

Galatians 5:26-6:5

Fulfilling the Law of Christ

Introduction: Paul has just sketched out what life should be like if people are lining up with the spirit; now he applies this to the church's own inner life. It's no wonder that Paul follows up walking in freedom and the growing the fruit of the Spirit with the practical application of bearing one another's burdens - The greatest manifestation of our freedom in Christ, or our life in the Holy Spirit is our expression of Love. Jesus himself said, **“Love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

The gospel creates a whole new self-image (5:26, 6:3-5) which is not based on comparisons with others. Only the gospel makes us neither self-confident nor self-disdaining, but both bold and humble. That works itself out in relationships with everyone.

Therefore the first and great evidence of our walking by the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit is not some private mystical experience of our own, but our practical relationships of love with other people. And since the first fruit of the Spirit is love, this is only logical.

But it's easy to talk about love in an abstract and general way; it is much harder to get down to concrete, particular situations in which we actually demonstrate our love for one another.

"It is easier to be enthusiastic about humanity with a capital "H" than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, ... exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular." -CS Lewis

1. How the Gospel Frees me from me.

1. **“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another....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.”**

2. I've read through the book of Galatians many times, and still almost every time I get confused about what Paul says here in this section. As we go through it now I think it becomes more clear when we take out vs 1-2 and deal with them separately.
3. Paul exhorts the Galatians to beware of, or to stop, being conceited.
 1. The Greek word translated "*conceit*" is "*kenodoxoi*," which means literally "vain-glorious" or "empty of honor." Conceit is a deep insecurity, a perceived absence of honor and glory, with a related need to prove our worth to ourselves and others. This in turn fixates our mind on comparing ourselves with others. When we seem better than someone else in some trait, our "honor-hunger" puffs us up and overly elates us. When we seem to be inferior to someone else, we are devastated for the same reason.
 1. This Paul says in vs 3, "**For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**" That means that not only is conceit a false honor, it's also delusional. We aren't thinking about ourselves correctly. This is because we are trying to find worth, glory, honor or security where it cannot be found, in ourselves, or in the praises of others.
 2. Paul says this will result, in either provoking one another - literally challenging one another to a contest; or to envying one another. Which is jealousy.
 3. Paul isn't just telling the Galatians to knock off this behavior but showing that it has no place in the life of the Christian.
 1. Everyone of us deals with this. Either we have a superiority complex or we have an inferiority complex, and some of us have both. Always comparing ourselves whether to make ourselves feel better about ourselves or never feeling that we are good enough, smart enough, strong enough, pretty enough, etc. But the work of the gospel takes away this self absorbed state.
 4. The gospel creates a whole new self-image which is not based on comparisons with others. Only the gospel makes us neither self-confident nor self-disdaining, but both bold and humble.
 1. The gospel takes away all self confidence (pride) because we realize that before God we are guilty of sin and deserving his just wrath and judgment.

1. It humbles me before anyone, telling me I am a sinner saved only by grace. I was so sinful that Jesus had to die for my salvation.
2. But it emboldens me before anyone, telling me I am loved and honored by the only eyes in the universe that really count. I am so loved by Jesus that he was willing to do die for me. So the gospel gives a boldness and a humility that do not eat each other up, but can grow together.
 1. Christian, will you nurse your pride when he emptied himself of his own glory to save you???
 2. Christian, will you criticize, demean, compare, and hate yourself when Christ paid the ultimate price for you - and now gives you his love and approval???
 1. (This seeming paradox of boldness and humility will be crucial for understanding this section vs 1-10)
3. It is only when we have grasped the depth of the gospel in our own hearts that we will be humbled enough to do what God calls us now to do and be, and simultaneously be bold (secure) enough to do it without fear of what people will think, say, and do in response.
 1. Tim Keller comments, “Practically speaking, you have to use the gospel by preaching it to yourself right in the midst of the situations where you are trying to act in newness of life. If, for example, you find yourself being very defensive around someone, you must use the gospel at that very moment, saying, “What you think of me is not the important thing. Jesus Christ’s approval of me, not yours, is my righteousness, my identity, my worth.”
 2. When the Gospel is the sole shape of my identity and worth we will do as Paul says in vs.4-5 **“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.”** Now we can view and assess ourselves correctly.

2. How I Fulfill the Law of Christ

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.”

1. It is only when we have begun to find our identity in the gospel that we can truly fulfill this call. (and might I add -please don't try to do work for God, until you have been so enamored with his work on the cross for you, that you want to love others as a response of gratefulness). It is only through the gospel that we will truly see one another as brothers and sisters to be helped, loved and encouraged, instead of rivals to be jealous of and compete against.
2. Paul is calling the Galatian church to practice this outworking of the gospel, this love for one another, the fruit of the Spirit, in a very specific way - **“if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”**
 1. Again, only if our hearts have been changed by the gospel will we have the right gentleness and humility to confront sin properly, and only if we are emboldened by God's view of us will we be able to speak the truth even when it's hard or unpopular.
 2. When Paul says, “those who are Spiritual” - he means those who are living by the Spirit. He is not referring to some super spiritual group of elite Christians, or to the leadership or elders of the local church; he is saying to ordinary, everyday Christians: if you follow the desires of the Spirit, you will do this. This responsibility belongs to anyone who is trying to live a Christian life at all.
 3. Going back a moment to the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Christians are called by God to see that one another walk in that new way of life -life in the Spirit. If we see a brother or a sister in a sin, or in a pattern that looks more like the works of the flesh than the fruit of the Spirit - we not only confront, but help one another, remind each other of the gospel, applying it to the particular situation.
 4. What is the aim? To restore gently. The greek translated “restore” was a term used for setting a dislocated

bone back into place. A dislocated bone is extremely painful, because it is not in its design, natural relationship to the other parts of the body. To put a bone back in place will inevitably cause pain, but it is healing pain. It means we are to confront, even when that will be painful, but our confronting must be aiming to prompt a change of life and heart. Confronting someone caught in sin is a way to carry each others burden's, but not the only way.

2. Paul said earlier: **“serve one another in love” (5:13) [for] “the entire law is...love your neighbor” (5:14) And (6:2) “bear one another’s burdens” (6:2a) “so fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2b).** So the law of Christ is the law summed up as “love-your-neighbor”. Why would the law of love be called the law of Christ? It is because Christ is the ultimate and unsurpassable example of this kind of love. In short, we are to love others as Christ loved us (John 13:34; Eph. 4:32). Though the whole Old Testament law could be summed up in the command to love, it is Jesus’ life and death that become the supreme embodiment of what this love should be.
 1. “When we look at his life and attitude and all his dealings, we have, in a sense, “a law,” a breath-taking model of the kind of life we should live.” -Tim Keller
3. This also means that bearing burdens is parallel to serving one another. What does this tell us? It brings the lofty concept of love down to earth. It means that we are not to let people carry their loads alone. -A burden of course can be anything. It can be a simple responsibility, like raising a child or renovating a living space. Or it can be a difficulty, a problem.
 1. By characterizing the responsibilities and problems of life as “burdens,” Paul very vividly and practically teaches how a Christian relates to others. To help with a burden, one must come very close to the burdened person, standing virtually in their shoes, and putting one’s own strength under the burden so its weight is distributed on both of you, lightening the load of the other. So in the same way, a Christian must listen and understand, and physically, emotionally, spiritually, take up some of the burden with the other person. This is exactly what Jesus has done for us - he moved in close to us, became one of us,

stood in our shoes, took our place and our punishment at the cross- now we are to follow in his steps.

Conclusion: It's interesting that Paul equates "bearing one another's burden's (love for neighbor) with, "the Law of Christ". Remember the whole question that was being debated among the Galatians was whether or not they had to observe the whole law and be circumcised. Paul, probably jabbing at the false teachers, says, If you want to be zealous for Law, be zealous for this law - the Law of Christ! To fulfill the "law of Christ" means to submit the whole of our life to the model of Christ out of grateful joy. It is a life centered on a person rather than a code. We have a different kind of obligation upon us than we did before. Now, we bear others' burdens because Christ bore ours. Thus v.2 could be paraphrased: "Bear others' burdens, and thus follow in the footsteps of Christ, who bore yours."