

Text: Gal 6.2

Last week we looked at Galatians 6.1, “The Brother Overtaken in a Fault.”

This week we are in Galatians 6.2:

The Brother Overcome by a Burden

Let’s recall Constable’s outline:

- I. Introduction 1:1–10
- II. Personal defense of Paul’s gospel 1:11–2:21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1–4:31
 - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
 - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1–6:10
 - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
 - 1. Living without the Law 5:1–12
 - 2. Living without license 5: 13-15
 - 3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16–26
 - B. Responsibilities of the Christian life 6:1–10
 - 1. Toward sinning Christians 6:1
 - 2. Toward burdened Christians 6:2–5¹

We will take just one step into the next point of Constable’s outline, thinking now about our responsibilities “toward burdened Christians.”

Since we have salvation by faith, we live without the law, without license, and by the Holy Spirit.

But we don’t live only to ourselves, we live towards others, so we restore fallen brothers and we bear up burdened brothers.

From last week: “Now Paul shifts to the corporate side of the Christian life and looks at believers as part of a family with responsibilities to one another. The first verse stresses the negative side, restoring those who have fallen into sin. Verse 2 looks at the positive, helping those who have fallen on hard times. In verse 3 Paul addresses the opposite of those who bear

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Galatians, Introduction, Outline.

other's people burdens, those whose concern is only for themselves."²

Bearing up burdened brothers is our theme today.

I. The burden-bearing burden

The commentaries provide a lot of discussion on this verse, especially the first part.

A. The difference between burdens and faults

1. Some commentators see little difference

- a. V. 1 = restoration
- b. V. 2 = prevention

2. Faults = sins; burdens = every weight that can oppress us

Among the Gks, the "main figurative meaning" saw this weight as "suffering" due to this word's "oppressive or burdensome nature."

1. Could refer to "afflictions of the body": sickness, injury
2. Could refer to "afflictions of the soul": oppression, depression, misery³

What we have here is a much broader term.

3. A helpful comment on meaning of term

"The word for 'burden' (*baros*) means literally 'a heavy weight or stone' someone is required to carry for a long distance. Figuratively it came to mean any oppressive ordeal or hardship that was difficult to bear."⁴

² Grant R. Osborne, *Galatians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 197.

³ Gottlob Schrenk, "Βάρος, Βαρύς, Βαρῆω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 554.

⁴ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: B&H, 1994), 413.

B. Not a repetition of verse 1, but an extension of responsibility

1. Yes, we should try to help a fallen brother get to his feet
2. Here, though, we are to help a staggering brother keep his feet

C. Reasons why burden-bearing is a need

1. Burdens are real:

“Creation itself is broken and groaning, and believers groan with it...”⁵

2. Self-sufficiency is a myth:

The Stoics are famous for desiring to develop personal strength so that nothing moved them. They called this *apatheia* (apathy): “a studied aloofness from pleasure and pain, and self-sufficiency, the ability to brave the harsh elements of life without dependence upon others.”⁶

Seneca: “The primary sign of a well-ordered mind is a man’s ability to remain in one place and linger in his own company.”⁷

“The myth of self-sufficiency is not a mark of bravery but rather a sign of pride.”⁸

D. The solution: the mutuality of the Christian brotherhood

1. A Scriptural example, 2 Cor 7.5-6

2 Cor 7.5-6 ¶ For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

⁵ George, *Galatians*, 413.

⁶ George, 413.

⁷ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 2; quoted in Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, vol. 3, 10 vols., The Story of Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944).

⁸ George, 413–14.

2. A Church Covenant example:

“To walk in love toward those with whom we stand connected in the bonds of Christian fellowship. As the effect of this, we will pray much for one another. As we have opportunity, we will associate together for religious purposes. Those of us who are in more comfortable situations in life than some of our brethren, with regard to the good things of Providence, will administer as we have ability and see occasion, to their necessities. We will bear one another’s burdens, sympathize with the afflicted in body and mind, so far as we know their case, under their trials; and as we see occasion, advise, caution, and encourage one another. We will watch over one another for good. We will studiously avoid giving or taking offenses. Thus we will make it our study to fulfill the law of Christ.... These things, and whatever else may appear enjoined by the Word of God, we promise in the strength of divine grace to observe and practice. But knowing our insufficiency for anything that is spiritually good, in and of ourselves, we look up to him who giveth power to the faint, rejoicing that in the Lord we have not only righteousness but strength. Hold thou us up, O Lord, and we shall be safe! Amen!”⁹

II. The Christ-glorifying consequence

A. Some confusion on “the Law of Christ”

1. Reformed thinkers suggest it is the continuance of the OT Moral Law: but Paul is arguing against the Mosaic Law in Galatians
2. Better is a dispensational approach
 - a. The Mosaic Law is set aside
 - b. The Law of Christ is in its place
 - 1) Different character (legality vs. graciousness)

⁹ “The Church Covenant of the Particular Baptist Church, meeting in the Horse Fair, Stony Stratford, Bucks,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 3 (1926): 41–44; reprinted in C. W. DeWeese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 129–30, cited in George, *Galatians*, 415.

- 2) Different motivations (external discipline vs. internal transformation)
- 3) Not saying “no grace” in Moses, nor “no law” under Christ

“Residents of the United States live under a code of laws that is similar to, but different from, the code of laws that govern residents of England. Some of our laws are the same as theirs, and others are different. Because some laws are the same we should not conclude that the codes are the same.”¹⁰

B. Defining the law of Christ

Gal 5.14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

Jn 13.34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

C. Fulfilling the Law of Christ

1. By burden bearing
2. By the principle of mutuality

The genius of the “church as body” (1 Cor 12) metaphor is the mutual love of members of the body.

Conclusion:

The life lived in close fellowship with the Spirit just automatically wants involvement with others in the body, especially when they are hurting or carrying a heavy load.

- If the Covid crisis taught us nothing else, it taught us how important our church family is.

When the body suffers, we all suffer, and we simply want to do what we can to get our shoulders under the burden to take a little weight off one another.

This is the Christian ethic and the Christian way of life.

¹⁰ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Gal 6.2.