INTRODUCTION

Larger context: 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. [2] Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. [3] For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. [4] But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. [5] For each will have to bear his own load. (ESV)

So, I really wanted to start here, remembering the importance of the body of Christ, as we get to our main text for this morning, Galatians 6:2:

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

The “rugged individualist,” that loner type, is not how we’re to be as Christians. We’re not meant to be Lone Ranger believers. Scripture is full of exhortations for us to be active participants of the body of Christ. We aren’t meant to worship alone, and we aren’t meant to bear our burdens alone. Even when the Spirit of God exposes our sin we need one another. Look at verse 1.

V.1 reads; "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."

What does that look like? See 2 Corinthians 2:5-9

Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. [6] For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, [7] so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. [8] So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. [9] For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.

Forgive

Comfort

Love (reaffirmed)

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to describe the importance of the body of Christ for our healthy existence. See 1 Corinthians 12:21–26 (ESV)

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so
composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

- "If one member is honored, all rejoice together."

V.2a BEARING ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS

- Return now to Galatians 6. The first part of Galatians 6:2 reads, “Bear one another’s burdens.” These words are like shorthand for how to live our Christian life.

  - Let’s start with the words “one another’s.” **The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone.**

  - How important is this? The Holy Spirit intended for us to really grasp the importance of "one another" in Scripture. In the New Testament, **“one another” appears 100 times in 94 different verses. 60 percent of those are written by Paul in his letters.**

    - One-third of those references deal with the unity of the church. And another third deal with love.

    - You can look them all up. We won’t go through them all now. But I’m sure many will come to mind. Love one another, serve one another, be kind to one another … greet one another with a holy kiss. (We don’t seem to obey that one …)

    - And the command to bear one another’s burdens clearly also tells us that we are not to bear our burdens alone. We’re to both bear one another’s burdens, and to allow others to bear ours with us. This is why we’re the body. This is why we’re the church.

- So … what exactly is a burden?

  - Quite literally, a burden is a load, especially a heavy load. We think of beasts of burden, like donkeys or mules or camels or oxen, that are trained to carry a heavy load.

  - But in this passage, the burden is more than a literal weight. It’s feeling the weight of something that is a great concern to us.

- And we all have burdens.

  - **Physical Health**

    - **For some of us, it may be a health issue.** An illness, an injury, that may be chronic, that may be debilitating, that may be very painful. We all may have seasons of sickness that really knock us flat. And if our loved ones are sick or injured, it can be a real concern and a source of some worry. A sick or injured child is a great concern to a parent. An ailing older parent is a great concern to the family.

  - **Depression**

    - **Others of us may have emotional burdens.** It is not uncommon for a Christian, who knows in his or her mind that we should be joyful in the Lord and should not be anxious about anything, to have depression or anxiety. Well known Christians such as Charles Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis, and John Bunyan have suffered through
serious bouts of depression. These can be spiritual or medical.

- Spurgeon wrote, “I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for.” And, “I am the subject of depression so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to. But I always get back again by this—I know that I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him, and if He falls, I shall fall with Him. But if He does not, I shall not. Because He lives, I shall live also, and I spring to my legs again and fight with my depressions of spirit and get the victory through it. And so may you do, and so you must, for there is no other way of escaping from it.”

- **Anxiety**
  - None of us is immune to anxiety. Not if we’re honest with ourselves. Another Spurgeon quote, which I had posted in my office for many years: “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”
  - Just knowing that quote doesn’t prevent anxiousness. We probably all remember Jesus from the sermon on the mount (See Matthew 6:25–34)
    25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
  - 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- **FEAR: We can have other emotional burdens.** Fear is a “sidekick” of anxiety. We may fear a medical diagnosis, the collapse of the stock market, the rejection of a friend, or a nuclear bomb in Iran. We fear things that we have no ability to control rather than trusting that God is in control.
  - What other emotional burdens? Anger? Hate? I don’t know what emotional burden you might have. But it can be a real weight. An obstacle to joy and peace.

- **MONEY: Money can be another burden.** Unemployment. Unexpected bills. A car or appliance that breaks down. When money is tight, even what some might consider to be a small occurrence can be devastating.
• **SIN:** Sin can be a burden, and the guilt that may come with it. We can have brothers and sisters who get caught under the crushing weight of sin. Is it lust? Unforgiveness? Coveting?
  - Christians can be caught up in besetting sin that rob them of joy and are heavy weights on them.

• So we all have burdens. I don’t know what burden you carry. And I’m sure that I didn’t mention every sort of burden we have among us.

• **We can’t carry them alone.** Jesus is here to carry our burdens, and He uses His church as part of the means of carrying them.

• **So... what does it mean to BEAR**

  • **1 Peter 2:24-25** 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. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
  
  • One writer described "bearing" or "to bear" this way: “to take upon our shoulders as our own burdens, and thereby help him to bear; this includes, in some circumstances, the lightening of them; in others, their entire removal.”
    - to hold up; support
    - to hold or remain firm under (a load)
    - to bring forth (young); childbearing
    - to produce by natural growth: a tree that bears fruit.
    - to hold up under; be capable of
    - to press or push against
    - to hold or carry (oneself, one’s body, one’s head, etc.):
      - to bear oneself erectly.

• **How can we take the burdens of our brothers and sisters upon ourselves?**
  
  • There are many ways we can help carry one another's burdens:
    - Jesus wants those who have received mercy to be mercy givers.
    - Matthew 18:33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'
      - Maybe it’s your time. If you make time to serve your brothers and sisters, you may make a huge impact.
      - Maybe it’s financial. Our dollars can make a great difference, even if they are a small amount to us.
      - Maybe it’s something else. If you are an expert in something, you can lend your expertise. Your muscle.
      - Maybe it’s prayer.
      - Maybe it’s sharing in their tears. Romans 12:15: weep with those who weep.
      - Maybe it’s a timely word from Scripture.
Maybe it’s a ride to an appointment or to work.
Maybe it’s a meal for a family who has lost a loved one, or gained a new child, or has dealt with serious illness.
Sometimes it’s just a kind word at the right time.

**V.2b AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST**

- But what does Paul mean by, “and so fulfill the law of Christ”?
- I guess it would help if we define the law of Christ.
- So let’s look at a larger section of Galatians (See Galatians 5:13–6:2 (ESV) :
  - 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.
  - 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. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

**Note how this larger context begins and ends.**
- It begins with verses 5:13 and 14
  - 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- It ends with 6:2
  - Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

- 5:13 Through love serve one another
- 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens

**The law of love IS the law of Christ.**
- The fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of the law of Christ brought by the Holy Spirit.
- Let’s look at some parallel verses to support that.
  - John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
  - Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
  - 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.
  - 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.
  - 1 Thess 4:9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another
The pattern of Christ is a love that is sacrificial. A love that is totally "other-focused". As Paul wrote:

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This truly is cross-shaped love. Without love, we are nothing. Without Christ, we really cannot know love. We as Christians love, because He first loved us.

Eph 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This imitation of God, this imitation of Christ -- this following of the law of Christ or the pattern of Christ -- is only made possible through the Holy Spirit, who has come to dwell in each of those who have been born again.

You must know and believe that Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again to take His church home – home to a new heavens and new earth where pain, sorrow, suffering and sin are all gone. You must turn from your sins and repent and believe this good news. You who may now still be dead in trespasses and sins may be made alive in Christ.

CONCLUSION

So what is the law of Christ and how do we fulfill it?

Bearing one another's burden fills up the law of Christ.

Bearing one another's burdens is the law of love.

Bearing one another's burdens imitates the One who bore all our burdens on the cross.

Do you have broad shoulders? Bear someone's burdens today.

Are you weary and heavy laden? Turn to Christ. And turn to His church to help carry your load.

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