

04.06.06 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

Christ Our Burden Bearer

Bible Readings = 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Galatians 6:1-10

Introduction:

- (1) Last week we saw that we have been formed for our life in Christ, to bear the fruit of the Spirit through our union with him.
- (2) This fruit is not ours: it neither originates with us nor is sustained by us. It is the fruit *of* the Spirit, seen so evidently in the life of the Man of the Spirit, with whom we must be brought into living union. He is the vine we are the branches.
- (3) This does not mean that it is impossible for us to walk ‘*according to the Flesh*’ (otherwise there would be no need for the letter!), but we do not *belong* to the Flesh. We belong to the Spirit, so as we walk according to the Spirit we do not carry out the desires of the Flesh.
- (4) We saw that we could not be united to the Spirit without being cut off from the Flesh (about which we say more next time) which is why Paul speaks about being crucified with Christ in the context of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:24).
- (5) We also saw that one of the marks of living and walking by the Spirit was the turning aside from boasting, challenging, and envying (Gal. 5:26) i.e. from those things which mean we are in competition with one another.

This week we will be focusing on the fact that Christ is the great bearer of our burdens, and so, as we share in that, we sow to the Spirit instead of the Flesh. This carries the on the thought immediately from Gal. 5:26, into Gal. 6:1

1. Bearing One Another, and Bearing One’s Own Burden

(1) Gal. 5:26 carries on directly into Gal. 6:1. At first appearance it seems as though Paul’s comments in the early verses of chapter 6 are contradictory. He speaks of bearing one another (Gal. 6:2) and also of bearing one’s own things (Gal. 6:5).

- The context is the answer.
 - In the wider context the problem is what emerges in our lives when we are walking according to the Flesh e.g. Gal. 5:26, cf. 5:15; 5:20. To walk ‘flesh way’ means that we walk comparatively...comparing ourselves among ourselves, ranking ourselves against others, and judging others on the ranks we give them, according to how well they have performed in our eyes and according to our standards. In such a state we think highly of ourselves and judgementally of others (cf. Gal. 6:3).
 - In the immediate context the statement of Gal. 6:5 has to do with one’s own personal calling (as in Gal. 6:4). Each has his or own path to walk and calling to follow in Christ, and we examine our work and walk before him...cf. John 21:23. Question is not whether our brother or sister is walking in the Spirit etc., but am I? Not do they love me, but do I love them?

(2) So, in contrast to comparative, envious, judgmental, hard and critical actions the calling is to bear the burdens of our brothers. This is not just, or even, practical burdens, but the burden of dealing with our brother’s sins. Gal. 6:1 and 6:2 are related.

- ‘Therefore a Christian must have broad shoulders and husky bones to carry the flesh, that is, the weakness, of other believers.’ Luther.
 - Even in cases of discipline for an arrogant offence with a haughty attitude (e.g. the man in 1 Cor 5, living in an incestuous relationship), the object is not destruction, but restoration.
- (3) So what may need to be borne, and by whom or from whom?
- Answer = any trespass, from any man. None immune from the potential to walk by the Flesh.
 - Caught? May mean ensnared or uncovered in it (Bruce)
 - In other words, we may be in the situation where we have to bear the burdens of another, who has been caught in sin, so that they may be restored to fellowship. This means gentleness, humility and gracious action in love.
 - E.g. Prov. 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offences; 12:16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult; 17:9 Whoever covers an offences seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends cf. 1 Pet. 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins; James 5:19-20 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins ;
 - And we have to acknowledge that we have failed in this from time to time. See also the (negative) example of Moses in Numb. 20:1ff.
 - Luther ‘In this life, the saints not only live in the flesh but even, by some urging or other from the devil, gratify the desires of the flesh; that is they fall into impatience, envy, wrath, error, doubt, unbelief, etc. For Satan is continually attacking both the purity of doctrine...and the integrity of life...For this reason Paul teaches us how to deal with those who have fallen in this way, namely, that those who are strong should restore them in a gentle spirit’ (LW27 p. 109)...run to him, and extend your hand to him in his fallen state. Comfort him with sweet words and embrace him in your motherly arms (p. 111).

2. The Principle of Burden Bearing

- (1) The idea of burden bearing does not begin with Paul in Gal. 6! It goes all the way back to the character of God himself.
- Some examples: Ex. 19:4; Deut. 1:31; 32:11; Ps. 55:22; Is. 40:11; 46:3-4; Hos. 11:3-4
- (2) In bearing one another’s burdens in this way, we fulfil the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)
- Law of Christ is no doubt the Law of Love (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8f. cf. Jn. 13:34; 15:12; James 2:8 cf. Matt. 22:34ff.
 - But in this context, also possible to see that the Law of Christ = he is the burden bearer. This is the ‘law’ under which he lived. It is *his* law...not simply a law that comes from him. His whole life was burden bearing. Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 13:7.

- And most fully it is seen in the bearing of us and our sin up into the Cross. Psalm 38:4 'my iniquities have gone over my head, like a burden they are too heavy for me'.
 - E.g. 1 Pet. 2:24 the cross: compare with the scapegoat of Lev. 16:22; Is. 53:4-6; John 1:29.

(3) Jesus did not come to please himself, but to serve his Father, and in so doing to serve us.

- Mark 10:35-45

(4) But this is not simply the temporary taking of the burden of sin, guilt, condemnation etc., but it is the bearing away of it completely for all time.

- Ps. 103:12; Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34; 50:20 cf. Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; etc.
- So God relates to us now in Christ fully as our Father, who continues to bear our burdens day by day.

3. Sowing and Reaping

(1) The whole of life is sowing, and (eventually) reaping (Gal. 6:7-10).

- Sowing to the Spirit = walking by the Spirit (and so with the Flesh)
- Burden bearing is sowing to the Spirit, as are other things
 - e.g. giving to teachers (Gal. 6:6 cf. 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. the attitude towards the Levite priests in the Old Testament e.g. Deut. 12:19)
 - Doing good to all people, but especially those of the household of faith cf. Luke 6:35; 1 Thess. 5:15; Heb. 13:16; etc.

(2) But only possible if we have been freed from the Flesh, in order to live in the freedom of the Spirit!