

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 September 2017. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Brotherhood of Believers

Galatians 6:1-6

Most of us know what it is like to have a brother or a sister. There is a strong bond in the brother or sister relationship. I have rarely had the chance to see my own brothers and sister over the last 12 years, because they are all on the other side of the world; yet, whenever we *do* meet up every so many years, it is as though we had never left off in our relationship. That deep bond of love never goes away.

Now, we all realise that people can have other kinds of bonds with each other, which make them *like* “brothers” or “sisters” to each other. In countless clubs, fraternities, and societies, people call themselves “brothers” and “sisters.” In religious orders and secular orders alike, people call themselves “brother” and “sister.” In many **ethnic groups**, the men call themselves “brothers,” and the women call themselves “sisters.” However, the New Testament speaks of a “brotherhood” that is unlike any other. It is not based upon oaths, common philosophies or creeds, or blood kinship. It is based upon a common *personal relationship* with God the Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is based on being born again, and being in the family of God. All who are saved are “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ can be found all over the globe. No matter what culture they are from, they are “brothers and sisters in the Lord”: and when they happen to cross paths, they are able to fellowship with each other as though they had known each other all their lives. Yet, there is an local organisation, which God has instituted, where brothers and sisters in the Lord can have *especially* close fellowship. In this institution, brothers and sisters in the Lord join together as a body, and assemble together every week. It is called the “church.” Every true church is the Body of Christ in its location; and Christ is the Head of that body. A true church is a living organism, made up of living saints, who are all alive to God!

As we finished our study of **Galatians 5** several weeks ago, we saw what it means for a believer to “**walk in the Spirit.**” Now, in **Galatians 6**, we will find some practical applications of *how* Christians who are “walking in the Spirit” should conduct themselves in their relationship with their brothers and sisters in Christ. The title of this message is “**The Brotherhood of Believers.**”

Read Galatians 6:1-6.

I. The sinning brother (v. 1)

Six thousand years ago, the very first murder in human history was committed by the very first person who was ever born—Cain. God approached Cain, and asked him where his brother Abel was. In his arrogance, Cain dared to *lie* to God’s face. But that’s not all. Cain got *cheeky* about it, too. Let’s take a look at Cain’s answer to God; and as we do so, let’s examine what Cain had to say in regard to *his* brother.

Read Genesis 4:1-12.

Did you notice that God didn’t answer Cain’s question directly? The answer was so obvious, that it didn’t even need to be stated. It has been about 6,000 years since Cain asked God that

brazen question, “**Am I my brother’s keeper?**”; and the answer to that question is still, “**Yes! You are your brother’s keeper.**” Christ commands us to love our neighbour. This includes everyone around us—even our enemies. Jesus said, “**Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven**” (Matthew 5:44-45). Loving your brother (even if he be an enemy) is a trait of God’s family. Christian, as you love and watch out for the welfare of those around you, you are demonstrating your family resemblance to your heavenly Father, and to Christ, your elder Brother.

Now, if God expect us to love even of our enemies, how much more so does He expect us to love and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ—and especially for those who are in our church body? Every Christian has a solemn responsibility to love and care for the brethren.

Read Galatians 6:10.

We who know Christ say we believe that we ought to love the brethren; but in reality, we don’t always practice this responsibility very well. Why not? Because with true love comes *responsibility*; and responsibility can be burdensome! What kind of responsibilities do we have toward our brethren in Christ? Well, here in **Galatians 6:1**, Paul makes it clear that we, as believers, have a responsibility to “**restore**” our brother when he is caught in a fault. It is not “love” to allow a brother in Christ to continue to commit a sin that is cutting off his fellowship with the Lord, hurting the church, and causing reproach to the name of Christ. It is actually *unloving*! We have a responsibility to “**restore**” that brother in a spirit of meekness.

Paul makes it very clear what a Christian’s responsibility toward his brother is. Yet, few churches are practicing this command. Why do so many Christians in our churches today recoil from this command? Well, to understand why we so often fail in this area, let’s take a moment to examine our responsibilities toward the *lost*.

Take the matter of giving, for example. Even lost folks know, deep in their conscience, that they are supposed to be their “brother’s keeper.” Hence, they do things such as “charity drives.” Tossing money into a bucket makes them *feel* as though they are being their “brother’s keeper.” It soothes their conscience. But how many born-again Christians are committed to be their “brother’s keeper” in the *biblical way*? The biblical way to give is to give your tithe (10%), as well as other freewill offerings, to the Lord, *through your local church*. And what does your church do with the money? They use it to finance Christ’s Great Commission! Every true, Bible-preaching church uses the Lord’s money to take the Gospel to the lost, so that they may be snatched from sin, death, and hell. *That* is truly being your “brother’s keeper.” Yet, many Christians are not willing to make this commitment.

But let’s take our responsibility to the next level. Let’s say that you, as a Christian, *do* give of your tithe to the Lord, through your local church. You’ve exercised your faith to that point. That’s great. But how do you fare when it comes to taking the Gospel to the lost *personally*? Many more Christians bale out at this point, because this requires that your *heart* be involved, and not just your pocketbook. When you begin to develop a genuine *burden* for lost people, tears will be shed, and your heart will feel anguish. That’s uncomfortable; and we don’t like discomfort, do we? The reason why we fail in our responsibility toward the lost is that we don’t like **responsibility and commitment**; and we don’t like **discomfort**.

Could it be that we fail in our responsibility toward our brethren for the same reasons—because we don't like responsibility and commitment, and we don't like discomfort? Let's look again at the commitment that is involved in restoring a brother. **(Read verse 1 again.)** The Greek word for “*restore*” here in **verse 1** has the idea of putting a displaced bone back in joint. Now, that's a fitting description, isn't it? In **1 Corinthians 12**, Paul says that the church is like a “body”; and each church member is like a body part, working together with the rest of the body. So, when a “bone” in the body of Christ is out of joint (when that member is caught up in a sin), what happens? It causes pain to the whole body! That pain will continue until the bone is restored to its right place. As Christians, we have a responsibility to let a brother know when he is grieving the Lord with his sin, so that he might get right with the Lord.

This is the point at which many Christians fail to obey the Lord. When we see a brother sinning, we too often turn a blind eye to it; and we justify our indifference by saying, “Well, Jesus said, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged.’” Now, on the surface, this *sounds* right. But is this the right understanding of what Jesus said? Let's take a close look at Jesus' words.

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

The verse in this passage which so many Christians fail to consider is **verse 5**. **(Read verse 5 again.)** Look closely at what Jesus said. Did He say, “Do *not* pull the mote out of your brother's eye”? No, He said, “*First* pull the beam out of your *own* eye, and *then* you will see clearly to pull the mote out of your brother's eye.” In other words, you *do* need to make discernments (judgments) about sin. You *do* need to recognise that that sin in your brother's life is wrong, that it is causing him harm, and that it needs to be removed. However, you must make sure that your *own* heart is right with the Lord before you dare to confront your brother about *his* sin. Throughout the New Testament, Christians are *commanded* to make judgments about sin in the church, and to *confront* the offender in love. Let's look at a couple examples.

Read Matthew 18:15-17.

In this passage, Christ told us what to do if someone in the church have committed a *personal* wrong against you. You are to go to that person alone, and confront him about the wrong that he has done. If he repent and get right with you, then that is the end of the matter. No one else should know about it. However, if he won't get it right, then two or three other witnesses should be brought to verify what is said by both parties. Again, the aim is repentance and restoration of fellowship. However, if he still won't repent, then it becomes a church matter. It is to be brought before the entire church. If the man still won't repent of his wrong, then he is to be removed from church membership by the whole church.

Let's look at another situation in which Christians are to make judgments about sin.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:4-8.

This is a very different matter from that of **Matthew 18**. This is not a matter of *personal* offence of one member against another; it is a matter of flagrant, open immorality. The situation was that a member of the church of Corinth was living in incest with his stepmother. *Everyone* knew about this; yet, no one was doing anything about it. Paul commanded the members of the church of Corinth to remove this man from the assembly immediately, and not even to allow him into their homes. The lost world needed to see that wickedness is *not* allowed in Christ's church. Yet, Paul made it clear that their goal was not to destroy this

brother, but to restore him. As it turned out, his punishment of being removed from the church (though it was painful) had the desired effect. He genuinely repented of his sin; and after he had repented, Paul commanded them to restore him to fellowship, and forgive him.

Now, make no mistake about it: this is *not* easy. Enacting these judgments upon a sinning brother in the church requires *commitment* to Christ's commandments. Could it be that many Christians's love for the brethren is more superficial than they would like to admit? Solomon said in **Proverbs 27:6**, "***Faithful are the wounds of a friend.***" Many Christians aren't willing to be the kind of friend who is willing to "wound" his brother by telling him the truth that he needs to hear, because they know that there is sin in their *own* life that they have not gotten right. Some Christians do rebuke their brother about his sin; but they do it in a spirit of harshness, and not meekness; and they fail to search their own hearts first, to see if there be any sin that needs to be removed. That's not being a friend, either. It's called being self-righteous and hypocritical. Those who confront others about their sin without first confessing their *own* sin are headed toward a fall themselves. Paul commanded the Galatians to "***restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.***"

Christians who are not "walking in the Spirit" are not fit for this task. That's why Paul said, "***Ye which are spiritual***" (in other words, "You who are walking in the Spirit") are to undertake this responsibility. By the way, this doesn't mean that it is O.K. for you to be fleshly, and to let the *spiritual* church members do all the confrontations. No, *you*, Christian, should be walking in the Spirit, so that *you* may be in the right spiritual condition to restore a brother. Are you doing that?

II. The burdened brother (vv. 2-5)

(Read verses 2-5 again.) In these verses, we see another responsibility that Christians have toward their brothers and sisters in the Lord. As Christians, we have a responsibility toward our *burdened* brethren. In **verse 2**, Paul tells us that we should bear "***one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.***"

Most unsaved people think of a church as a sort of "preaching station." It's a place where they go to sit through a boring service, and to endure a boring sermon, so that they can earn a little more "heavenly insurance." But to the born-again Christian, church has nothing to do with salvation. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. To a true Christian, church is a place where Christians can pray with each other, uplift and encourage each other in the Lord, and help each other through the trials and discouragements that they are all facing.

This is exactly why Paul exhorted Christians to "***tarry one for another***" whenever they meet for church (**1 Corinthians 11:33**). "***Tarry one for another***" means "Stick around for a while!" Don't bolt straight out the door after church; wait around on your brethren, and spend some time with them. As members of God's family, *we need each other*. We all have burdens and trials that we are going through; but if we don't stick around at church, and get to know each other, how will we know how to pray for each other? How can you encourage your brethren, and help them in practical ways, and help to bear their burdens, if you don't know them enough to know what they are going through?

Now, no one—not even a dear brother or sister in Christ—can do for you what *Christ* can do for you. *Christ* is the "***God of all comfort.***" Peter exhorted Christians to cast "***all your care upon him; for he careth for you***" (**1 Peter 5:7**). Christ is the first one to whom we should go with our burdens, because He is the only one who can answer our prayers, and bring peace and

joy to our hearts. Oftentimes, the Lord Jesus is the *only* one to whom we can pour out our heart about a specific trial or temptation that we are going through, because it is so personal.

Nonetheless, God did create us as social creatures. As human beings, we *do* need comfort from others. God created us that way. Well, guess what? God has created an institution where His people can receive human love and comfort. It's called "the church"! He has given us brothers and sisters in the Lord, with whom we can assemble together. Are you helping your brothers when you are at church, Christian? Are you bearing their burdens?

We all have many kinds of burdens. Many times, our brothers and sisters in Christ have physical, material needs, with which we can help in practical ways. However, I believe the "burdens" that Paul is talking about here in **verse 2** are, primarily, the *spiritual* burdens that we bear. Even when we have material and physical needs, there are *spiritual* burdens that go along with those material needs, because the situation is weighing upon your spirit, and is causing you to have doubts and fears in your heart. We all battle against temptations every day, as well. As we fight these battles, we don't need to take our sins to a priest; rather, we take them to our one and only High Priest, Jesus Christ. He is the one who can forgive our sins, and give us "**grace to help in time of need.**" But after we have confessed our sins to God, **James** says that we should *confess our faults one to another* (**James 5:16**).

Why do we need to confess our sins to each other? Well, confessing our faults to each other doesn't add any more "forgiveness" to our sins. *Christ* does all the forgiving. **But it does keep us accountable to each other.** If a brother or sister be going through a battle with temptation, that brother should be able to come to *you* and ask *you* for prayer. To be fit for that responsibility, you must be "*walking in the Spirit.*" Those who are "*walking in the Spirit*" don't blab people's sins to others, and gossip about them; they *pray* for them.

Bearing each other's spiritual burdens also includes the restoring of a sinning brother, which we read about in **verse 1**. These are great responsibilities, because they require that our hearts be right with God. Christian, are you getting the idea that church isn't a game? It is serious! The church is Christ's body; and those who are members of a church are part of that body. Just as the organs of our physical bodies must work together, so we who are members of Christ's body must work together. We are not to be "lone ranger" Christians, floating around out there on our own, and serving God in whatever way suits us. No, we need a church. We need to assemble together with believers, so that we can uplift and help each other, and bear each other's burdens. How seriously do *you* take this responsibility, Christian?

Now, what are we really doing when we bear each other's burdens? Paul says that we are fulfilling "**the law of Christ.**" Which "law of Christ" would this be? Let's take a look.

Read John 13:34-35.

The law of Christ is that we "**love one another.**" Now, why did Jesus call this a "**new commandment**"? It was actually a very *old* commandment. God had commanded the children of Israel all the way back in **Leviticus 19:18** that "**Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**" If God had given this command centuries earlier, why did Jesus call it a *new* commandment?

Well, here's the answer: When the Son of God came down into our world, and took on human flesh, and walked among us, the world saw the truest, purest love in action. No one had ever seen such love before! Yes, the Jewish nation had been commanded to "**love thy neighbour**"

fourteen centuries earlier; but they had never seen true, pure, utterly selfless love demonstrated before. Christ's example of selfless love was so radical, that when Jesus commanded them to "**love one another,**" it was as if they had never heard this command before. In Jesus, they saw a whole new quality of love. That is why Jesus used the Greek word *kainen* when He called it a "new commandment." The word *kainen* means "new" in the sense of *quality*. Even if Christ had never re-stated this command to "love one another," His personal example is a "new" law to us. We are to love as He loved. That means bearing each other's burdens.

Now, in **verse 3**, Paul gives us a warning of something that can hinder our fulfilling the law of Christ. Let's read it again. (**Read verse 3 again.**) The thing that will always hinder you from fulfilling the "law of Christ" is *pride*. You cannot possibly fulfil Christ's command to help a burdened brother, or to restore a sinning brother, if you think that you are something that you're not. In short, it is impossible to fulfil the Law of Christ if you be not "*walking in the Spirit.*" The moment you stop walking in the Spirit, *pride* creeps in: and when *pride* creeps in, you are in no condition to bind up someone else. Instead, you yourself are tottering on the edge of a pit, ready to fall. So, here is Paul's remedy for *pride*. (**Read verse 4 again.**)

Paul exhorted the Galatians to "**prove your own work.**" The word "prove" means to "test." Christian, if you are going to be fit to fulfil the Law of Christ, you must constantly be testing your own inward motives against God's Word. You must constantly be crying out to God, "**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me**" (Psalm 139:23-24). When you see your own sin for what it is, and you are regularly crying out to God to remove sin from your heart, you are much more likely to have that "**spirit of meekness.**" Why? Because you know that you are no more deserving of God's grace and mercy than your sinning brother is!

Notice what happens when you are "proving your own work." You are able to "rejoice in yourself alone." "Rejoice in yourself alone" does *not* mean "boast." It means that after you have confessed your sin with God, and your sin has been cleansed, *you have the blessedness of a clear conscience before God.* Whether the brother that you're attempting to restore gets right with God or not, you know that *you*, in your own heart, are right before God.

Now, Paul has one more thing to say about this "burden bearing" business. Let's read **verse 5** again. (**Read verse 5.**) Paul says that "**every man shall bear his own burden.**" Now, what does he mean by this? Didn't he just command us to bear *each other's* burdens? Yes, he did. Why, then, is he now telling us that "**every man shall bear his own burden**"? The answer is: At this point, Paul isn't talking about *this life on earth* anymore. He's talking about the *future*. Yes, in *this* life, we are to *bear each other's* burdens. But when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give account of ourselves before God, there won't be any more "burden sharing." You will bear your *own* burden. You will have to give account for the things that *you* have done in *your* body, and not for what someone else has done. Your salvation won't be in jeopardy; but you will be ashamed for what you didn't do for Christ in this life.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

A false gospel of salvation through good works fosters pride in people. People in churches that preach false gospels couldn't care less about someone in their church who is sinning. In fact, they look down on that person with malicious glee. It gives them comfort to see someone else who is sinning, because they can then say, "See? I'm not as bad as *that* person." But in true Christianity, God's children are motivated by the love of Christ to restore their sinning brothers, and to help them with their burdens. Christian, are you fulfilling that command?

III. The teaching brother (v. 6)

(Read verse 6 again.) In this verse, we see one more responsibility that Christians have toward their brothers. Christians have a responsibility toward the **“teaching brother”** (in other words, the **pastor** of their local church, who feeds them God’s Word). The Christian’s responsibility toward his pastor is that he is to support his living through tithes and offerings. The word **“communicate”** means “share with,” in the sense of bestowing material goods.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

In **Luke 10:7**, Jesus said that the **“labourer is worthy of his hire.”** What does a minister of the Gospel do to earn that hire? Well, come live in the Finley house for a week, and you’ll see! The pastor’s job isn’t from 9:00 to 4:00, Monday to Friday. Any pastor who is worth his salt works from long before dawn until late at night, every day of the week. Now, as you all know, I do not receive any pay from Redemption Baptist Church. I am a church-planting missionary; and as a missionary, I am supported by churches in America. However, our goal, as a church, is that one day, after I have moved elsewhere to start another church, this church *will* be able to support its next pastor, at least partially. This is biblical and right.

What can a church expect to receive from their pastor in return for the pay that they give him? Well, **Acts 6:1-4** says that a pastor is to pray continually and fervently for his flock; and he is to spend much time in studying Scripture, so that he can feed the flock with rich instruction from God’s Word. **Second Timothy 4:1-5** says that a pastor is to teach **“sound doctrine,”** and not what people *want* to hear. He is to be **“endure afflictions”**; and he is to do **“the work of an evangelist”** (take the Gospel to the lost). **First Peter 5:1-3** teaches that the pastor is not to be covetous; and he is not to be a tyrant, lording it over God’s flock. Instead, he is to be an example to the flock. As a pastor, I am just a sinner saved by grace. Though I have a special office, I am nothing more or less than what every Christian is. I am a brother in Christ. We who know Christ are *all* brethren. As brethren, are we doing our duty toward each other?

Conclusion: If you be saved, you are a “brother in the Lord.” Do you take that kinship seriously? If you be not “walking in the Spirit,” there is no way that you can possibly perform these duties toward your brethren. Through the Spirit, are you seeking to put sin and pride to death every day, so that you can restore a sinning brother, or uphold a struggling brother? I would also ask: **Are you saved?** If you have never repented of your sin and trusted Christ alone, none of these things we’ve talked about are relevant to you. To be birthed into God’s Kingdom and family, you *must* be saved. The Scripture says, **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Romans 10:9-13).