

Bearing Burdens

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[0 : 0 0] I like this evening for a few minutes just to focus on one verse in the chapter we read together from Galatians chapter 6 and it's from verse 2 which is, Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

I want to look at that this evening in the light of us celebrating the Lord Supper and the importance of recognising that we don't do that privately for a reason. We don't just take bread and wine whenever we want it on our own to get a kind of mystical boost. The Lord Supper is something we do together for a reason and there's a reason we just share the cups and there's a reason that we just have one bread because we're part of His people and we're part of His people together and the Lord Supper is the ultimate expression of that and it is something that is to be enjoyed corporately and we'll sit at the Lord Supper this evening and there'll be, I don't doubt people carrying many burdens. There'll be people who are feeling unloved, insecure, unwell, full of doubt, broken, oppressed, not even be some that are happy. Good Presbyterians. But you know if we're realistic you'll probably find that these are realities for us and that many people are struggling their Christian lives and very often we are not taking Christ into these things. Our

Christ is a theoretical saviour and we enjoy all the theological truth about Him but He remains outside of our experience and He is not the BAM of Gilead that we need. He's not the healing power that we feel we need. We're looking for something else. I want to speak just for a moment about this passage which speaks about our burdens being lifted and the Law of Christ. It's great, I love this whole concept of the Law of Christ here because we generally have negative understanding in many ways or even legalistic understanding of law but we know that Christ very clearly defined the Law of God which we're going to spend 10 weeks in the New Year looking at the 10 commandments.

He clearly expressed it in terms of love that these 10, you know, only 10, only 10, 4, 1 and 5, 10. That's all He gave us, 10 regulations which we couldn't fulfil but they're regulations which are focused on love. You know, as He's summed up Himself, you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and the second table of the Law, the last five commandments, you love your neighbour as yourself. So I believe that Paul here when he refers to the Law of Christ is referring to that second kind of table of the Law, the last few commandments, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Because if you look at John chapter 13 and at verse 34, Jesus is predicting Peter's denial and he's coming to that stage, it's really a deepening stage of his spiritual intimacy with the Father and also the pain and the suffering of what he was going to go through and he leaves the disciples with a command. He says, a new command I give to you, it's not really a new command, but he's phrased it differently, a new command I give to you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you're my disciples if you love one another.

[4 : 4 8] So that's the Law of Jesus. The Law of Jesus is that we love one another as He has love does. That is what He's speaking about here and that is what's so important here is that as we bear one another's burdens we are fulfilling the Law of Christ. So the Law of Jesus is love one another as I have loved you, as I have loved you. These are the five greatest words that you will ever hear.

As I have loved you. Now when someone you love and someone you know says that, that's great. Love that. But when God says that, as I have loved you, it is the foundation and the focus and the center of everything that we are and it marks where our identity lies and the fact that the God of the universe has declared in Jesus Christ for believers that I love you. I love you. You know, that is absolutely crucial to our understanding of the gospel and indeed to our understanding of our own natures. Hands up here, anyone who chooses to be hated. Me, me, me. I love being hated. I love being the object of wrath and derision and mockery. I love when I come into a room and everyone looks the other way. Nobody's like that. Nobody wants to be unloved. Nobody wants to be alone. Nobody wants to be the object of people's derision. We all want to be loved. Every single one of us want to be loved. We want to be accepted. We want to belong. It's absolutely basic to our humanity and God says here in Christ, as I have loved you and He expresses that love in being the one who carries our burden, doesn't he? That great prophetic picture of Jesus from Isaiah 53. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed. He's the one who carries our sorrows, okay? So you've got a great Old Testament picture of His love being expressed as the burden bearer. He bears our burdens. And I want you just for a moment to look at what that means, what I believe that means from the Bible. Excuse me, I shouldn't blow my nose into a microphone. It's bad enough normally, but it's a lot worse than a microphone.

So next time I take my hand, you'll need to put the microphone on. I'm sorry. What does it mean to bear someone's burden? You know, it's an oppressive or a heavy weight that he bears.

Practically what does it mean? What does it mean I love you in this way as I have loved you? Well, it means he takes up our cause. That's one of the meanings of being a burden bearer. You know that that's a great thing, don't you? When somebody is interested enough in you to take up your cause to help you when things are difficult, when your car is broken down, when somebody will come and stop and help you to fix that car, you've got lots of heavy, heavy bags at the airport, and someone will come along and say, I'll help you with this. Something you don't understand, something you don't know about that is changing a plug or whether it's decorating a room or whatever it might be, someone who shows interest and concern and who takes up your cause. And these are small and minor examples, but there's obviously much more significant ones when people take the time to go through something with you, who are interested in you, even though you know for them it's a pain for them to be involved. Christ is the one who takes up our cause and takes our baggage on board in his incarnation, in his coming alongside us, in being our advocate, in being a redeemer. He is the one who answers us and takes up, he has taken up our cause when nobody else was interested in it, when no one else could take it up, when there was no one that can stand in our place and be a redeemer. But Jesus is the one who takes up our cause in order to meet our deepest needs. It's a great reality for us. He takes up our cause, he carries our burdens, but it also means that he serves us. The whole idea of being the burden bearer, biblically, would have almost inevitably brought the idea of servitude with it, the weight carrier, the servant, the slave, the one who carries everyone else's burdens. And that is a picture of the living God. The living God is willing, the astonishing reality that the living God is willing to serve us by being our burden bearer. The Savior's work is to carry. Even in his incarnation and in his life there was a burden that he was bearing, there was a weight that he was carrying, the weight of humanity and of a broken and sinful humanity. But he's that active and able friend who will always be our servant, who continues to serve us as we've seen before and who never refuses to serve, who is always willing and able. So we have a divine slave. We maybe don't like thinking of God in these terms and maybe rightly so. But he gives us that picture of himself as one who's our servant, one who's our slave, one who intercedes on our behalf, one who provides for our needs, one who helps us in our day-to-day living. And I would like you to channel these truths into your own life and into your own thinking, because the reality for us is the only barrier to us being served by

Jesus is our own relentless pig-headed determination to be independent and to do our own thing and to go our own way and to be strong in our own strength. And yet he is there willing and able and convincing and divinely empowered to serve us and carry our burdens. These burdens are many for us and may look very different to everyone here. But there's one particular burden that he bears for us, not in an ongoing practical way as it were in our lives, but that he has borne for us. And that is that he bears more than just coming alongside us, more than just being our friend, more than just being our helper. He's the one who bears the weight of our sin for us on the cross. And that uniquely he carries our heaviest burden alone. You know there's one burden that lies on each of us.

[12:18] And without this thing being removed from it, it is an unbearable burden. We can't overcome it, it's the burden of death. And the guilt that that represents our separation from God and our guilt before His throne. And that's a burden we simply can't bear. It is far too great for us.

None of us can overcome our own death, none of us can deal with our own death, none of us can stand before God in our own strength. But he's the one who went to that cross and bore that burden alone.

Bore the burden of your sin and of my sin and of your death and in my death on his own. He bore that punishment, in other words, the weight of guilt, the weight of wrath, the weight of God's just punishment for our rebellion against Him. He bears that on the cross. And as Christians, it is important for us to come round to understanding and seeing and knowing the glory of that burden bearing. I think sometimes if we've known it all our lives, we take it for granted, don't we?

It's not very revolutionary or radical or important to us. We don't really think much about death. We're not that guilty feeling. We're not a burden by sin or by being distanced from God. We're kind of compromised. We're engaged so much in the world around us, we're compromised. But it's important for us to remind ourselves and to get back to that place where we see and know and understand on that cross is total aloneness bearing our burdens. Not his own, not his own guilt, but our guilt. Not God's wrath against him, but God's wrath, just wrath against us. That total aloneness was something that he faced, that he bore that burden in himself. That we receive from him, now this very smoothly carries into this morning service, which we very amazingly receive the weight of glory from him. And we looked at glory as being life, didn't we, and light. And as we receive Christ Jesus, we receive that weight of his forgiveness, of his light. We see things clearly and we see and know who he is and what he has done on our behalf. Very difficult to explain. Very difficult to comprehend. This is a remarkable transaction of the weight bearer who bears our sins so that when we die, that we don't go to that place of intolerable burden, an intolerable weight that we are unable to cope with. So Jesus Christ is our weight bearer. The law of Jesus is the law which says, as I have loved you, and it's a tangible love, it's not a soft, emotional, easy love, it's a love that took him all the way to the cross and to that great burden bearing on our behalf. So in response to him, what does he ask of us in terms of believers, that we are to carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Well obviously in order to carry other people's burdens spiritually, we need to first have followed Jesus Christ. And not only do we need to follow Jesus Christ, but we need to keep following Jesus Christ. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn me from my yoke is easy, my burden is light. So we come to Jesus Christ and we receive that great burden being taken of us, that great weight of being masters of our own universe, of being in charge of all that we are and of trying to justify ourselves before God and we take it and we leave it with him and we leave at the foot of the cross and Jesus Christ accepts us and we take the weight of glory. We take on ourselves that weight, that burden of God because it's an easy one and a light one and he gives us the power and the ability to take that light and love and the knowledge of himself. We follow him because they're in his freedom and we need to keep following him. We need to do it tomorrow. You're going to need to do it on Tuesday. You're going to need to do it on

Wednesday and on Thursday and on Friday as well and then on Saturday do it again and when you come back to church on Sunday, remind yourself that you're a follower of Jesus Christ and that you're asked to take your life into his and let him bear your burdens. So you've come to church tonight and you're carrying a great weight of burden. Oh, if only they knew what I was going through, sitting here and everyone else's life is just so correct and ordinary and everything's together but if only they knew what I had to face tomorrow. If only they knew the letter that I got from the doctor yesterday, if they only understood that I've only got six months more in my job and then I'm unemployed. If only they realised the exams that I'm facing and the work that I've got to do. If only they could realise that and he's talking about spiritualism. Let him carry your burdens.

[18:11] Pour them out before I'm speaking to him about these things. Make that relationship real. Stop leaving him with some perch up and above some theoretical place where he's never used and never pleaded with and never related to. Let him be the one that you follow. Follow him and serve him and then simply and with this I close, love one another. That's what he says. Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. That's how we carry one another's burdens by loving one another. That's the great mark of orthodoxy, isn't it? It's the great mark of orthodoxy in the New Testament church. And then this way you will fulfil the law of Christ and Jesus says, and it's by this that all men will know that you are my disciples. Isn't that great? That we love one another, that we bear one another up, bear one another's burdens up. That is how we express our Christian faith. Now what does that mean? What does that mean? Well I think interestingly in the context of this chapter it probably means primarily that we bear one another's wretched sinfulness. It means that we understand our own weaknesses. It means that we're spiritually accountable to one another and that we are in such relationship with each other that we can restore one another. In sin, brothers if anyone has caught in a sin, those are spiritual should restore them gently but watch yourself. Carry each other's burdens, you know? Carry each other's burdens.

And then instantly it goes on to say for each one should carry his own load. It seems contradictory, doesn't it? I think it simply means that we carry our own load before God, our own sins before God.

We take them to him, we unburden ourselves before him but we carry one another's burdens that we recognise we need one another in our lives. That we are vulnerable with one another, that we recognise our need for one another. Holiness is that recognition of serving one another and taking up one another's cause. We're great at being independent, we're great at putting walls around ourselves, we're great at not admitting our need and yet this is all about carrying each other's burdens, taking up one another's cause. It means being willing to carry and it means being willing to let go, doesn't it? It means both things. It means that we're not islands and it means that we are those who are willing to receive the needs of others. Being committed to Christ means being committed to one another and all the vulnerabilities and the weaknesses and the frailties and the struggles. You know it's easy, we're committed to Christ, isn't it? It's easy, peasy. Because Christ's perfect. There's nothing wrong with Christ. It's easy to say we love Christ, see we follow

Christ, I'm committed to Christ, it's no problem. Because there's never any problem with that, there's never any difficulty, there's never any glitch in that. Because He's perfect, He's the perfect Son of God. Please don't make me commit to other people. Because other people are so untrustworthy and they make so many mistakes and they're speaking behind my back and there's all kinds of things going on but bearing one another's burdens is a recognition of who is born ours.

Therefore we can bear others. It means sharing weight, sharing pain, sharing their cross. It requires depth, it requires genuine friendship but it sets us apart from a world that isn't really interested in us beyond the we're fine today, thanks very much in walking away. And yet sometimes the world shames us in their commitment and in their love for one another. So we sit at the Lord's table and we recognize that that is a symbolic act of great significance. We are people that are committed to carrying one another's burdens, loving one another in the way that Christ Jesus has loved us. That is an inescapably high standard. We don't get to the place where we say well that's it, I've done enough loving today, I've fulfilled my requirement, I'm going to have some me time. Not that there's anything wrong with me time, now and again. But isn't it that recognition of endless sacrifice and of endless open arms and of endless sympathy and of endless patience, not because we have it in ourselves but because we've been touched by that grace. We've received that grace ourselves and so we want to share that with others. We always will reflect the kind of Christianity we believe in by the way we treat others. That will always reflect or the way we treat others will always reflect what we understand about ourselves before God. If we're not so bad, if we've really more or less made it on our own, we just need a little top up of grace from

[24 : 07] Jesus, then we'll probably treat others in the same way without much commitment, without much forgiveness, without much sacrifice. But when we see ourselves in the gutter, when we see ourselves pulled up by his grace and love, that wonderful picture in the Zekele of the baby, the king's child that's left to die in the desert, the king comes, lifts the naked child up, cowering its own blood, left to die and he washes it, he cleans it, he clothes it, he looks after it, picture of God with his people in the Old Testament and that's the kind of the desperate lostness of our own lives and hearts without Jesus Christ and that does change then how we think about others and it makes us real legalists who want to fulfill the law of Christ, genuine legalists in the right way if we can use that term. So I encourage you not to build up a wall of impregnability with other people. We're all vulnerable, let's just get over it. We're all needy, we're all afraid. Don't be divided. The Lord's table is a place for self-examination but also I think church examination and the way we think about one another and the way we treat one another as a people and don't allow your understanding of church to be a them and us understanding but may it be one where the them are very much the us and that we are all seeking the help and strength of God to take each step forward. So can I encourage you as I encourage myself not to be condemnatory, self-contained, unattached, uncommitted, critical but can I ask you to be like Jesus Christ and to recognize

His law, that great law of love and be people who are burden bearers you know and He doesn't ask us to be burden bearers in our own strength. He asks us to be burden bearers in His strength. So be a burden bearer, carry each other's burdens as we get you know and that's a struggle. Let's get to know each other in such a way that we can carry one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ and that's a hugely blessed place to be. Now I hope that the Lord's table is a place where we can consider that and remember it and think about it and meditate in the silence of the evening for a few moments. Amen.