

**Galatians 6: 2 and 3; “Fulfilling the Law of Christ”, Message # 54 in the series –
“Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on June 1st, 2016,
by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.**

The last time that we were studying together I attempted to show you how to go about restoring a brother who has been overtaken in a trespass; that is, that you and others with you in your church, will go to him in a spirit of gentleness to speak to him about it. It appears from the contextual proximity (the closeness) of verse 2 to verse 1, that the words “bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ” were written as a further explanation of what you, as a Christian and a member of a local church are to do, in relation to the one who you are trying to restore. To bear one another’s burdens is therefore to bear the burden of being patient and forbearing with this same person during all the time of the process of their restoration, after you have told them of their fault. In a more specific and fuller sense it will mean that you will be thinking of what the real burdens of other Christians are. Their real burdens are not so much their material needs, although we would not be opposed to giving help to a needy brother. But their real burdens, as spoken of here in these verses, are related to their being able to grow up into Christ, and what may be hindering them in that way. The burden of every sincere Christian is – What is keeping me from fulfilling all of my holy responsibilities to both God and man? And how can I fulfill the law of Christ? And as they look at other Christians they will be asking themselves: What may be hindering them from fulfilling all of their holy responsibilities to both God and man, and how can I help them, in a righteous and loving way, to come to place where they are fulfilling the law of Christ? So what I would like us to consider tonight , is 1st – What does it mean to fulfill the law of Christ? And 2nd – What is the proper attitude to assume in order to begin to bear one another’s burdens?

1st of all – What does it mean to fulfill the law of Christ?

What is meant by the law of Christ is also known as the Golden Rule, and it is found related by our Lord Himself in Luke chapter 6, verse 31. “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” Now, in applying this verse to ourselves, we need to see that the Lord Jesus extends the Golden rule’s principle beyond the limits of using it in a situation of trying to restore a wayward member of a church or a fellow-Christian, to loving our enemies as well. He uses it as the guiding principle in His instructing our thinking about what we should do in terms of those who hate us or spitefully use us. Look at verse 27 – “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.” “And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.” “Give to everyone who asks of you.” “And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.” “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” This, Jesus says, is the way to treat your enemies; whatever you would want done to you, you should do to them. This is the way of love, and kindness and considering others, to do for them. even as we would want done for us, or to us. It is Christ’s way of doing things that we are being led into. It is what we will do when Christ’s grace is at work in our heart. It is the believer’s fulfilling the law (that is, God’s stated expectation) by means of Christ’s love. It is faith in Christ working by means of His love which He Himself is teaching us, and leading us into.

This leads me to ask this question: Is the law of God, as we find it in the 10 commandments and in the moral law of God in the Old Testament, opposed to, or against this law of Christ? No, we can most certainly say that it is not. For we find that it is stated, both negatively and positively, back in Leviticus chapter 19, verses 17 and 18. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.” “You

shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” Here we find moral commandments given to the Old Testament brotherhood in Israel not to hate a fellow brother in their heart. If there was something that had offended them about their brother’s words or conduct, they were to surely go to them and rebuke their neighbor and not bear sin because of them. That is, they were not to simply allow themselves to degenerate into sinful silence and sinful anger, or keep the matter to themselves and say nothing to the offending brother, for that would be “bearing sin” because of them. That is, they would not be fulfilling their God-directed responsibility to the offender.

Furthermore, they were not to take matters of justice into their own hands personally. They were not to personally avenge a crime or a great offense which had been committed against themselves or others. And, as we are told here: As time went on, they were not to hold a grudge against any of the children of their people, but rather, they were to love their neighbor as themselves. In other words, they were to ask themselves: Would I want to be treated in this way if I was the one who had committed an offense? Would I want my other brothers and sisters quietly burning in rage and anger against me, wanting revenge against me, and holding a grudge against me? But this commandment goes just as far as what Jesus said in Luke chapter 6. They were to love their neighbor as themselves. They were to treat others as they would want to be treated. This is the Golden rule. This is fulfilling the law of Christ.

But let us take this one step farther and see how Jesus would have us who know him in New Testament times fulfill the law of Christ. Turn with me over to John Chapter 13, verses 31-35. “So, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.’ “If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.” “Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer.” “You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you.” “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” You can see here that Judas has just gone out from them. He has just gone to betray His Master; and our Lord knew that this was what he was going to do. And yet, Jesus is still able to say, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” How can God be glorified in His Son, when His only-begotten and beloved Son is being betrayed? He can be glorified in Him because Judas’ betrayal of Jesus would be instrumental as a part of a much greater plan which God had; to redeem a people for His own possession, a people who through His Son, He would redeem and save them from their sins. When a person has been called by the gospel with an effectual call, when they have been justified by faith in Christ, they also can, by the imparted grace of Christ, become those who are able to bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. This is one of the great evidences of a true Christian; that they can begin to think this way and bear one another’s burdens.

Christ at this time, just before He went to the cross, was thinking about how He could bear the great burden of His people’s sins. And He was particularly thinking of bearing the burden of His disciples sins at that time. He was thinking of how He could bear the burden of all their sins through His sacrifice of Himself at the cross. But He was also thinking of how He could bear the burden of their on-going weaknesses and sins in regard to their being able to live their everyday Christian life in confidence and with peace and joy. This is why He washed the feet of the His disciples. Look at verses 3-17. “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.” “After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” “Then He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, are you washing my feet?’ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after

this.” “Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, are You washing my feet?’ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.’ “Peter said to Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet!’”

“Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.’ “Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” “Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ “For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said ‘You are not all clean’ “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’ “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.” “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” Now, Jesus was concerned, at this critical hour, that Peter and the other disciples would understand that, even though they were clean by the spiritual regeneration of their hearts, that they still would need a regular washing (a regular spiritual cleansing) from Him, their Lord, every day in relation to the their feet. That is, He would need to cleanse their everyday walk with Him, as well as bear the burden of the guilt of all of their past sins. They were forgiven because they had faith in Him; and they were clean through regeneration and their believing in His word. But they had not yet understood the fact that in the future, theirs would be a spiritual walk with Him; a walk in which they would make many sinful mistakes, and where they would evidence much sinful weakness in their hearts as a result of their fleshly attitudes and actions. Peter did not see that he needed to be washed by Jesus in this way. He thought that he was sufficient to serve Christ as he was; having been regenerated in his heart. Didn’t Christ see that he had a great determination to follow and serve Him? Jesus did see this, but He also knew that it would not be enough when He was taken from Peter, and Peter would have to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Jesus had to show him that this washing of Peter’s feet was essential to his “having a part” with Him; of Peter’s not only being sanctified as a part of his salvation from sin, but also it would be essential to Peter’s being able to become his useful servant, one who would be able to wash the feet of others.

This is why Jesus said in verse 15 – “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” It was not that the disciples, in spiritually washing one another’s feet, would be able to deal with each other’s sins as Jesus was doing in bearing their burden. He gave them this example so that they would be concerned, in accordance with the grace that He would give to them, in order that they would bear one another’s spiritual and physical burdens as they lived their lives out together, as His disciples, for the glory of His cause and kingdom. And so He gave them what He calls here – A new commandment. John Gill says on John 13: 34 – “As parents, when they take their leave of their children, in their dying moments, give them proper instructions and orders, and lay their dying injunctions on them, so Christ taking his leave of His disciples, gives them His; which were, that they love one another: as brethren in the same family, children of the same Father, and fellow disciples with each other; by keeping and agreeing together, praying one for another, bearing one another’s burdens, forbearing and forgiving one another, admonishing each other, and building up one another in faith and holiness: and this He calls “a new commandment”; that is, a very excellent one; as a “new name”, and a “new song”, denote excellent ones; or it is so called, because it is set forth by Christ, in a new edition of it, and newly and more clearly explained, than before; and being enforced with a new argument and pattern, never used before, as I have loved you; and to be observed in a new manner, not “in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit.” (End of Quote) All of Christ’s disciples are to love their neighbor as themselves. But all of Christ’s disciples are also to love each other as Christ has loved them; in this sense of bearing

one another's burdens and thus fulfilling His law of the new commandment that they love one another even as He has loved us.

Now 2nd - What is the proper attitude to assume in order to begin to bear one another's burdens?

It is given to us in verse 3 of Galatians 6. "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Usually the reason that a person will not bear the burdens of other Christians when they see them, is because they do not believe that it is a part of what they have been assigned to do for Christ. They are above having to do this kind of spiritual work; they have received Christ's salvation as a free gift of grace, and so they think that this is enough. "Why should I have to take on the burdens, the sinful weaknesses and problems of others?", they think. "I am able to bear my own burdens; then why can they not bear theirs?" In this way, they become conceited and they think themselves to be something when they are really nothing apart from Christ. Everything that we have is from God. But I would ask, in closing: Why should we be too proud to do the lowest service for Christ? If Christ could wash the feet of the disciples, then why can't we be those who bear each other's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ? Paul said in Ephesians 3: 8 – "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And he said in 2nd Corinthians 12, verse 11 – "I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me." "For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing." He also said in 1st Corinthians 13, verse 1 – "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. So you see, my brethren, love is the fulfillment of the law of Christ, and we will better serve Christ when we take the attitude that we are nothing, but learning to be more like Christ is everything. He is the One who is making us into something; that is, He is making us into people who can bear one another's burdens, and in this way we can best bring glory to His name through the way that we live, and others may be helped, changed, and transformed to be more like Christ also.