

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
Pastor Stephen Felker
Swift Creek Baptist Church, 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
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Galatians 6:1-2, 5 “Showing Christian Love to Mother”

Intro. Two children ordered their mom to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to breakfast in bed, the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. Finally, the children called her to come downstairs. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs. “As a surprise for Mother's Day,” one explained, “we decided to cook our own breakfast.”¹ Well, the children did help their mother some that morning, but I think they missed the point. They should have also cooked breakfast *for* their mother.

The typical mother with children at home does so much work. She shoulders so many responsibilities, and often without enough help. And I ask mothers here today, “Have there been times when you have really needed a helping hand?” I’m sure you have. And so this morning I say it is time to apply today’s brief text to the subject of helping mother. I am going to challenge children who are old enough to help, as well as husbands, to give a helping hand to your wife or mother with the many responsibilities that she has.

As we consider this subject, let’s start with the foundational Christian and family responsibility, and that is:

I. WE MUST OBEY THE GREAT COMMAND TO LOVE

In the last part of v.2, Paul says we should “fulfill the law of Christ.” What is the law of Christ? It is found in Jn. 13:34, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.” Likewise, James 2:8 says that we should fulfill the royal law, which is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus clearly taught that the greatest commandment of all is to love God, and to love others. Love fulfills all the other laws.

Application: Are you practicing love? Are you a loving person?

Now when Jesus says, “love one another,” certainly our mothers are included! In fact, in most cases, they are more deserving of our love than anyone. Our mothers have loved us with incredible devotion. Have you shown love to your mother today? Are you committed to loving your mother? Are you giving love to her by giving her honor?

If the great commandment of Christ is to love, then we should ask the question, How should we love? Is it just a matter of *saying*, “I love you”? I Jn. 3:18 says, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” No, Paul teaches us from this text that love must be put into specific action. He gives a command in v.2 that fleshes out the command to love. He says, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” And so the second truth I want to share with you is this:

II. THE GREAT COMMAND TO LOVE INCLUDES BEARING BURDENS

Illustration: This reminds me of a story of a certain professor in a religious school who was strong in his teaching that we as Christians should love one another. One day, he had someone

¹ Pastor Tim's Sermon Illustrations and Inspirations List , <http://www.cybersaltlists.org> [Illus.#C-902]

pour a new concrete driveway at his house. After a while, a child in the neighborhood came across the yard, stepped into the fresh concrete, and messed it up. Immediately the man scolded the boy harshly and seemed very unloving toward him. Some of his students heard about what happened and said, "Hey prof, I thought we are supposed to love one another." He replied, "Well, I can love in the abstract, but not in the concrete." Actually, we are to love in concrete, specific ways. Love can be an abstract term, but it is not real love until we implement specific applications. And one way is through the service of bearing burdens. In fact, as we shall see tonight, one way we should love is by loving service to meet needs. And helping someone bear a burden is a very loving form of service.

Explanation: What does it mean to bear one another's burdens? The word "burden" refers to a heavy load or weight. Paul is referring to a load that a person cannot and should not bear alone. We all have such burdens from time to time. You may try to bear that heavy burden alone. But if you do not get some help, you will either break down, or you will break out with an explosion of frustration. Most mothers have experienced that! My friend, I have good news for you. God does not intend for you to bear such a burden alone. There are times when we need help, and we should be ready to offer help to others.

Illustration: Do you remember the story in Luke 5 when Jesus told Peter to go out and drop their nets one more time. When they did so, the catch was so great, they could not get the fish into the boat. So in v.7 Luke says, "So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them." Only with help were they able to land the catch.

This command teaches the important principle of mutual responsibility. Cain denied any responsibility for his brother, but the Bible teaches otherwise. You are responsible for the well-being of others, beginning with your family, your church family, as well as others, to the extent you are able. Look down at v.10, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Many times you will find the words "one another" in the New Testament. We should pray for one another, encourage one another, exhort one another, and yes, help one another by bearing burdens too great to bear alone.

On the other hand, this same text also teaches personal responsibility. V.5 says, "For each one shall bear his own load." This is not a contradiction. This verse uses a different Greek word for "burden." This word is the diminutive form of the word for a large load, like the load a ship would carry. The word often referred to a load a person could carry, such as a soldier's pack. Paul is referring to responsibilities of life which cannot or should not be shared by another and for which a man will be accountable to God at the judgment, as Paul says in v.4. For example, an expectant mother has a burden that only she can bear. So we need to have the discernment to know when we should help someone with a burden, and when we should not take on someone else's responsibility. For example, is it good character training for children to have appropriate levels of responsibility in the home. Now when they fail to carry out their responsibility to take out the trash, for example, it may be easier just to do it yourself. But you should not. They must learn to shoulder their own responsibility. On the other hand, there are times when you see someone carrying a burden or responsibility that is too great to bear alone.

Illustration: Albert Schweitzer was one of the most famous missionaries of the modern era. Leaving behind both an academic career (he had PhDs in both theology and physics) and a musical one (Schweitzer was also a concert organist), he set up a medical clinic in French Equatorial Africa. He was 85 years old when Andrew Davison had the privilege of visiting. Davison tells how one morning Schweitzer and some others were walking up a hill. It was extremely hot. Suddenly Schweitzer walked away from the group and made his way toward an African woman struggling up

the hill with a large load of wood for the cookfires. Schweitzer took the entire load of wood from the woman and carried it up the hill for her. When he rejoined the group one of them asked why, in view of his age, he did things like that. Schweitzer looked at the group, then pointed to the woman and said, “No one should ever have to carry a burden like that alone.”²

Application: Look around you today. There is someone you can help, someone that needs you to lighten his or her load.

III. BEARING BURDENS MUST BE APPLIED TO SPECIFICS

In this message I am moving increasingly from the general command of love, to one specific way to show love, and that is by helping others bear burdens. But the command to bear one another’s burdens needs specific application. Indeed, we should apply this principle to many different specific situations. There are people around you this very minute who are carrying heavy loads. People with sickness, financial problems—the list goes on and on. I will only mention 2 specific applications in detail today. The first we should apply this principle to is:

A. To One Who Sins – Paul says in v.1, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” I must say that this is the kind of burden Paul primarily had in mind here. Helping someone who has sinned is a burden, a responsibility of the body of Christ. In v.1 Paul acknowledges that Christians can and will sin. All of us have faults. Illustration: One time a man was speaking to a group, and he asked if anyone present did not have any faults, or if anyone knew of someone who did not have faults. After a while a man raised his hand. “I admit that I have faults, but I know of someone who didn’t. My wife’s first husband must not have had any!” But the fact is that we all have faults, and we all can fall into a sin or make mistakes.

What are we to do when someone falls into sin? Are we to just ignore the problem, or say, “It’s not my responsibility?” No. We have seen that this Scripture teaches mutual responsibility. We are responsible for an erring brother. Illustration: When something goes wrong with a member of our bodies, the pain alarm goes off, and if there is an infection, the brain sends thousands or millions of white blood cells to that infected member for healing and restoration. But too often in the body of Christ, when one member is out of line or is infected with sin, the alarm goes off but we ignore the alarm and do nothing. That’s not right. We do have a responsibility to that wayward brother.

Well, what are we to do when someone sins, and doesn’t turn from their sin on their own? I am going to talk about this more in detail in a later message. For now, I want to focus on what we are to do when a brother or sister in Christ seems to have trouble overcoming a sin in their life. The answer is that Paul says that those who are spiritual³ are to restore them. The word “restore” means “to bring something or someone back to its or his former position of wholeness or soundness.” The word means to mend or repair. The word was used of mending a broken net or setting a broken bone. So Paul is likening the sinning Christian to a broken bone in the body of Christ. Restoration involves rebuke using Scripture. If you do not back up correction with Scripture, your efforts will not be as effective. That means you have to know Scripture. This must be backed up with a godly

² Adapted by Verse a Week Club in *Pulpit Helps*, March 2004, P. 11.

³ Who are the spiritual here? In the context of chapter 5, it is simply those who are indwelt by the Spirit, who rely upon the Spirit for strength & guidance, and who manifest the fruit of the Spirit. It is not necessarily referring to the spiritually mature. Only such people can carry out restoration with any effectiveness.

example. You cannot correct someone if you are committing the same sin! It involves prayer. I John 5:16 says, 'If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.' Pray for the wayward brother, and hopefully, pray with them. Lead them in prayer to look to the Lord for strength to overcome that temptation.

Application: This certainly applies to a mother's responsibility to her children. When they get out of line, she must not say, "Well, that's not my problem." No, we all understand that a mother is to restore her wayward child.

Now this burden should not be a mother's alone. The father is to do his part. Discipline should not be the sole burden of the mother. The father needs to back up the discipline of the mother. Don't let your children play one parent against the other in discipline issues.

I also want to talk to children about this. You need to understand why your mother corrects you. First, it is because she loves you. Illustration: I remember when I was just a young boy, I visited my grandmother for the summer. Evidently I did something wrong. She made me cut a switch from a tree, and for the first time she proceeded to give me a good switching on the behind and legs. I cried, and was so upset with her. I remember telling her later that she must not love me. She assured me that she did. Now that I am older and wiser, I understand that indeed, she did love me. Jesus said in Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The most unloving thing a parent or grandparent can do is to allow a child to sin unchallenged. Sin will ruin a person!

Now children, when your mother or father gives you correction, listen to her! Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days."

So again, the primary application that Paul gives to the principle of bearing one another's burdens is to help a person overcome their sin problem. But since this is Mother's Day, I want to give another specific application not given in our text. Let's apply this principle:

B. To Mothers – As I have already pointed out, mothers shoulder a heavy burden, especially those who young children, and those who are also employed outside the home. So I want to give some suggestions for helping mother with the burdens she bears.

1. Help Keep the House Clean & in Order – The physical dwelling for the home is very important to the vast majority of most mothers. I've discovered that a home a like a mother's nest, and she doesn't want her family wrecking her nest! I'm not an expert on this, but Cheryl is still working on training her husband and sons to at least bear our own responsibilities around the house. For example, when you go to the kitchen and pour a bowl of cereal, put away the cereal, milk, bowl, and spoon when you are through. Don't leave your clothes lying around. Help mother out around the house.

When mother is sick or unable to carry out her responsibilities, then the other members of the family should pitch in and help.

2. Husbands, Make it Possible for the Mother of Your Children to Avoid Full-time Employment – She should not have to carry the burden of caring for children *and* earning a significant portion of the living. This means taking care of both the earning side and spending side.

3. Pray for Her - 2 Cor. 1:11 says, "you also helping together in prayer for us." Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Not only should you pray for her, but also pray with her.

4. Ask "How can I help you?" When you see your mother or wife worn down with the burdens of home, ask her what you can do for her. She may want you to clean the dishes after

supper. She may want you to do the cooking tonight. She may want you to vacuum. Man, the typical mother with children works 16 hours/day or more. It's not quite fair for you to work 8 hours, come home, sit in you chair, and do nothing until bedtime but read & watch TV!

Application: Children, I want to encourage you to set a goal of doing at least one helpful deed each day for your mother, starting today! Will you do that?

Conclusion: Mothers carry a heavy burden bearing children, feeding children, raising children, and giving discipline. They also keep and clean house. Many work outside the home at least part time. Don't you think that our love should begin at home with our mothers? And don't you think that our responsibility to show love by bearing burdens should begin with mother? If our Christianity does not work at home, it doesn't work! I call upon you to obey the command to love others, beginning with you mother, by helping her bear her burdens. Will you make a commitment to show that kind of love today?

Sources: William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT & Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957); W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians & Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968); Alvah Hovey, *An American Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887); J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Curtis Vaughan, *Galatians: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon tape on this text dated 12/9/84); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1975); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Galatians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944, 1973). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).