

1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

BURDENS . . .

- 1. We must SHED (v. 1)**
- 2. We must SHARE (v. 2-3)**
- 3. We must SHOULDER (v. 4-5)**

Burdens are a part of life. They come in many flavors and sizes. And they all take our focus off more pleasant and important aspects of life. But they must be dealt with. And here Paul gives us practical advice on how to determine the kind of burden, and how we are to deal with it.

Chapter 5 of Galatians began the practical application of the doctrine taught in chapters 1-4, namely that “it was for freedom that Christ set us free.” (5:1). Chapter 5 taught us the importance of walking in the fruit of the Spirit in order to “stand firm” in that spiritual freedom. We learned that LEGALISM and LICENSE holds us captive to the bondage of the law, but that LOVE fulfills the law and sets us free.

Now in Chapter 6 we have the practical working out of “walking in the Spirit” and living out the “law of love.” Verse 2 teaches us to “bear one another’s burdens.” Verse 7 teaches that “whatever a man sows, this he shall also reap.” Verse 10 teaches to “do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” This is HOW to “through love, serve one another.” (5:13) Practical stuff!

BURDENS WE MUST SHED (v. 1)

So in verses 1-5 we get teaching on how the supernatural fruit of the spirit flowing through us believers can help with the burdens of life. And the first burden mentioned is the burden of being “caught in a trespass” – the burden of sin and its consequences.

As frustrated as Paul has been with the Galatians, here he calls them “brothers.” And here is the beginning of dealing with my sin or helping another through theirs – seeing Christians as part of a family in which sin is really everyone’s responsibility. You are called to help me through my sin, and I am called to help you through yours. I really am “my brother’s keeper.”

“Caught in a trespass” does not so much mean being “found guilty” as in – you have been caught! Rather it speaks of being entrapped in a snare of sin, having made a poor choice and now caught in the consequences. We’ve all been there. We’ve “put our foot in our mouth” or done something “stupid.” We’ve failed to do what we know is the right thing, or we’ve openly disobeyed God and now we have “crossed the line” of what is right. “Trespass” means to “cross the line” of righteous behavior.”

Paul says “even if ...” as if to say you might not think another’s sin is your business, but it is! Our obligation, yes spiritual privilege, is to reflect the supernatural fruit of the Spirit and serve in love. Here the emphasis is on love through GENTLENESS, which would mean not “pointing the finger” or “passing judgment” but rather lovingly, gently holding accountable. The ultimate goal of this involvement is made clear – it is to be for the sole purpose of restoration. And the warning is to not let the closeness to the situation entrap you as well.

But this verse is not saying that every time we witness sin in someone we are to confront it. “Caught in any trespass” implies trapped in an unbroken pattern of sin. Help is needed.

LEGALISM would point out the fault in condemnation
LICENSE would not bother, feeling it was not their business anyway
LOVE must intervene with the goal of gentle restoration

Helpful support Scriptures would be:

1 Peter 4:8 *Above all keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

1 Corinthians 13: 5, 7 *Love . . . does not take into account a wrong suffered; love . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

So if the burden of sin is our own, we must SHED that burden through confession and restitution. If the burden of sin is another's then we should intervene with gentleness and in a desire to restore. This is PRACTICAL WALKING IN THE SPIRIT and LIVING IN FREEDOM.

BURDENS WE MUST SHARE (v. 2-3)

"Bear one another's burdens" (6:2) = "through love serve one another" (5:13). We are to "lighten the load" for which we must COME CLOSE to the one burdened. The "law of Christ" that we are to fulfill is the law of LOVE, given by the EXAMPLE of Christ while on earth. To "bear" is not to take over, as much as to "share the load" in order to lighten it. "How can I help?"

We remember Christ's example of gentle love to ...

1. The sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 7:36ff)
2. The penitent thief on the cross (Luke 23:43)
3. Simon Peter after his denials (John 21: 15-17)
4. An invalid who Jesus healed at the pool of Bethesda (John 5)
5. The woman taken in adultery (John 8)
6. The "prodigal son" through his father (Luke 15)

Keep in mind this sharing of burdens is not just a "nice thing to do." It is the ESSENCE of CHRISTIANITY. Serving one another is HOW we love God back – the fulfillment of the LAW.

This is freedom, for it is not offering sacrifices of animals or attending festivals or observing rituals, but rather it is SERVING IN LOVE as we WALK IN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Fruit is meant to be "eaten" or "used" – not just admired as a nice ornament of spirituality. Love, joy, peace and all the rest are meant to be used in serving others, not just in "being a nice person."

You remember how good it feels and how grateful you are when someone comes along side of you to share a burden. It might be sympathy given, or a needed meal provided, or a chore accomplished. But it "lightens the load" and gives strength to go another day. In a spiritual sense, this is exactly what Jesus has done for us – taken our burden of sin upon Himself, and now calling us to take up our cross and follow Him. This is "sharing the load" in example. To do this for others in service is just reflecting the supernatural love of God, and all the other fruit of the Spirit. THIS IS WHAT WE AS CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO BE AND DO.

BURDENS WE MUST SHOULDER (v. 4-5)

The "burden" we are to share = a heavy weight

Our "load" that we are to bear alone = a backpack, implying the portion we are personally given to carry.

Personal responsibility can never be deferred to another. We each have our own "backpack" to shoulder, and we must do it dutifully and conscientiously – not looking to another to shoulder what is our own to bear. This might be our health, our family, our financial status, our heritage – others can't shoulder these loads, but they belong to each individual to bear.

Verse 4 helps make this clear. We are each to examine our lot in life – "our own work." We assess the talents given, the personality given, and so on. And we are not to compare with others. This takes us back to 5:26

which told us not to BOAST or ENVY. Boasting is thinking "I'm better than another" and envying is thinking "I wish I was like another. But neither is helpful or appropriate. The Christian living In the freedom of the Spirit is to assess himself and then be appreciative for what he has ("have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone") and make the best of what he has been given. THIS IS FREEING!

SUMMARY

When we have been "caught in a trespass" (made a stupid and sinful mistake) we must be quick and grateful to accept the gentle love of someone who dares bring us along the road to restoration. Or, we if are the one caught, we must be quick to confess and repent.

And when we are burdened with a heavy weight, and someone offers assistance, we must be quick and grateful to allow the other to share our burden. And when we discover another with a weight that we can help lighten, we must live out our faith by serving the other in love.

And once we have made honest assessment of our own life, we must "take up our cross and bear it," carrying the "backpack" that has been given to us without comparisons with others that only frustrate.

THIS IS HOW GOD WANTS US TO BURDEN-BEAR, living out the fruit of the Spirit.
THIS IS PRACTICAL LIVING IN FREEDOM!