

Title: Paul's Application of Justification in the life of the believer:
Living graciously in Christ bears one another's burdens.

Text: Galatians 6:1-5

Theme: A fruit of the Spirit is reaching out to the fallen in loving grace and seeking to restore them to wholeness in the body.

Introduction: Grace living manifests the fruit of burden bearing. If you have been following Paul's thinking, you will see the natural connections being made between what has been previously said and what is now being stated. "To walk by the Spirit is to support the weak and the fallen and to bear their burdens." (Johnson, *Galatians*, 6:1).

As a healthy body and loving family we will at times hurt. When this happens we will seek to minister to one another in the spirit of gentleness for the healing of the hurting and the loving of the rejected. This inter-body dynamic is a fruit of the Spirit.

Question, "How many different kinds of Christians are there in the world today?" Answer, "Only one, you are either **in Christ** or **in Adam**." Within the Galatian Church strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envying (5:19-21) was rampant. The body suffered because of sin. Instead of pulling together against the false brethren they were being pulled apart by the false brethren. The body began to congregate around personal preferences and perceived stereotyping. Paul called them to put aside all of the various categorizations and go back to the simple truth of what it means to be **in Christ**. The strength of His body is that there is only one body. When the body of Christ in general and this community of faith in particular stand united in Christ by loving one another, then the gates of hell will never prevail against her.

"Instead of the community Paul has established, where all were equal at the foot of the cross, all equally 'in Christ', all equally members of Abraham's family (3:26-29), the work of the 'agitators' had left a legacy of division based on non-theological factors." (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 75).

The word "overtaken" sets the tone for the entire study. "The word Paul uses (**paraptoma**) does not mean a deliberate sin; but a slip as might come to a man on an icy road or a dangerous path." (William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 53). "The passage refers to the believer being himself overtaken by sin, perhaps to his own surprise. This suggests the deceitfulness of sin in causing us to stumble before we realize fully the danger we are in. The element of surprise should be emphasized." (Earle, *Word Meanings*, 285). "Paul is excluding willful, deliberate sin." (Lenski, *Galatians*, 297). In our context it is speaking of those who are going back to self-works in their walk with God. They are falling back into legalism without even knowing it. When they do wake up they find themselves ensnared.

I would identify those in 6:1-5 differently than those in 5:19-21. Those in 6:1-5 need **restoration**. Those in 5:19-21 need **regeneration**.

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/ Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/ Application

Its Eternal Value:

Because of the bodies inter-connectedness we are to serve one another by a willingness to confront and be confronted.

The Problem:

Because we do not always know what to do with those who are caught in any trespass we have a tendency to ignore the problem. But ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

The Storyline:

Paul has confronted those who are caught in a trespass. His desire is to restore such an individual in their Christian experience. In his absence he is encouraging others to do likewise.

Questions:

1. What does 6:1 assume?
2. What is the relationship to 5:19-21 and 6:1? What might this tell us about those who are believers yet find themselves looking “fleshly?”
3. What does the idea of “caught” convey?
4. Who are the spiritual in verse 1?
5. What is to be our goal when confronting those who are caught in any trespass?
6. How should we approach those who are caught in any trespass?
7. Why this approach?
8. What are we to do according to verse 2?
9. Why are we to do this?
10. What is the relationship between 5:13-15 and 6:2?
11. Why does burden bearing fulfill the law of Christ? What is the law of Christ?
12. What are we if we think we are something when in reality we are nothing?
13. Could your assessment of yourself be wrong?
14. Where should our examination be focused? Why should we not compare ourselves with other people?

15. What is our responsibility in relation to others?
16. What responsibility do we have towards others inside our community of faith?
17. If I am going to assist those who are caught in any trespass, what should be my attitude and temperament?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the unity of the body and the power of the body to overcome all evil.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to serve one another in love.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of serving one another in love.

Outline:

Paul provides for us three statements concerning the ministry of burden bearing.

- I. The principle of living graciously in Christ when burden bearing (vv. 1-2).
 - A. The occasion for grace living in burden bearing (v. 1)
 1. Burden bearing is a family issue (“Brethren”)

“We are free because we are sons, and yet we are in bondage because we are brothers.” (Johnson, *Galatians*, 6:1). No man is an island that lives unto himself.

In Paul’s discussion of strong and weak faith in Romans 14, he exhorts the strong to bear the weaknesses of those without strength.

Romans 15:1 Now **we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength** and not just please ourselves.

This same principle is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

1 Thess. 5:14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, **help the weak**, be patient with everyone.

2. Burden bearing is necessary when anyone has been overtaken in a fault.

The grammatical structure (**ean kai** with the subjunctive) suggests a hypothetical situation or probability, but it does not mean it is a present reality. It is not saying it cannot happen only that it has not yet happened. This is in the passive voice. He is

being acted upon. This is like the man running for the end zone only to be tackled from behind. This is not the man of 5:19-21 who is manifesting a pattern throughout.

These are perhaps those Galatian believers who have been overtaken by false doctrine. However, I believe we should understand that Paul's concern is real and some within the church were caught off guard by the false brethren and were beginning to believe the lie. "In this context, the sinning brother was the Galatian Christian who had been cleverly deceived by the Judaizers (1:6; 5:8)." (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 177-178).

In having a discussion about the "deeds of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" it is easy to look at those who appear to be engaged in the flesh as not being a part of our community of faith. It is unfortunate but we have a tendency to begin with where we might end instead of beginning with a passion for Christ and His church and reaching out to the fallen with the intent of pulling them back into the boat.

B. The outworking of grace living in burden bearing (v. 1b)

1. Who is to be a burden bearer? ("you who are spiritual")

Some people do not believe they are "spiritual" enough to deal with problems. They find themselves asking the question, "Am I spiritual?" Well, Galatians 5:16-26 has answered the question for us. The saved are spiritual. Now you might not be mature enough to go with a spirit of gentleness, but you are spiritual enough.

"There is no hesitation or irony in Paul's use of this loaded term, and we have every reason to believe that the Galatians themselves approved of it and used it as a self-designation." (Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 296, 297).

I still question such phraseology as "A spiritual Christian" or "a carnal believer." Christians are spiritual and unbelievers are carnal. One author writes, "The term 'spiritual' underscores the fact that there are two kinds of Christians, those who are 'spiritual,' or mature, and those who are not. The 'spiritual' are those who are walking by the Spirit, as the apostle has just explained in 5:16-26." (Johnson, *Galatians*, 6:1). Such a dichotomy leaves the believer wondering if he is or is not walking by the Spirit. Such language makes the Christian life subjective and tentative, when it is objective and sure.

Can a Christian act carnally? Yes they can. Think of the reverse? And can an unbeliever act spiritual? Yes they can, but it is only an act. You and I as believers are spiritual and it is our responsibility as members of one body to assist those who are overwhelmed by their burden. We might not have all the necessary information and

experiences to minister to the overwhelmed as needed, but we are to function in that role as a burden bearer.

2. Why do we become a burden bearer? (“restore such a one”)

The word “restore” is very graphic. It is used in Matthew 4:21 of “nets being mended,” and in 1 Corinthians 1:10 of a body being “perfectly joined together,” and of “the worlds being framed together” (Hebrews 11:3). “The whole atmosphere of the word lays the stress not on punishment but on cure; the correction is thought of not as a penalty but as an amendment.” (Barclay, *Galatians*, 53).

“When Paul recommends to ‘restore’ the ‘transgressor,’ this implies, as Chrysostom has seen, limitations in that **the procedure does not include punishment or condemnation.**” ([emphasis added] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 297).

A believer that has been overtaken in an offense is a broken building, a disjointed body, a fleeced sheep, a soiled bride, and a withered branch. We should do whatever is necessary and possible to bring this individual back into completeness.

Illustration: Often when the old get together (I include myself) we talk about our broken bones, torn tendons and meandering minds. Such things are uncomfortable and inconvenient. When such things happen we immediately feel the effect on the whole body and we seek to fix the problem. This should be no less true in our body called the Church.

Love heals the hurting, provides hope to the despairing and wholeness to the dysfunctional.

Illustration: Remember when as a child you would skin your knee or hurt your hands? Remember your mother picking you up and kissing your hurt and speaking words of healing? Friend, love heals. Most of our problems could be solved with just a little love. All of our problems would benefit from the practice of unconditionally loving one another.

3. How is burden bearing to be done? (“In a spirit of gentleness”)

Can you not hear 5:23? (“But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness). What does it mean to be meek? It is not so much being docile or passive, but rather sensitive and sympathetic. This is a hallmark of Christianity. The manner in which we act should speak of a ‘spiritual one.’

“Paul seems keenly aware that a self-righteous posture of prosecutors can cause greater damage to the community than the offense done by a wrongdoer.” (Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 298).

4. Why is burden bearing to be done with a spirit of gentleness?

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul uses an example from the Old Testament to warn his Corinthian audience. His call is to assess accurately where you are in your fight against sin.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

It is so easy to forget that we are all but a “hair’s breadth” away from failure. And but for the grace of God we would be in the same boat as our fallen comrade. It is so easy to go from a burden bearer to biting and devouring.

When you minister to the hurting they are very vulnerable. The spirit of gentleness realizes the gravity of the situation and knows it has the power to “lord” it over the individual, yet acts with compassion and understanding.

C. The origin of burden bearing in grace living (v. 2)

Burden bearing is an expression of serving one another through love (5:13) and is thus a fulfillment of the law (5:14). The grace of God compels me to help. I do not have to, but I most surely want to.

It is my desire to . . .

- Preach the gospel to the poor
- Proclaim release to the captives
- Pronounce recovery of sight to the blind
- Set free those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18).

Paul shows the continuity between the law of Christ in 6:2 and that of the “Law” in 5:14. Do you really wish to keep the Law, do you truly desire to fulfill the law of Christ, then love one another in a manner that is not self-serving. Often our love is open and public when it should be quiet and unnoticeable. I love to see the body serve one another.

It is interesting to see how this idea opens up our Lord’s statement in the upper room when addressing His disciples.

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 12 **"This is My commandment, that you love one another,** just as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Notice the interplay between “commandments” plural and “commandment” singular. The totality of the “commandments” is summed up in this one “commandment” and it is that we love one another.

James also addresses the idea of “law” and that of “love” in James 2:8-13.

8 If, however, you are fulfilling **the royal law** according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. 9 But **if you show partiality, you are committing sin** and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by **the law of liberty**. 13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith’s “work” is to love God first and as a result of this to love one another. John likewise shows the relationship between loving God and loving one another in 1 John 3:7-11.

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but **an old commandment** which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 On the other hand, **I am writing a new commandment** to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9 **The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now**. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Not to bear one another’s burdens is a sign of unbelief. Bearing one another’s burdens is a fruit of the Spirit and is thus a sign of **in Christ**.

II. The perils of living graciously in Christ when burden bearing (vv. 3-4).

A. We come with the wrong spirit (v.1b ['spirit of gentleness'])

You come with a spirit that is judgmental, critical and proud.

B. We come with the wrong mindset (v. 3 ['if anyone thinks he is something'])

You come with the mindset of being the great deliverer riding on your white horse ready to solve everyone's problems . . . but your own. We are so prone to see ourselves in light of others that we become puffed up. "God does not grade on the curve." (MacArthur, *Galatians*, 181).

"You are deceiving yourself – but probably nobody else." (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 76). It is of interest to see this principle stated elsewhere in the Bible.

Proverbs 26:12 **Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?** There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;** but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. **Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

James 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not **merely hearers who delude themselves.**

We must come as Christ would come when seeking to assist those who are ensnared.

C. We come with the wrong perspective (v. 4)

You come wishing to remove the proverbial speck from someone's eye while you have a beam in yours. You come straining at the gnat while attempting to swallow the camel.

III. The pledge to live graciously in Christ when burden bearing (v. 5)

The pledge is not to become a preventable burden to the body. “Here is the paradox of genuine community living. All for each and each for all; but one cannot slide through, hoping that other people’s devotion and godliness will suffice, and that one does not need to worry about oneself. When it comes to my neighbor, I must be sure to remain humble if I offer help; when it comes to myself, I must recognize my own responsibility for my actions. ‘Bear one another’s burdens’ (verse 2) is balanced by ‘each of you must carry your own load’ (verse 5).” (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 76).

A distinction needs to be made between verses two and five. In verse two the word “burden” means “pressed down by a crushing weight” whereas in verse five it means, “Something carried.” “The word Paul uses is the word for a soldier’s pack.” (Barclay, *Galatians*, 53). “Putting the two verses together we get the thought clearly. When any Christian has an extra heavy, crushing burden – such as an unexpected illness, sudden death of a loved one, loss of home, financial pressures, or the like – other Christians should help to lift the pressing burden, lest it crush him to the ground. But that does not mean we are to shirk our regular responsibilities in life. We are to shoulder our own responsibilities and not push them off on others.” (Earle, *Word Meanings*, 286).

Everyone is to bear their own burden. It is when we see people being crushed by their burden that we need to come up alongside of them and assist them in the carrying of the burden.

There are three kinds of people. **First**, those who never seek help. They are so independent that they don’t think they need anyone. **Second**, those who are always seeking help. They are so dependent that they can never stand-alone. Both of these people are theologically weak and emotionally immature. And they are emotionally immature because they are theologically weak. **Finally**, there are those who see themselves as part of a healthy body and loving family.

By the way, if we committed ourselves to the 2 Timothy 2:2 process there would be fewer “catastrophic” failures within our family. Everyone here should have a mentor and a protégé. Everyone should be a teacher and a student of at least one person.

Life is going to be problematic. At times it can knock us down. It is then that we are to reach out and help the overwhelmed. That is a normal action and right. We should be there for each other in our moments of crisis. Sometimes we need long-term care and other times we just need help for the moment. But that is the embodiment of grace living in the lives of God’s people.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Paul is big on helping the hurting and strengthening the weak (Rom. 14, 15:1-7).
2. Who among you is being crushed by the weight of life?
3. Who among you can you come alongside of to help?
4. Who do you need to be praying for and encouraging?
5. Be careful how harshly you treat those who find themselves in bondage to any addiction. Sin always takes us further than we wish to go, it will cost us more than we wish to pay, and keep us longer than we wish to stay. What starts as a small pleasure soon becomes a consuming prison.
6. God never intended you to go it alone. WBC is a grace-based fellowship. We do not shoot our wounded or seek to conform you into our image. We believe Jesus Christ is enough. I would strongly encourage you to become a part of this loving family.