

## **One Anothering**

Galatians 6:2-5

People today have a great propensity to make verbs out of nouns. Or verb forms. We add an “ed” to the end of noun, even a person’s name, and it becomes a verb. Or we add an “ing” to a noun in order to describe some action. Those who use Facebook are used to the idea of “friending” someone. To “friend” someone is to give them all the rights and privileges of reading and interacting with you on Facebook. And of course, we have “texting”, which is simply to send a text. That came a generation after “emailing”.

Sometimes you don’t even need to change the form of a noun to make it a verb. So if you “google” something, that means, of course, that you are looking up it’s meaning. Couples who have a baby now bear the responsibility to “parent” that newborn child, such that parenting is now something that you do rather than who you are. And a couple who separate or divorce are said to be uncoupling.

The list can go on and on, and this afternoon I am going to contribute to that list, at least with my sermon title. There are a lot of verses in the Bible that have reference to our relationships with one another, more than 50, and without being too original, many have classified them as the duties of “one-anothering.” And I use that language today because I think that it is helpful for us to realize just how important it is to establish and maintain healthy, godly relationships with one another, relationships established not so much by the emotional or even sentimental enjoyments of some friendships, but by the biblical responsibilities which God gives to us as Christians.

### **I. OUR MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ONE ANOTHER AS**

## **CHRISTIANS.**

Interesting, isn’t it, to read Cain’s response to the Lord’s inquiry after the first murder in human history. God had received Abel’s sacrifice while his brother Cain’s was judged unacceptable. Cain was angry, and killed his brother. And we read,

Gen. 4:9 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?”

Beloved, the answer to that question is, “Yes!” We are our brother’s keeper. We are responsible for one another. We are related to one another such that we have mutual responsibilities. And, according to Galatians 6:2, that includes the responsibility to,

### **A. Bear one another’s burdens.**

Literally the words would be, “Shoulder together one another's burdens.” So picture in your mind a team of oxen, working under a common yoke. A team of oxen yoked together. That’s the image. A beast of burden, laboring together.

Five times Sharon and I managed to move a very heavy, old upright piano before we finally sold it. Five times. It could not be moved alone. It could not even be done with two men. It was nearly impossible even with three. It required four men.

You might picture four men carrying a casket from a funeral service, each bearing one fourth of the load. Picture any group of men working shoulder to shoulder, combining together their strength and their power, accomplishing together far more than any one of them could have accomplished apart. Bear one another's burdens. A burden is a great weight that is too oppressive for one man to handle by himself. Carry each other's burdens.

So how well do you do that? It means you have to be involved with one another. You have to know one another. You have to be engaged with one another. You have to get your hands dirty, working with others in their lives, living in their lives. Which means, you can't be self-absorbed or self-focused. Life isn't about you. Life is not only about your situation or circumstances. It is about the body. And the body needs to live together.

I have known people over the years of my ministry who came to church every week, and barely knew anything even about people sitting in the next pew. I have known people who never got involved in the lives of others because they chose to stay away, even to shun them. And they kept their own life to themselves as well, so that other's couldn't bear their burdens. That is the complete and total opposite of what Paul describes in verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens." And notice the context of that responsibility and duty, "and so fulfill the law of Christ."

So this is the law. This is,

### **B. Love according to the law.**

James calls it "the royal law."

James 2:8 "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well."

And that is what Paul refers to here. The law of love. The second great commandment. Jesus was once asked,

Mat. 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the first and great commandment. 39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Thus the law of Christ isn't something different or distinct from the moral law of God, but rather that same law which Jesus intensifies by its personal applications. And so the law of Christ is not simply some sort of outward or external duty, but a deeply inter-personal responsibility. Love is just not some warm feeling that you get around people with whom you are very familiar; rather it is the willingness to bear one another's burdens.

So what are some of the burdens you see, in the lives of others around you? How has God enabled you to shoulder that burden with them? What about people you don't know very well? You can't possibly fulfill this responsibility unless you know them well enough to know what burdens exist in their lives. That's what it means to love one another.

Notice, then, how Paul continues, for this responsibility to bear one another's burdens requires,

## **II. OUR SELF-AWARENESS AS CHRISTIANS.**

v.3

Let me say it again, as I often do. "It's not about you." It's not about doing things for others to make yourself look good, or to make yourself feel good. It's not about drawing attention to yourself and gaining an advantage for yourself. There is none of that in any of this. The whole point is the other person, and if I could make any attempt to summarize the law of God with reference to loving your neighbor as yourself, this is it—the focus is entirely on the other person. The focus is upon one-another, not upon yourself. The goal is to promote the welfare of someone else, by bearing their burden with them, rather than making yourself look good.

And so Paul gives to us,

### **A. A consistent warning against the spirit of self-importance.**

The words are so simple, aren't they? And so penetrating.  
v.3

Did you get the foundation of those words. You are nothing. You are not that important. Your own preeminence is irrelevant. What you get out of it, how you benefit, how you look, how important you seem or how well you are judged—all of that is absolutely and totally irrelevant.

This is a necessary warning, isn't it? So often, too many of us are infected with a zeal to promote our own self-importance. That is called pride. Pride causes you to think much more highly of yourself than you should. And we are all prone to that.

One commentator writes, "The greater advance a man makes in true Christianity, the more humble he becomes. He gets better acquainted with himself, more emancipated from the dominion of self-love, and obtains higher and juster ideas of that holiness, which is the object of his ambition."

People of God, beware the danger of thinking yourself to be something, when you are nothing. Beware the danger of thinking yourself to be important, or strong, or secure, or rich, or righteous. It is a deception. And that's what pride is. A deception. It fools you. It blinds you. It makes you think about yourself and evaluate yourself entirely wrong. So Paul gives us,

### **B. A reminder of the dangers of self-deception.**

Beware the deception that causes you to think of yourself as better than others. Beware the deception of thinking that sin is not actually a problem for you. Beware the deception of the Pharisees, whom Jesus described as white washed tombs.

Mat. 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

That's what pride does. That's what the deception of pride is all about. You become proud of that white-washed appearance. The outside of the cup and dish is clean. But inside. Oh, the reality of what is inside. The dangers of self-deception.

v.3

Paul describes for us the antidote, the solution, the proper alternative. It is nothing less than an honest and...

## **III. GODLY SELF-EVALUATION.**

It begins with,

### **A. Self-examination**

v.4

Scripture is full of such examples. For instance, the familiar words of,

Psalms 139:23 "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

There is something else absolutely crucial in this self-evaluation, and that is to avoid and entirely put away the common and pervasive tendency of comparing yourself to others. There are two especially harmful effects that come inevitably when you do that comparison. Either you compare yourself favorably to others, resulting in a proud and self-satisfied, self-exalting arrogance, or you compare yourself unfavorably to others, resulting in your own insecurity.

So how many of you have ever done that? Looked down upon someone else in such a way as to consider yourself more highly. Or been afflicted with a great insecurity because when you made the comparison you just didn't measure up.

That's a terrible plague upon our culture today, the insecurity of fear what others think of you. The insecurity of fearing for your reputation with others. Fearing man instead of fearing God. Worrying about what others think.

Let me say something rather dramatic. I don't care what you think. Ultimately, I don't care what you think about me. Because what you think about me is not what matters to me at all. Not by comparison to what God thinks of me. And my point is, it is God's evaluation, it is God's judgment of you that should be your focus. Not the insecurity of what others think.

I believe that is Paul's emphasis in,  
v.4

Calvin puts it this way, "By a powerful blow, Paul has already struck down the pride of man. But it frequently happens that, by comparing ourselves with others, the low opinion which we form of them leads us to entertain a high opinion of ourselves. Paul declares that no such comparison ought to be allowed. Let no man, he says, measure himself by the standard of another, or please himself with the thought, that others appear to him less worthy of approbation. Let him lay aside all regard to other men, examine his own conscience, and inquire what is his own work. It is not what we gain by detracting from others, but what we have without any comparison, that can be regarded as true praise."

To be a bit psychological, if you grew up in a home where you were constantly criticized, this can be especially hard to do. If

your family relationships were characterized by one person assuming control and dominance, then you have probably learned how to live for the approval of others, and frustrated by the inability to get that approval.

Some of you are naturally more insecure than others, though the inclination is common to nearly everyone. We fear the disapproval of others. So we act in ways that we think in our own calculations to be ways in which to win their approval. And that is called insecurity.

Paul tells us to put away that sort of motivation.  
v.4

Don't live with the insecurities of always comparing yourself to others.

Rom. 14:7 "For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

And so Paul writes,

1 Cor. 4:3 "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. 6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. 7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not

receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it.”

This is the solution to the self-absorbed insecurities of our age. Not blind self-love, but biblical self-evaluation. Replace the fear of men with the fear of God, for it is God to whom you must give account. It is God before whom you will stand in judgment. And with that Paul gives to us the idea of,

### **B. Biblical self-reliance.**

v.5

On the surface, that seems to contradict what we read in,  
v.2

But the contradiction is only on the surface. It is actually no contradiction at all. Verse two speaks of your duties and obligations to one another. Verse 5 speaks of your responsibilities before God. Verse 5 means that you are responsible to God for your own actions. It means you will personally stand before the Lord to give an account. No one can stand in for you on that day. You are responsible to the Lord for you. Responsibility for our actions can never be transferred to someone else.

I am eager to stress the corporate nature of our identity as Christians. We belong to a body, a church. We belong to one another. And even in this context, we are to bear one another's burdens. That's who we are. Truly, no man is an island. And you are your brother's keeper.

But with all that, you are personally and individually accountable to God. You will give account to God yourself. Individually. “Each will have to bear his own load.”

The first application of all this is for non-Christians. If you are without Christ and expect to die without faith in Jesus Christ as the only way in which you might be saved and gain an entrance into heaven, then nothing remains but a fearful and terrible judgment. Without Christ, you will bear your own load of sin before God, and you will not stand!

And yet for Christians, with Christ, by faith in Christ, that judgment will be your entrance into eternal glory. And with that hope, with that sure and certain confidence, let that day of judgment be your motivation in life here and now. Accept this responsibility to bear your own load. Never make excuse for your sin, but confess it freely upon deep and personal self-examination. And the reality of that day of judgment be the motivation for your own faithfulness to God.

2 Cor. 5:9 “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

So make it your aim to please God, to honor him that he might say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Don't think of yourself too highly. And bear one another's burdens. Your willingness and ability to do both of those things will enable you to stand before God with confidence. That is the meaning and the encouragement of,

v.4-5