

Serve – Galatians 5:13-15; 6:1-5,10

Seize the opportunity to serve. We strengthen our relationships when we help and serve another person. Serving is a way of showing love to someone. Pleasing God should be your prime motive for serving others.

Service is simple work done for someone else. For Christians, it is work done lovingly, thoughtfully, and for the good of others. Serving others is a spiritual discipline. The love that we need to serve others in God's name is a supernatural quality the only God can provide. Paul was inspired to write, "Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men." (Ephesians 6:7) God empowers you in your service to others. "Based on the gift (Spiritual Gift) each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything." (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Galatians

Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia to clarify and defend "the truth of the Gospel." (Galatians 2:5, 16) He wanted to show the believers how the Gospel message worked practically in daily Christian living. He chose to use this approach to correct them in regard to both their faith and practice related to the Gospel. The letter tells us much about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Christian life. After the Spirit's role in the ministry of adoption (4:5-6), believers are commanded to "walk by the Spirit," (5:16), be "led by the Spirit," (5:25) as well as "sow to the Spirit," and reap the related eternal harvest. (6:8) We as believers as to be sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are to serve others in a spirit of love.

After Paul left Galatia, some Christian Jews came there and tried to convince the new believers that in order to be truly saved they had to become Jews and practice the Mosaic laws. This was a false teaching promoting the idea that Jesus came to save only the Jews. It supported the idea of salvation by works. We know that Christ came for all and that our salvation is not given because of our works, but is given by the grace of God and our faith in Jesus. Paul teaches them the truth and highlights, in the verses we study today, that freedom in Christ should be defined by our faithful service to others.

Galatians 5:13-15 Show Your Love By Serving the Other Person

V. 13 – "You were called to be free..."

- "Called" refers to God's call of a person to become a Christ follower. Remember, Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws (calls) him, and I will raise him up to the last day." John 6:44 "Called to be free" states that Christians are not bound slaves to God, to the Mosaic Law, to other people, or any human ordinances. But we are not to take this freedom too far. This freedom that God has given to believers is designed to set us free from the bondage of the law and bring us to a new liberty in serving Christ Jesus.

- "Don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh..." Paul is saying ABSOLUTELY do not abuse this freedom. It is NOT a license to sin. The Greek word used in this verse for "flesh" is *sarx*. It refers literally to the soft tissue on your body. It also is a reference to the whole body, to human nature, and especially to corrupt human nature. Paul speaks of the temptation to sin just because you know you are forgiven in Romans 6:1-2 – "What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

- “But to serve one another through love.” Instead of continuing in our sin, we should use our new freedom from sin as a means to serve others. We are to look for opportunities to voluntarily place ourselves in service to others. And this is to be done through love. Service to others is a self-giving act of love.

V.14 – The link between freedom and love

- “The whole law is fulfilled in one statement:” Paul’s emphasis here is that obeying the Mosaic Law takes actions of the body. The Christian Jews in Galatia were teaching that in order to be saved, a male had to be circumcised. In previous chapters Paul said that no person can be justified by the law (2:16, 3:11); he spoke of dying to the law (2:19); and he spoke of the curse of the law (3:13). But Christ has brought salvation through grace.

- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Obey this law takes action of the heart. Paul actually quotes part of the Old Testament Law here, Leviticus 19:18. Jesus also quoted this part of the Law in Mark 12:31. Your love for your neighbor, for another person, is rooted in your love for God. Jesus combined what He called the “second” greatest commandment, with the first. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Deuteronomy 6:5 and Mark 12: 30.

- How are freedom and love connected? Paul says that through love you make yourself a slave to another person. Freedom and slavery have a close relationship in terms of object and goal: what we are a slave to and what we are free for. The freedom Christ gives us is not a static thing. It has to be realized through our actions. Paul speaks of this in Galatians 2:20 – “The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Jesus was equal to God, yet He humbled Himself and became a slave through His death on the cross. For Paul, the freedom of which he spoke was centered in the Crucified Christ.

V.15 – Failing to love each other

- “You bite and devour one another...” Nothing can destroy the Christian fellowship of believers faster than the biting words, and jealousy, and conflict between them. The word “bite” reminds me of the attack of a snake. We as Christian are to encourage and build each other up in love (I Thessalonians 5:11.) We are to love each other and to serve one another.

- “Watch out!” Paul says, “beware.” He gives a strong warning here against doing the things that will bring down the fellowship of believers. Here is the warning: When you deal with people, you have to realize that they not only HAVE problems, but they can BE problems by the way they try to deal with their own needs.

- “You will be consumed by one another.” You will be destroyed. Your “witness” of Christ will be gone, used up, devoured. Your witness to others of the love of God and the sacrifice of Jesus will become ineffective. Our world is already infected with pandemic sinfulness. How do you combat this? You show Christ’s love through your service to others. That is the way to build up each other. You’ve heard it said many times on public media in the past few months concerning the pandemic, “We’re all in this together.”

Galatians 6:1-5 When you help another person you are helping to carry their burden.

Most all of us can sing at least part of the popular songs “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother,” and “Lean on Me When You’re Not Strong.” That is what Paul is telling the Christians in Galatia and us. As Christians we all have a relationship with other believers. We have the same Heavenly Father. We are all saved by the sacrifice of Jesus and have hope through His resurrection. We have the same Spirit living within us. We have all sinned.

A burden is defined as a “load, a care, a responsibility, something oppressive, something that encumbers.” (Webster’s Dictionary)

V. 1 - How Do You Deal with a Person who is “Overtaken in any Wrongdoing?”

- This phrase could mean that a person was “caught in the act” of committing a sin. It could also mean that a person was overtaken by a strong temptation that resulted in sin. They may have been taken by surprise, or surprisingly discovered in the act. It could even have been an unintentional act or it could have been a willful sin.

- Paul says we are to “restore such a person with a gentle spirit.” We are not to be angry at them or judgmental. Gentleness is a Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23.) The work of a Christian servant has to be done with a sensitive spirit and a tender heart. In order to “restore” the person, you must do it gently. You don’t want to harm or humiliate the person in any way. You want to bring them back into a right relationship with God, and with other believers.

- “Watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted.” You have to be cautious. What kind of temptations? The person you are ministering to, whom you are serving could have a variety of problems, such as: physical, emotional, relational, financial, unemployment, family matters, temptations, and others. But, you do not get personally involved with their problem! You must remember, your goal is to bring that person to a right relationship with God, and to His will. The best thing you can do for them is bring them back to God’s grace and enable them to solve the problem so they do not repeat it. But, don’t let them tempt you to fall into the same trap.

- If you find yourself tempted, you need to pray for yourself. Don’t let Satan get a foothold into your heart. That can ruin your ministry and your service to others.

V. 2 – We are to “carry one another’s burdens.”

- You may not be able to completely remove the burden of another person, but you can at least help the person carry the burden. Paul is talking about the “burdens” that weigh down a fellow believer and interrupt their joy in Christ.

- So how do I help “carry another person’s burden?” You have to come alongside of them. You have to let that person know that you want to help. You have to reach out and make the first contact. You have to rely on the Holy Spirit to let you know what to do. You have to pray with the person and for the person. You have to ask, “What can I do to help you.” You have to put your own “burdens” aside and give a part of your time to that person. Costly? It may be. It may also take longer than you anticipate. Don’t give up.

- “In this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Notice, Paul is not referring to the Mosaic Law but to the Law of Christ. What is that? Read Matthew 22:37-38 which I referred to early. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most

important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." Carrying another person's burden shows your love for them in the way Christ loves you.

- You put other's needs ahead of your own, but you must put Christ ahead of others. When you put Christ first in your service to others, your "burden will be light." (Matthew 11:30)

V. 3 – Don't think too highly of yourself.

- Your motive for service should not be for self-gain or glory. Your purpose of service is to help a person mature in Christ. If you consider yourself superior to the person you are serving, you are deceiving yourself and risk being tempted.

- Restoration of a person is never achieved by putting them down, or devaluing them. As a servant of God, you cannot be arrogant. Putting a person down is NOT helping them carry their burden, it is only adding to their load. Such a person who puts down another needs help carrying their own burden.

V. 4 – Self Examination

- You cannot compare yourself to another person because each person has his own burden to bear. "I know how you feel," is never completely true.

- Once you examine your own actions, measuring them against Christ's commands, you may realize that you really have nothing to boast about. Timothy George, a commentator, said, "True self-examination is not merely taking one's spiritual pulse beat on a regular basis but rather submitting one's thoughts, attitudes, and actions to the will of God and the mind of Christ revealed in Holy Scripture."

- An important part of bearing one another's burdens, or serving others, is in holding each other accountable to God's high standards and calling on our lives.

V. 5 – You have to carry your own load.

- Is Paul contradicting himself? No, you have to do back and read verses 2 and 5 in the original Greek. Two different Greek words are used and translated as "burdens." In verse 2 the word is *baros* which refers to a burden as a weight that forces you down. But, in verse 5 the word is *phortion* which means a person's task or service. Quiet a difference. So we could say that as Christians our *phortion* is to help carry another person's *baros*.

Galatians 6:10 – As Christians, we are to look for opportunities to serve others.

- **"Therefore,"** Paul is summing up his teaching on service to others. "We," yes, that includes you and me. We are to take advantage of every opportunity to serve others as it is made known to us. God will provide you opportunities to serve Him, but you have to take the initiative to seize the opportunity.
- How do you "Work for the good of all?" All encompasses both believers and non-believers; family and friends, rich and poor. Your mission field is all of humankind. Now that is a lot of people to serve. We are to serve those within the fellowship of our church and those who are outside our fellowship.
- But Paul does add, "especially for those who belong to the household of faith." If we do good and serve our fellow believers, they in turn will be able to serve and do good for others. This cultivates a love for others.

A final word: Christian minister and author, Warren Wiersbe said in his book, On Being a Servant of God,

“If our service for the Lord doesn’t make us grow, two things may be true: either we’re in the wrong place, or we have the wrong attitude toward the right place. Both are tragic.”

- God measures us, and people measure us, as Christian servants. We make mistakes and other people make mistakes. Paul says that we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we should. We are not to become proud of the “service” we do for God. We are not to forget that humility is a part of Christian service. We are not to use our Christian service to others to make for ourselves a more important place in life. If you think less of yourself, you may become discouraged and quit. Both attitudes are wrong.

Think about how others have served you. Can you use that experience to help serve others.

Ask God for wisdom and direction to serve another person whom He brings into your path.

Who can you walk alongside to help them and ease their burden?

How can you use “service” to help clear up a messy relationship? You will have to dwell on the needs of that person and ask God for guidance in how to minister to them. Ask Him for courage to take the first step. You can strengthen that relationship when you help and serve that person in love.

Remember, as the old hymn says, “Serve the Lord with Gladness.”