our burden or burdens may be God has committed Himself to aid His people bearing burdens. He bids us to come to Him for help with our burdens and to expect that He will help us to bear them.

God promised to relieve the burdens of Israel:

Exodus 6:6-7

*"Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'"*

God promised to relieve the burdens of Moses:

Numbers 11:11-17

*So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now -- if I have found favor in Your sight -- and do not let me see my wretchedness!" So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone."*

God promises to relief to the righteous:

Psalm 55:22

*Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*

Christ promised relief to those who come to Him:

Matthew 11:28

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

Time and time again we see the Lord looking upon His people and their burdens, bringing relief or promising relief to them. God clearly bears the burdens of His people and provides relief.

Therefore, if we would be like God and imitators of God, then we must be those who relieve the burdens of other people. Indeed, the means that God uses often to relieve the burdens of others is by supplying other believers as burden bearers. God uses the ministry of fellow Christians in order to exercise His burden relieving benefit to His people. Though there are times when God directly, immediately, and even miraculously removes and bears the burdens of His people, His normal course of action is to employ the service and ministry of His people with and among His people to the same end - burden lifting.

Christians are those who have had burdens lifted and who have been used to lift burdens. They are those who have cast their burdens upon the Lord. They are also those who invite others to cast their burdens upon themselves for relief and aid.

#### OUTLINE:

- I THE COMMAND TO BEAR
- II WHAT IT IS THAT WE ARE TO BEAR?
- III THE MOTIVE FOR BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS
- IV IS THERE AN OBJECTION
- V THREE APPLICATIONS

#### I THE COMMAND TO BEAR: GALATIANS 6:2

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

The command is found in the first words - *bear (ye) one another's burdens.*

#### A The fact of the command:

We must notice that this is not a suggestion, but a command from God to His people. The verb is in the imperative mood - a commandment. As such it bears the weight of any commandment, e.g. any one of the ten commandments. Described in these opening words of verse 2 is a duty laid upon us by the Lord.

We must have the same attitude as that of God's people;  
Exodus 24:7

*Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people.  
And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."*

If we are obeying the Lord, then one of the things we ought to be able to do is point to burdens we have born for other believers.

#### B The nature of the command:

Not only is this a command to the people of God, but it is a present tense imperative. We are to be continually performing this task. It is not something we are to do once and consider it a completed obligation. As one burden is born successfully, we should be busy looking for another to bear on the behalf of our brethren. It should be characteristic of us.

C The meaning of the command:

The meaning of the word *bear* is to carry, support, or hold up. It does not mean merely to tolerate or endure something.

Mark 14:13

*And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him."*

The pitcher of water was not being endured or tolerated, but it was being carried.

John 19:17

*And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. . .*

This gives us the clear idea of a physical bearing.

This word is also used of non-physical burdens.

Matthew 8:17

*. . . that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."*

The word in Matthew 8 is obviously not a reference to the physical bearing of our sicknesses. The reference is to Christ's bearing of our spiritual diseases at Calvary for perfect healing there. (There is a sense in which this verse will have a physical fulfillment in the ultimate redemption of even our physical bodies by the provision of a new and resurrected one.)

Romans 15:1

*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

Here is an example of bearing with the limitations of others in the area of their conscience. [This seems to be an example of toleration and endurance as an expansion of the responsibility to actually carry or support one another.]

John 16:12

*"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."*

Act 9:15

*But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."*

This is a metaphorical use of the word to bear. Saul/Paul was to carry the name (work and gospel) of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, kings, and Israel.

Acts 15:10

*"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"*

This is the meaning of the command. It means to bear another's burden, to assist the brethren with reference to that burden, to ease the weight brought into your brethren's life. This is done by taking on a portion of that weight yourself in whatever way is appropriate, whether physical or spiritual.

D The subjects of the command:

The Greek verb includes the subject *-bear ye*. The subjects are the *you* and the *one another*. In other words all Christians are included in this command.

Here is a bit of a contrast. In verse one the restorative work of correction was to be accomplished by *ye which are spiritual*. However, verse 2 is directed to all Christians. The reference is to *you* without restriction as to maturity and spirituality. It is the responsibility of every Christian to be an on-going burden bearer.

The object of this ministry is summed up by the phrase *one another*. Those whose burdens are to be born, according to this verse, are your fellow Christians.

The extent to which we offer to carry the burdens of others will rest upon the limitation of our abilities as supplied by God. Our personal resources, our spiritual maturity, and our physical abilities come into play here. These factors are not equal in us all. To some God has given more than to others. Of those who are given more, more shall be expected.

Not every Christian is competent to bear every burden. The Lord supplies specific individuals with specific abilities to bear another's burden. Nevertheless, every Christian is to be a burden bearer to the extent the Lord allows.

## II WHAT IT IS THAT WE ARE TO BEAR: GALATIANS 6:2

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

Specifically we are told that we are to bear burdens. A burden is that which places a weight upon the one who bears it. It is that which produces stress and strain on the one bearing it.

A Physical:

It can be physical. For example when one is carrying in groceries a burden is being born. If we offer to carry some of those groceries we are actually complying with an important part of this command. Under the old covenant economy it was actually a rule that such assistance was to be offered.

Exodus 23:5

*"If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it."*

Physical assistance is certainly a fulfillment of this command.

Acts 3:2

*And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried (same Greek word), whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple. . .*

This is a clear and physical fulfillment of the command. We must never think little of helping another with respect to their physical burdens (washing dishes, watch another's children, fix someone's car, etc.).

**B Economic:**

People are often put under stress and strain as the result of economic and or financial burdens.

Paul saw that one way to relieve the economic burdens of others was by not becoming an economic burden to them.

**1 Thessalonians 2:6, 9**

*Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands (burdensome - same Greek Word) as apostles of Christ. . . . For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.*

Paul could have insisted that the Thessalonians support him and his ministry as an apostle, but he would not add to their burden. He actually lifted some of it by refusing support from them.

**Leviticus 25:35**

*'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help (relieve) him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.'*

**Proverbs 19:17**

*He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given.*

Here we have a very interesting point made. To lend to the poor is as if we have lent to the Lord. This is an example of the Lord's use of the resources of another in order to alleviate the burden of someone else. Though it is a Christian who proffers assistance, it is help from the Lord actually. Notice that this verse goes on to say that the Lord will actually make up the expenditure in some fashion.

When there is a legitimate economic burden among our brethren, it is our duty to lift that burden as much as we are able.

**C Personal:**

**1 Guilt:**

The burdens we are called to alleviate may be personal ones, such as guilt. By reminding our brother of the mercy of God, the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and of the grace He alone offers we can serve to lift the burden of guilt from him.

We can also lift the burden of guilt by forgiving that brother who has offended us. Or we can accomplish something similar by helping a brother be reconciled to another brother from whom he has become estranged.

## 2 Trials:

One of our brothers may undergo a difficulty or trial. We can help by assisting them in finding solutions to their trial. We can also help them gain a spiritual perspective regarding their trial and thereby alleviate some of its burden.

These personal trials can be in the category of sorrow. In this case we would weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). We can bring the comfort of God's promises.

To accomplish appropriate biblical burden-bearing we need to be observant. We need to look around us to determine what is the burden laid upon our brethren. Is it physical, personal, or economic? How can we help?

### III THE MOTIVE FOR BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS: GALATIANS 6:2

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

The motive is discovered to us in the last half of this verse - *and so fulfill the law of Christ*. When we bear each others burdens we are doing what Christ has commanded us to do. What is the command of Christ in this case?

John 13:34

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

The Galatians context reminds us of this commandment of Christ.

Galatians 5:13-14

*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Jesus is saying that we are not only to love our neighbor as we have loved ourselves, but we are now to love him as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). This command is repeated by Christ three times (John 13:34, 15:2, and 15:17). It is a strong command. We are to love others as Christ has loved us.

How has Jesus loved us? He loved us by bearing our burdens. He took upon Himself our greatest burden, the wrath of God.

1 Peter 2:24

*. . . who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- by whose stripes you were healed.*

Christ has set the example for us. Christ has given us a law to live by.

#### IV IS THERE AN OBJECTION:

Some would put off the bearing of other's burdens upon the complaint that they have too many burdens themselves to carry. Such an objection is the spirit of Cain - *I am not my brother's keeper*. But Christ has said that we are our brother's keeper.

##### 1 John 3:16

*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

Here we see that even the atoning and sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be an example we follow.

Though we will most likely not find ourselves called to Calvary for the sake of another, we will find that at times we are called to make a sacrifice for the benefit of others.

Often in the service of others and the alleviating of their burdens we will discover our own burdens lifted.

Often the burdens of others will show us how light our burdens are.

##### 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Paul would exhort us to employ the exercise of comparison in order to properly evaluate and estimate our own burdens here. How do they measure with respect to the things yet promised to us? Think of the afflictions suffered by Paul (stoned, cast out, etc.). Yet he calls those trials *light afflictions*.

Bearing the burdens of others benefits us in the evaluation of our own.

##### Romans 15:1

*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

Self-pleasing is the curse of our age and that of the present church.

##### Philippians 2:4

*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

It is imperative to become selfless if we would fulfill the commandment of Galatians 6:1. Everyone has burdens. The keeping of this commandment has abundant opportunity!

#### V THREE APPLICATIONS

A Church fellowship is given to us to provide opportunity to learn and share the burdens of others. Church fellowship provides a context for learning about the existing

burdens of others. It is how we can learn where ministry is needed. When coming to church we need to be observant and sensitive so that we can learn about burdens others are bearing.

Likewise, if we have burdens, the local church is a place to air them. We must not expect our brethren to be mind-readers. Honesty is a necessity. (How was your week? Fine - when it was actually difficult.)

Conversely, if we come and air our burden and no one assists, this is evidence of a lack of care. The intimacy and trust developed through church fellowship is necessary to the airing and meeting of burdens.

The proper and better context for the fulfillment of this verse is the local church.

- B We must learn to allow others to help us meet our needs. Some of our burdens are to be ours alone. Nevertheless, there are burdens which we do need help with from others. It does no good to give the appearance of self-sufficiency when we have a burden that requires assistance. Pride will often interrupt this commandment in its fulfillment.

Pastors are especially prone to this error. They feel as though they must have their burdens under control. They believe they should not demonstrate needs to others.

Ecclesiastes 4:9

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.*

This aloneness that is dangerous is fostered by absenteeism from church or by pride in us. The church is body.

- C We can all do something. The New Testament knows nothing of uninvolved Christians. Everybody can do something. This commandment is wide open to fulfillment in every Christian. Simply praying for one another is a sincere fulfillment of this commandment.

James 5:16

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

From the context of confessing to one another the ministry of praying for one another is commended to us.

By simply expressing concern and a desire to help we may benefit others. We can be used to locate assistance for others.

True faith actually helps others.

Matthew 25:35-36

*. . . 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

Are not the things listed here all burden-bearing things?

The reality of our faith is demonstrated by the assistance and concern we display towards others. The selfish are not saved.

We must carry this command to the Lord and ask that we would be burden-bearers.

Hymns # 318