

Galatians 16 – Love in Action
Pastor Joe Oakley – 2/2/2025

We are continuing our study in Galatians called Freedom through Christ. Last week Pastor Deb preached a powerful message on the battle within each of us between our flesh and our spirit. She taught on how to identify the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. We saw that the first fruit of the spirit is love.

That goes along with what Galatians 5:13 says:

You have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Grace gives us the freedom to truly love one another. Today, I'm preaching a message called Love in Action. In Galatians 5 Paul showed us the importance of love. Now in Galatians 6 Paul shows us how to put love into action.

We will see three actions we all can take to love others.
 Love Restores – Love Bears – Love Gives

By the way, all three of these are expressions of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ in us.

Christ Restores – He came to earth for the express purpose of restoring sinful people back to relationship with God the Father.

Christ Bears – He bore our sins, iniquities and sicknesses on the cross.

Christ Gives – For God so loved us that He sent His Son who loves us so much that He gave His very life to save us from our sins.

So let's look at how we can be involved in these three ministries of Christ in practical ways.

Now – if you are an immature Christian, you want people to love you enough to restore you, bear with you and give to you. That's okay. But the goal is to become mature believers who are like Christ who restores, bears and gives to others!

To attain maturity in the Christian life requires someone willing to speak the truth in love into our lives. This involves direction and correction. And here's the hard part – growing to maturity requires us to be willing to receive direction and correction from others. **If you cannot receive correction – you will never grow to maturity!**

1- Love Restores

Galatians 6:1 says:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Paul is not speaking about a deliberate and hardened sinner. Instead, the idea is of someone who has fallen into sin, finding themselves trapped in a place they never thought they would be.

Intentional planned sin is quite different from making a mistake. For instance, when someone who has a long-term affair tries to excuse it as a mistake, they are mistaken! A long-term affair takes planning and intention. It might have been a mistake the first time, but the next times are all deliberate!

When Paul addresses someone caught in sin, he is not saying someone who got caught sinning. He means someone who got caught by sin. There's an element of surprise to this.

He then says that those who are spiritual should restore them gently. Spiritual believers are those who are filled with the Spirit, who walk in the Spirit, and who have the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

We should not ignore sin or excuse sin or condemn those who sin. The goal is always restoration.

The Greek word for restore here is *katartizo*, which is also translated equip. So, equipping does not mean just teaching or disciplining people. It also means to restore them to their former condition. Like a doctor setting a broken bone or the disciples mending their nets.

But this ministry of restoration is often neglected in the church. Churches tend to either pretend the sin never happened, or we tend to react too harshly towards the one who has sinned. The balance between these two extremes must be negotiated by spiritual people. And they must restore those caught in sin in a spirit of gentleness.

Restoration includes confessing and repenting of sin, but also discovering how this fall happened so that the one who sinned can keep from falling again. Restoration must be done with an awareness of our own weaknesses.

Even if you are spiritual, there may be some people you should not try to restore. I heard about a man who got saved and repented of a gay lifestyle. He had a legitimate concern for his friends in that lifestyle, so he went to their clubs to witness to them. However, he kept falling into sin.

So, he went to his pastor and told him about his struggle. His pastor told him not to go back to those clubs again. The man said, "But somebody needs to reach out to them." And the pastor replied, "True, but that someone is not you."

If something easily causes you to fall, you need to stay away from it. Even if you are trying to help others, be aware of your own weakness.

2- Love Bears

Galatians 6:2 says:

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Since Paul said to bear one another's burdens, that means that we all have burdens that God does not want us to carry alone. God want all of us to carry burdens and grow stronger together. There are times in life where we all need support in crisis times. **You should not have to go through the tough time alone.**

You need people who care for you and are committed to help you. Someone to bear your burden. We all have burdens we should not bear alone.

We all need to learn how to go to God to receive His comfort. But sometimes God wants to comfort us through others. That's why the New Testament is full of "one anothers" – God chooses to meet some of our needs through other people.

Now ultimately, it is true that God meets our needs. But He uses a variety of methods. One of those methods is other people. He created us with a need for Him and a need for others. Here's a passage that actually says that.

1 Corinthians 12 talks about the different parts of the body of Christ and verses 20-21 say:

There are many parts, but only one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

No part of the body of Christ can say to another part, "I don't need you." That means we need each other. We need to meet each other's needs.

This is not complicated. Just look for someone bearing a burden and help them carry it. People can get weighed down with marital issues or children issues or loss of a job or family member or dealing with someone's sinful behavior or addiction. Sometimes these burdens are too heavy to bear alone. **You can tell someone is heavily burdened because they will say things like "I don't think I can go on" or "This is too much for me to carry."**

In those times – we are responsible to help each other. We need to crawl up under that burden and help them carry it! That starts by asking, "How can I pray for you?" But, in addition to prayer, sometimes we need to listen or get them counsel or actual physical or financial help.

And when we do bear one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ.

In Galatians, Paul battled the deception that Christians are required to fulfill the law of Moses. But now he tells them to fulfill the law of Christ. Let me make this clear - Christians are not under the Old Testament civil laws or Jewish religious laws. However, **we are not without law. Rather, we are under the law of Christ.**

In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 Paul told how he reached different people for Christ. ***To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.***

Believers are not under the Old Testament law as the way of salvation or as a way of life. But we are not lawless – we follow the law of Christ.

Here's the key: we must rightly divide the word by learning which parts of the Old Testament law ended at the cross – which parts were changed by the cross – and which ones continue. What continues after the cross is God's unchanging moral law. We know which laws to keep because they are repeated in the New Testament.

The law of Christ is the great commandment. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. The law of Christ is the law of love and love fulfills the law.

Galatians 6:3 says:

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Pride prevents us from bearing one another's burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ. **If you are not serving others in some way, you are deceiving yourself in some way.** This happens when people think they are too important to serve others and bear other people's burdens.

But pride is not always thinking you are better than others, it can manifest when you are self-focused rather than others focused. Your self-focus might be negative – but it is still self-focus. This happens when people think, "I deserve more of my own attention than you do. Taking care of myself is more important than taking care of you."

Listen – there are times when you have nothing to give and you need others to help carry your burdens. I get that. But that should not be all of the time! By the way – sometimes helping others helps you! Getting your focus on others and off yourself can relieve some of your burden.

Another way pride can be in people is when they have a false humility and refuse to receive help from anyone else.

Paul is teaching us that we all have times we need others to help carry our burdens and it is self-deceiving to refuse that help. You are making yourself out to be something you are not – you are actually someone who needs help like the rest of us!

Paul writes with the same idea in Philippians 2:3-4:

Don't act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Instead, humbly think of others as being better than yourselves. Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others.

I love this! If I esteem you above me, and you esteem me above you, a marvelous thing happens: we have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on!

Galatians 6:4 says:

Let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Instead of deceiving ourselves, we must carefully examine the works we do and why we do them. It is right to want our works to be approved by God and rewarded by God in heaven. If you do nothing to be rewarded if heaven, then you will only be able to rejoice in the works of others. You will have no crowns to cast at the feet of Jesus and no rewards to rejoice in.

The word for examine means “to scrutinize, to prove.” In other words, **if you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?** Are you bearing good fruit or bad? What fruit are you bearing in your marriage? Family? Workplace?

Galatians 6:5 goes on to say:

For each one shall bear his own load.

Now – wait a minute! Verse 2 says to Carry each other's burdens... But verse 5 says: For each one should carry his own load. So which is it? Do we carry our own or do we carry each other's? Well – both.

The word in verse 2 for burden means a load so heavy that you don't have the strength to carry it alone. The load in verse 5 is different from the crushing load in verse 2. Verse 5 speaks of a lighter load that you can carry on your own. In Bible times, this was a military term that indicated the amount of weight a soldier was expected to carry in his bag or backpack. We each have burdens we must bear alone.

So burden bearing requires discernment! We must help people in time of difficulty, but we are not responsible for their actions. They are! Sometimes we help other people stay weak when we do something for them that they should be doing for themselves.

We each have everyday burdens of working and paying bills and being responsible. And each of us should carry out our individual responsibilities in life!

No one is going to do your work for you! No one is going to pay your bills or raise your children or feed your dog or mow your yard or wash your laundry. Those are your burden to carry!

In case you haven't noticed it yet, there are freeloaders in life who are lazy or irresponsible and they expect everyone else to do for them what they should be doing for themselves. This includes children who expect parents to do their science project and co-workers who constantly need your help because they procrastinate. There are also many people who are too lazy or irresponsible to work and pay their own bills. They always expect other people to bail them out. **But the Bible teaches that everyone should carry the load of their own personal responsibilities.**

Problems arise when people with heavy loads don't allow others to help. And, problems also arise when people with light loads act like they should not have to carry their own weight and everyone else should do for them what they should be doing for themselves.

So, the Bible says to set a boundary! When someone is under a crushing load – help them carry it! But do not empower freeloaders or irresponsible people! That will not help them grow strong!

Many parents are raising children who will not be able carry their own load because they always carry it for them. Many Christians think it is loving to always help everyone who asks, but **the Bible tells us not to help people who refuse to carry their own load.**

Here's what 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15 says:

Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? "If you don't work, you don't eat." Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and meddling in other people's business. This must not be tolerated. We command such people and urge them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and work to earn their own living... Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. Don't think of them as enemies, but warn them as you would a brother or sister.

Wow! This shows us how to set boundaries in a biblical way. We should speak the truth in love. We should point out the boundary that is being crossed and the consequences of continuing to do so. Then – if the person violates the boundary – allow them to suffer the consequences! I know it's hard – but that actually helps them grow strong. **Remember – God wants each of us to help others grow strong, and if we help people stay weak, we are actually hurting them, not helping them.**

So don't take on the financial burden for those who refuse to work or refuse to be financially responsible.

Don't take on the burden of a co-worker's workload because they are lazy or they procrastinate.

Don't take on the burden of someone else's spiritual growth if they refuse to do their part to grow.

Don't take on the responsibility for other people's poor decisions when they won't listen to any advice.

We think love helps others no matter what – but we need discernment to know when our help is actually hurting others.

3- Love Gives

Galatians 6:6 says:

Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

Pastor Deb will preach a whole message on this next week. So I just want to say, **Those who are filled with the Spirit are not stingy.**

The Expositor's Bible Commentary says the fruit of the spirit called goodness means to show generosity to others. **A main expression of love is giving.**

James says that every good thing in our lives is a gift from God.

Generosity includes giving money but it is not just financial. In this passage it says to share all good things with your teachers. That includes sharing life with each other, sharing our time, our talents, and our blessings.

It means to put love in action by restoring those who fall, bearing one another's burdens and giving unselfishly.

That's what Jesus did for us! He bore our sins on the cross so that we could be restored to relationship with God and He freely gives us all things!

Freely you have received, so freely give!