

14 December 2014

Bear one another's burden & fulfill the law of Christ.

(Part 1 Bear one another's burden)

There are various "laws" identified in Scripture, among them is the law of Moses (which is written in a book – Josh.8: 31), and the law of Christ (Gal.6: 2), and the law of sin (Rom.7: 25).

Today we are not required to obey the law of Moses (all 613 laws in the Old Testament) to achieve righteousness (Jer.38: 20), because Christ "is the end of the law for righteousness" (Rom.10: 4).

Man is unable to obey the law of Moses because his flesh desires to obey the law of sin, yet for those that are saved they desire to serve the law of Christ.

The only occurrence of the phrase "law of Christ" is in Gal.6: 2 where the Lord says, ""Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." But what does it mean to "bear ye one another's burdens"? If we can understand what it means, we would know how to fulfill the law of Christ.

Let us look at the meaning of the word "bear", and "burden", and then we will look at the context of their setting in Gal.6: 1–6. The Greek word for bear in Gal.6: 2 is "bastazo" which is also translated "carry", and "take up". The Greek word for "burden" in Gal.6: 2 is "biros" which is also translated "burdensome" and "weight". The meaning of the word "bear" (in the context of our verse) is "to carry", which is also apparent in other verses (Num.7: 9 and 1Sam.17: 7). When something bears something else it carries the weight, as the staves and rings carried the weight of the ark in Ex.37: 5. Now let us consider the setting of verse 2 from Galatians chapter 6.

Verse one begins with "Brethren", so we know that this counsel, this instruction is for believers in the church.

The verse continues, "if a man be overtaken in a fault", hence the verse is speaking of a brother that has sinned (see James 5: 16).

The verse continues, "ye which are spiritual", indicates they are believers who "walk in the Spirit" (Gal.5: 16). These spiritually minded men are required to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness...lest thou also be tempted" (Gal.6: 1).

Then we have our verse (Gal.6: 2) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

So how do we fulfill the law of Christ? By bearing one another's burdens. How do we carry our brother's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ? In this study we will answer this question by providing four points; (1) think nothing of ourselves, and (2) forgive our brother when he sins against us, and (3) suffer ourselves to be defrauded, and (4) carry our own burden.

Let us add a little more details to our points:-

1. We bear a brother's burden when we do not think anything of ourselves.

Gal.6: 3 "For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

See also Rom.12: 3.

This point sets the stage for subsequent points in this study because before we can do anything to assist our brother we first need an attitude of lowliness, rather than lifting ourselves up. Because when we lift ourselves up when we are nothing, we deceive ourselves, and by lifting ourselves up we put our brother down. When this takes place we disobey Paul's instruction to the church, where he says, "but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil.2: 3).

So when we lift up ourselves, when we think more highly of ourselves than we should, when we think ourselves to be something when we are nothing, then we deceive ourselves, and we are in **no** position to bear our brother's burden, because we are too busy putting him down and lifting ourselves up. Rather, we should think of ourselves to be lowly, esteem our brothers more highly than ourselves, and then we are ready to bear our brother's burden.

We have used Mohammed Ali as an illustration before, but for this point we could use anyone who calls himself "the greatest". Because there is no room in such a man's heart for anyone other than himself. There is no room for a brother, nor room for his god if his heart is proud. The scriptures remind us that those who lift up themselves "will I not suffer" (Ps.101: 5), and if you think that those are strong words, then consider Prov.16: 5 "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord". In other words pride or a high look "is sin" (Prov.21: 4). And to prove that there is **nothing** good that comes from a proud heart, turn to Prov.28: 25 where it is recorded that "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife". So **nothing** good comes from a proud, arrogant heart that lifts a man above his brother, for the ultimate goal of such a heart is to devise strife,

and we cannot bear our brother's burden when we are inwardly seeking to put him down and stir up strife.

So how do we carry our brother's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ? When we do not think anything of ourselves, when we do not put ourselves above others, and we have a greater chance of doing that when we esteem our brothers greater than ourselves. Let us remember to think nothing of ourselves and so make ourselves available to bear our brother's burdens.

## 2. We bear a brother's burden when we forgive him.

Gal 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

See also Matt.18: 21 & 22.

Our verse uses the word "restore", which when we compare scripture with scripture (Lev.6: 4 & 5) and the context of our verse, we can see that restoration is part of forgiveness. Then we consider the teachings of the Lord Jesus about forgiving a brother, and we see that we are to forgive our brother "seventy times seven" (Matt.18: 22). Matt.18: 35 indicates that if our brother sins against us and we "from our hearts forgive not every one his brother his trespasses", then our "heavenly Father" shall "do also unto you". Now if you want to get tangled in a verse today, just try applying that one (in Matthew) to today, and ask yourself where in the Pauline epistles to the church does Paul say forgiveness of our sins is conditional on us forgiving our brother's sins. In short, our forgiveness takes place when we repent and do so in our heart, when we believe that our sin is on Christ, then **all** of our sins are washed in His blood. But given that all scripture is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Tim.3: 16), let us receive encouragement from the words of the Lord in the gospel of Matthew and forgive our brother when he sins against us. For when we do so, we bear, we carry our brother's burden.

But how can we carry our brother's burden, how can we forgive our brother's fault if he does not articulate his transgression? Why the question? Because often we hear brothers ask for forgiveness, and the other will accommodate his request, yet there has been little or no explanation of the transgression. And we see that among the heathen as well, where they teach their children to say "I am sorry" but often with little or no knowledge of what the child is saying sorry for. So how does a man carry his brother's burden? How does he bear with him who has been overtaken in a fault, if the fault has not been acknowledged, and forgiveness sought for that specific sin? If the words "I am sorry" and "you are forgiven" are spoken without acknowledgement of the sin then the words carry little meaning. Once we know of the transgression, once it is acknowledged that we have sinned before our brother, then forgiveness can be asked for, forgiveness extended and the sinful brother restored, all with an attitude of meekness, lest we ourselves are tempted. When we forgive our brother and restore him we bear our brother's burden.

## 3. We bear a brother's burden when we suffer ourselves to be defrauded.

1Cor 6:7 "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather [suffer yourselves to] be defrauded?"

We move away from the book of Galatians to 1Corinthians, where we see Paul pointing out to the church a fault. The error is they "go to law one with another" ( they take their brother to court) for a wrong they have done against them. That might not appear on the surface to be a bad thing, but for those in the body of Christ we are **not** to take our brother to court, but rather we are to take the wrong against us. And if you missed what that meant, then in the same verse Paul says it slightly differently, where he says "suffer yourselves to be defrauded". So even though we may be right, and our brother wrong, in God's eyes we are **not** to take our brother to court, because they are our family. Rather, we are to take the wrong, and suffer ourselves for their wrong. I suggest to you that although the passage in 1Cor.6 does not include, as part of the context, bearing our brother's burden, it plausible to make the link, because the end-result in taking the wrong is that we bear his burden. Therefore, if we do what Paul teaches in 1Cor.6: 4 and take our brother's wrong rather than taking them before a civil judge, we bear his burden and in doing so fulfill the law of Christ.

Have any of you been a member of a church where one of the brethren have taken another to court? I have not, and I have not heard of it happening in New Zealand, but clearly it happens in other countries. According to the peacemaker website, "There was a time when few people would even consider suing a church. Those days are long gone. Thousands of churches are sued every year in the United States, usually by their own members" (<http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBlpH/b.5474493/>). That is sad, but understandable when Satan is seeking to deceive and destroy the church of God, when believers no longer have a written authority. What would happen in such instances? There would be confusion, division, and a lack of order. And according to the Scriptures, God is a God of order because that is what he requires of the believers (1Cor.14: 40), He is not a God of confusion (1Cor.14: 33), and it is the devil that divides a church (because division is carnal – 1Cor.3: 3), not God. Whereas, the scriptures say that given that the saints will judge the world (1Cor.6: 2) and the angels (verse 3), why do they go before the courts of the land to sort our issues? Are we unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (verse 2). Paul sets out church order when we have such an issue (verse 4–5), we are to appoint those who are "least esteemed in the church" to judge such matters, and then he goes on to ask "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" Then we have our verse, where Paul says "there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another." And we are to take the wrong.

Now if we adopt the order that Paul sets out I suggest that we carry our brother's burden, we bear our brother's wrong, when we suffer ourselves to be defrauded, rather than taking him to court. But as we see from the examples in the US, there are many brethren who choose not to adopt the order by which to conduct their church, according to the scriptures. But when we do, there is less likelihood of confusion, division and defrauding our brother, and more opportunity to bear our brother's burden when we suffer ourselves to be defrauded, when we take the wrong.

#### 4. We bear a brother's burden when we carry our own burden.

Gal.6: 5 "For every man shall bear his own burden."

For our final point we go back to the book of Galatians. Our verse Gal.6: 5 at first glance looks like a contradiction of our first three points, where we have indicated that when we bear a brother's burden we fulfill the law of Christ. So why would Paul make this statement in Gal.6: 5 after saying that we are to bear one another's burdens? Why would he say, "bear one another's burdens" then in the later verse say that each man is to bear his own burden? The preceding verse helps us to answer this question; verse 4 says, "But let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another".

When a man is sure in his own work for the Lord, when he has proved beyond doubt to himself that what he is doing is of God, he will have rejoicing in his heart. And I suggest that when he is in that state of mind he is in the best possible place to bear another brother's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. In other words, sort out your own walk with God first, before trying to help another brother with theirs.

We see this wisdom when a backslidden brother spends his day being caught up with the things that burden him. Their whole life is their worries, they have little or no time for others that need help with their burdens, so they often do not see the burdens that their brethren are carrying, or they do not have the head space to put any thought into them, so they do nothing. Hence, how do we work out any apparent contradiction here in Paul's teaching? We assert the logic of dealing with our own burdens first, bearing them, taking them to the cross each day and walking stronger each day, and being fed good godly food, **before** we seek to bear another's burdens. So when we are skillful in bearing our own burden we are better prepared to bear another brother's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Having said what we have said let us say it again. In this our first study on the topic of carrying our brother's burdens, we have asked; how do we carry our brother's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ? In answering this question we have covered four points: (1) think nothing of ourselves, and (2) forgive our brother when he sins against us, and (3) suffer ourselves to be defrauded, and (4) carry our own burden.