

BURDEN-BEARING

NO. 2831

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 17, 1903
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 26, 1886

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ....every man shall bear his own burden.”
Galatians 6:2-5

OBSERVE, dear friends, that the apostle says in the second verse of this chapter, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” These Galatians had been trying to bear the heavy burden of the law of Moses. They had, as far as they could, put themselves again under the old ceremonial law. They had forsaken the Gospel way of justification by faith, and had sought to be made perfect by their personal obedience to the law.

Now, the apostle, as though he would expel one affection by another, says, “You want a law, you wish to be under a law, well, here is the law of Christ, yield yourselves to it. Instead of observing the outward ceremonies of the Levitical law, here is a living law, which touches the heart, and influences the life, obey that law. You are Christians, you have come under law to Christ by the very fact that you are not your own, but have been bought with a price by Him, now see to it that you yield implicit obedience to the law of Christ.”

It is somewhat remarkable, I think, that many of those who are self-righteous, and apparently pay much regard to the law of Moses, are usually quite forgetful of that which is the very essence and spirit of that law. They are so righteous that they become stern, severe, censorious, which is being unrighteous, for the righteousness even of the law is a righteousness of love, “for all the law is fulfilled in one word,” that is, “love.”

A self-righteous man is not generally a man with a tender spirit. He looks at that which is hard and stern in the law, and he begins to be himself hard and stern, but there is none of the softness, and sweetness, and gentleness, and graciousness which even the law itself required when it said, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as yourself.”

Paul did well, in the mood in which the Galatians were—as they wanted to be under law—to remind them of what is the essence of the law, and he did better still by reminding them that they were under law to Christ, whose law emphasizes the love which even Moses himself had taught under the old dispensation.

These Galatians had most foolishly sought to burden themselves with a load which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. After being set free by the Gospel, they had gone back to the yoke of bondage, so the apostle, in effect said to them, “As you have been so bewitched and fascinated that you want burdens to rest upon you, here are burdens for you, ‘Bear ye one another’s burdens.’ And as you want law, here is law for you, ‘so fulfil the law of Christ.’” It was characteristic of that sacred craftiness, that holy ingenuity, which was so conspicuous in the apostle Paul that he worded his argument thus, that he might draw the attention of these Galatians to it, fix it upon their memories, and if possible, reach and influence their consciences.

Should there be any of you here who desire to come under the yoke of bondage, or who wish to be burden-bearers, or who find great music in the word “law,” I hope you will discover all these things in the text. I see in it, first of all, *community*, “Bear ye one another’s burdens.” Then the latter part of the text teaches us *immunity*. You are not bound to consider other people’s burdens as so much your own

that you become responsible for them. No, “every man shall bear his own burden.” Then the third point, which will be a further opening up of the fifth verse, will be *personality*, “Every man shall bear his own burden.”

I. First, I see, in the text, A MARVELOUS COMMUNITY, “Bear ye one another’s burdens.” What does this mean?

Well, dealing with it first, *negatively*, it does not mean that we are to burden one another. There are some, whose religion consists in laying heavy burdens upon other men’s shoulders, while they themselves will not carry them for a single yard.

You recollect that sect of Pharisees with whom our Master was always in conflict, they have their representatives in these modern times. Why, even this text itself is twisted by some into a reason for burdening others. “Bear ye one another’s burdens,” they say, “do you not see, friend, that you have to help me?” Yes, friend number one, but do you not see that you are not to go and burden that other friend? It is true that you have to bear his burdens.

Let the first application of this passage be to yourself, and be not eager to apply it to your neighbor from whom you want to draw something. You have begun by violating the spirit of the text, not only by not bearing your brother’s burden, but also by thrusting upon him your own burden without taking his in exchange. I say this because I have often found that men naturally draw this inference, “We are to help one another, therefore, please help me.”

The proper inference would be, “We are to help one another, where is the man whom I am to help?” Is not that the most logical conclusion from the text? Yet such is the selfishness of our nature that we begin straightway to say, “This text is a cow, I will milk it,” not, “this text gives me something to do, and I will do it,” but “This text gives me a chance of getting something and I am going to get it.” If you talk like that, it proves that you are out of gear with the text, and have not entered into the spirit of it at all.

The text does not mean that we are to spy out our brother’s faults. Its connection shows that the word “burdens” here means “faults.” “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens.” To a good man, a fault is a burden. The worst burden that he has to carry is the fact that he is not perfect, that is what troubles him.

Now, you and I are not to go about the world spying out everybody else’s faults. “He is an excellent man,” says one, “but”——. Now stop there, you have said quite enough already, you will spoil it if you say another word. “Ah!” says another, concerning someone else, “she is an admirable woman, an earnest worker for the Savior.” Stop there, I know what you are going to say—something that might make it seem that you were about as good as she is, and perhaps a little better, and you were afraid that the light of your star would not be seen unless you first covered up that other star. But it must not be so, “Bear ye one another’s burdens.” Bear with one another’s faults, but spy not out one another’s faults.

I think I have heard a story of Mr. Wesley going several times to a certain town, where he thought that there was a band of earnest Christian people, but he was met by a brother, who told him how dead they all were, what a little life there was in their meetings for prayer, and how much of inconsistency there was amongst them.

When he got there, he did not notice anything of this, so, the third time he went, he said to this brother, “How is it that you always meet me, and tell me of these things about the brethren? Nobody else ever seems to say it.” “Well, you see,” he said, “Mr. Wesley, I have a rare gift of discerning spirits.” “Oh!” said the good man, “then wrap that talent up in a napkin, and bury it, and you will have done the best thing possible with it. The Lord will never ask you what you have done with it if you will only keep it to yourself.”

I believe that there was great wisdom in that advice. There are still some who have only that gift of spying out other men’s faults. That is shocking, dreadful, horrible, so, alter all that, my brother. Shut

your eye, and bend your back. If you know that the burden is there, bow down to help bear it, but do not stand, and point at it, and seem as if you wished to do that brother a discredit.

Further, the text does not mean that we are to despise those who have heavy burdens to bear, for instance, those who have the grievous burden of poverty. “Oh!” say some, “there is a large number of persons attending at such and such a place, but they are all poor people.” So you think little of poor people, do you? Then what poor souls you must be!

“Oh, but!” says one, “such and such a person is always afflicted, and very sad.” And do you despise the afflicted, especially the mentally afflicted, the desponding, the sorrowful among God’s people? Do you turn away from them and say, “I cannot endure talking with persons of that sort, they are so sad in temperament and disposition”?

But the apostle says, “Bear ye one another’s burdens,” which means, do not run away from other people because you see that they are burdened. If you say, “I like to be with the cheerful and the gay, I cannot go and spend my life in comforting the mourners in Zion,” is that mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who was meek and lowly, and who did not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax?

O brothers and sisters, we need to be schooled in this matter of showing sympathy with the sorrowful! No doubt, it will drag our own spirits down if we really have fellowship with those whom God has sorely afflicted in mind, but we must be willing to be dragged down, and it will do us good. If the Lord sees that we are willing to stoop to the very least of His people, He will be sure to bless us. I like sometimes to sing that verse that Dr. Doddridge wrote—and I hope I can sing it truly—

*“Hast Thou a lamb in all Thy flock
I would disdain to feed?
Hast Thou a foe, before whose face
I fear Thy cause to plead?”*

The second half of the verse is much easier than the first half. You might be able to stand up, like young David before Goliath himself, for there is something grand and noble in such an action as that, but to go looking after the poor little lambs of the flock, that scarcely seem as if they are alive, is quite another matter. Yet that is what the text means, “Bear ye one another’s burdens.”

Carry the lambs in your bosom, be tender to such as are afflicted, be, as your Master was, of a gentle, loving spirit, seeking to bear the infirmities of the weak, especially you who are strong, for if you are like those fat cattle described by the Lord in the prophecy of Ezekiel, that thrust the lean cattle with side and with shoulder, and pushed with their horns those of the herd that were sickly, then the Lord will order you to be taken to the slaughter-house, for that is the lot of the fed beasts that are so big and brutal.

The tall tree is uprooted in the breeze which only bends the lowly willow. Blessed are they who never exalt themselves over the weak and afflicted among the children of God.

Nor do I think, dear friends, that our text could be made to mean that any of us may dare to live as if all things existed for our own use. Are there not some people, who seem to feel that they are the center of all creation, and that all things were created for their honor and glory? The working people, round about them, are so many “hands” to be employed by them at the lowest possible rate. The whole stream of trade must be so directed as to conduct the golden liquid into their capacious reservoirs. Politics and everything else must be so arranged that they shall prosper, whoever else may suffer loss.

As they go through the world, their great concern is to mind the main chance. “Every man for himself,” is the motto of their lives, and they try to get as much as they can, and to keep as much as they can. Perhaps even their benevolence is only self-indulgence thinly veiled, for they give alms that they may be seen of men.

There are some Christian people—at least, I call them Christians by courtesy—whose main thought is about saving their own souls. Their favorite hymn is not in “Our Own Hymn Book”—

*“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.”*

That is nothing but a kind of spiritual selfishness—living unto yourself. There is something that you want to get, and that something is what you strive after. Blessed is that man who is saved beyond all fear and who, for the love he bears his Lord, lives wholly and only to prove the power of the grace of God that has been bestowed upon him, and earnestly seeks to be the means of saving the souls of others. The doctrines of grace do this for us—by delivering us from all fear with regard to the future, and fixing us firmly upon the Rock of Ages, they turn our thoughts away from self to the service and the glory of our God. I delight to sing—

*“’Tis done! the great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine;”—*

and to feel that, as He will never lose me, nor permit me to lose Him, I can turn all my thoughts to the rescue of my fellow sinners who are going down into the pit. If God shall grant us grace to enter into the true spirit of the Gospel, having been delivered from every burden, both of this life and of that which is to come, we shall be prepared to bear one another’s burdens, and so to fulfill the law of that Christ who has set us free from the law of sin and death which was in our members.

I have thus shown you, negatively, what the text does not mean.

But dear friends, to take our text *positively*, we can see that it must mean, first, that we are to have great compassion upon those who are bearing the burden of sin. You cannot bear the burden of their sins for them—only Christ can do that—but you can help them to bear their burden. I mean this. Here is a troubled soul, who has begun to seek the Lord, and the poor creature is in great sorrow of heart. Get alongside that burdened one and say, “Now, dear friend, I am very sorry for you, I feel as burdened about you as if it were my own soul, not yours, that was in trouble.”

Ask the Lord to help you when you have left that person, after speaking with much prayer and many tears, go home so grieved that you cannot sleep, and keep on crying to God in secret about that soul. Then, when you get up in the morning with no burden concerning your own soul, because God has saved you, still feel that you have to carry the burden of this poor soul who does not know the Lord, and at last, you get to feel as if you could not live if that soul did not also live. If it will not repent, you seem to feel the burden of its guilt. If it will not believe in Christ, you wish you could believe for it.

Of course you cannot repent and believe for it, but you can believe about it, and you can, by faith and prayer, bring it to Jesus’ feet, and lay it there. The Holy Ghost often draws sinners to the Savior by means of the love of Christians. We can love them to Christ, and if we love them as the apostle Paul did when he travailed in birth for them until Christ was formed in them, it will not be long before we shall see them converted. I am sure that it is so, and that one great secret of soul-winning lies in the bearing of the burdens of the unconverted.

But we must take special care, dear friends, that we do this in the case of backsliders, because the text, in its connection, alludes to them most particularly, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens.” If that backslider has been awakened to a sense of his true condition, he will feel very unhappy, so be you very sympathetic towards him.

He may be afraid to come back into membership with the church, if so, go after him, and encourage him to return. If he says, “I have brought disgrace upon the name of Christ,” try to bear part of the shame that he feels. If he says, “I cannot face So-and-so,” say to him, “I will stand between you, or I will go and plead for you.” Take to yourself, as far as you can, the shame and the disgrace which belong to

the backslider. Try to get right into his place. I am sure that there is no other way of setting broken bones that is equal to this.

There is no way of bringing back the wandering sheep like that which the good Shepherd took when he lifted the poor creature right up on his own shoulders. It was too worn, and weak, and weary, for him to lead it back, or drive it back, so he carried it all the way, and brethren, let us carry the backsliders on our own shoulders in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. As far as it is possible, let us compel them to come in once more that God's house may be filled, and let us take the burden of their grief, and of their shame, upon ourselves. Thus shall we carry out the injunction of the text, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Next, the text seems to me to mean, "Be very patient with the infirmities of your brethren." "Oh, but So-and-so is very quick tempered!" I hope that it is a burden to him to be quick tempered, and if so, it is an additional reason why you should bear with him. "But So-and-so is really very bitter in spirit." Yes, alas! there are still some people of that sort, but you are to bear with them. I hope it is a burden to them if they have even a tinge of bitterness in their nature, so bear with it. "I do not see why I should," says one. Well, then, open your eyes and read the text, "And so fulfil the law of Christ."

If the Lord Jesus Christ can put up with you, you ought to be able to put up with anybody. "Oh, but some people are so exacting!" Yes, some of you know that I am sometimes very exacting. When I am suffering very greatly from gout, if anybody walks heavily and noisily across the room, it gives me pain. Well, then, what do you think happens? Why, they go across the room on tiptoe, they do not say to one another, "We cannot help it that he is ill, and that our noise gives him pain, we shall walk just as we always do, we have a right to walk like that."

No, no, they do not need even to be asked to move about quietly, but they say, "Poor man, he is so ill that we must be as gentle as we can with him." Could not you look in that kind of spirit upon brothers and sisters, who are not quite all that you would like them to be, and say, "They are not well spiritually," and deal very gently with them, "and so fulfil the law of Christ"?

We who are Christians are to live together in heaven forever, so do not let us fall out by the way. Come, my brother, I have to bear a great deal from you and you have to bear a great deal from me, so let it be give and take all the way through. "Bear ye one another's burdens,"—not I bear yours without you bearing mine, but I bear yours and you bear mine, you put up with me, and I put up with you, and in that way we shall both "fulfil the law of Christ."

Does not the text also mean that we are to bear one another's burdens by having a deep sympathy with one another in times of sorrow? Oh, for a sympathetic heart! Seek after it, beloved Christian men and women. Seek to have large hearts, and tender hearts, for the world is full of sorrow, and one of the sweetest balms to sorrow is the sympathy of Christ flowing through the hearts of His own redeemed ones. Be tender, be full of pity, be full of compassion.

But this sympathy must show itself by actual assistance rendered wherever it is possible. "Bear ye one another's burdens." Let the burden of poverty be borne by those of you who have no poverty of your own. Succor your brethren in their times of need. Light their candle when their house grows dark. Blessed are those men and women who addict themselves to the ministry of the saints, and who seek, wherever they can, to lighten the burdens of life for their fellow Christians, lending their shoulders whenever they can give support to the weak.

Brothers and sisters, we should also bear one another's spiritual burdens by helping one another in our soul struggles. I am afraid that in some places of worship, Christian men and women come up to the house of prayer and go home again, without ever speaking to one another. I do not think that is the case here, but it is the case in many places, especially in very respectable places of worship. There they go in and out as if they were all self-contained, and could not speak to one another, especially if they happen to be half-sovereign people and a half-crown person is anywhere near, they cannot speak to him at all.

This is all contrary to the mind of Christ. In our church fellowship, there should be real communion, and we should converse with one another. In the olden times, "They that feared the LORD spake often

one to another,” and Christian people should do the same still, and you, who are elders in the church, might often say a word that would help a poor young friend who is struggling to do right. You, who are joyous, might often lend some of your sunbeams to those who are in the dark, and you ought to do so, and it would be to your own profit as well as to the profit of others. Trade produces wealth and the inter-trading of Christians, exchanging their good things, one with the other, would tend to the spiritual enrichment of the entire body. God help you so to do by communion with one another!

“Bear ye one another’s burdens” also by much prayer for each other. When you have prayed for yourself, end not your supplication. Keep a little list of people to be prayed for, and try to put down, on your list, certain things which you know trouble them, and which also trouble you, and bring them before the Lord. In some way or other, bear ye those burdens which God lays upon your brethren.

II. The time flies so quickly that I can only speak very briefly upon the second point, that is, IMMUNITY, “For every man shall bear his own burden.”

Let us always, for our comfort, recollect that there is a point beyond which we cannot go in bearing one another’s burdens. After you have prayed for anyone, and conversed with him, and he still continues in sin, you are ready to break your heart about him. Yes, it is right to feel like that, but *do not be so unwise as to take his sin actually to yourself*. If you have warned, prayed, instructed, and set a godly example, and men will still sin, their sin is their own, and their blood will be upon their own head.

And next, *do not take the shame of other people’s sins upon yourself beyond a certain point*. I have known a good man ashamed to come to the house of God because his son had disgraced himself. Well, his sin does dishonor his father, but still, as you did not commit the sin, and you did not do anything to contribute to it, do not feel so ashamed as that.

I have known some Christian people very seriously injured by the shame which they have felt because some distant relative or some near relative has misbehaved himself. Go to God with it, but recollect that it is not your sin, and it is not your shame either. Bear it so as to sympathize and pray about it, but not so as to be yourself ashamed and depressed because of it.

Remember, also, that *we cannot take other people’s responsibilities upon ourselves*. I am responsible for faithfully preaching the Gospel, but I am not responsible for your reception of it. If I preach the truth, and there is not a soul saved by it, I am not responsible for that, and if you, dear teacher in the Sunday school, or if any of you Christian workers, have labored in vain—if you have been faithful to God, I do not think that will happen—but if it does, and it may happen in some measure—do not seem to bear that responsibility, for the text says, “Every man shall bear his own burden.”

I find it difficult to make young brethren, when they begin to preach, feel sufficiently the burden of souls, but every now and then, I have met with a brother, who has felt the burden of souls so much that he has scarcely been able to preach at all.

That is a pity, because after all, the salvation of souls lies not with us, but with God, and if we have faithfully declared the whole counsel of God, and can call God to witness that we have not kept back anything of His truth that we knew, or failed in faithfulness or earnestness, we must leave the matter there, and fall back upon the eternal purpose of God, and throw the responsibility of the result upon our unbelieving hearers.

III. I have not time to speak as I should like upon the last point, that is, PERSONALITY, “Every man shall bear his own burden.”

That is to say, *every man, if he has any religion at all, must have personal religion*. You cannot get to heaven by your mother’s godliness, or by your father’s graciousness, there must be a work of grace in your own souls. No man can be a sponsor for another in spiritual things. There is no more gigantic falsehood than that one person should promise that another shall do this and that, which he cannot even do himself. No, “every man shall bear his own burden.”

Everyone must come, with his own sin, to his own Savior, and by his own act of faith, must find peace through the blood of Jesus Christ. Do not trust to any national religion, for it is utterly worthless. It is personal religion alone that can save you. If the blood of saints is flowing in your veins, it brings

you nothing except greater responsibility, for salvation is not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, and of God alone.

And every man should bear his own burden *by personal self-examination*. I would never think of asking another man to give me his opinion of me, and I hope you will not do so. Search your own souls, “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” “Oh, I do not like self-examination!” says one. So the bankrupt said, he did not like casting up his accounts, but when a man in business does not cast his accounts up, his accounts will soon cast him up, and when a man does not like to examine his own heart, depend upon it, the time will come when another will examine him, and he will be found wanting, and be cast away as worthless.

Next, this text means that *there must be personal service*. “Every man shall bear his own burden.” That is, if you and I are saved, we must each one have a work of his own, and we must set to work, and do it personally. The Lord has put each one of us into a position where there is something we can do which nobody else can do, and we are bound to do it, and not to begin thinking of how little others do, or how much others do, but to say to our Lord, “What wilt thou have me to do?” Let each Christian Levite bow his shoulder, and carry some burden for the Lord’s house.

And every man should *make a personal effort to bear his own burden*. We have a certain number of persons about, who seem as if they never can do anything for themselves, they have to be carried wherever they go. I think I have told you of a set of portraits that I have at home, it represents my two sons, taken on their birthdays while they were quite little boys, and then taken every birthday till they had grown to be young men. Well, at first, they are in a perambulator, and it is very interesting to see how they have grown every year.

But there are some of you who have been in perambulators ever since I knew you, and you are in perambulators still, and I have to keep wheeling you about still. Oh, I wish you would grow! We are all pleased to have dear little children, and we do not mind how little they are at first, but if, after they were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, or twenty years old, our boys were the same size as they were when they were a year old, we should feel that we were the parents of poor little dwarfs, and it would be a great trial to us.

And it is a great trial to us spiritual parents, when we are the fathers of dwarfs. Oh, that you would grow, brethren! God help you so to grow out of yourselves, and your inactivities, and your listlessness, that every man shall say, “I am big enough to bear my own burden. By the goodness of God, I will get so much grace, and so much help, that I will do some work for the Lord, and do it thoroughly. I will bear my own burden—not sit on the top of it, and fret and cry, and ask somebody else to bear it for me, but I will bear my own burden.”

I will finish by saying that the text indicates that *everybody has own burden*. “Every man shall bear his own burden.” You look at somebody else, and you say, “Ah, I wish I had his load to carry!” I do not think that I ever met with more than one person in the world with whom, upon mature consideration, I would change places in all respects. I have thought, once or twice, that I might do so, but soon there has been a hitch somewhere, and I have said, “No, I will go back into my own shell, after all.”

I think, sometimes, that I would not mind changing places with George Muller for time and for eternity, but I do not know anybody else of whom I would say as much as that. But I daresay that even he has his own burden, though he has not told me about it when I have talked with him.

And that good woman, who always looks so smiling, God bless her!—she has a skeleton at home in the cupboard. And that good brother, who is always so bright and cheery—yes, he has a burden too. There is a cross for everyone, and I want you to feel that it is so, because it would take away all thought of envy whenever you meet with another who seems so much happier than yourself.

That Bother has the sense to turn the smooth side of his coat outside, he wears the rough side of it inwards—a very sensible thing to do. Do not, therefore, begin to say, “Oh, but I am so much worse off than he is!” You do not know what he has to endure, “for every man shall bear his own burden.” Let us

end the whole matter by not envying others, or caring or wishing to be other people, but just saying, “What can I do to help anybody else? What I can do to help anybody, I will do it by the grace of God.”

But what can some of you do in carrying burdens for other people? Why, even while I have been talking, you have said, “I do not care to do that. What have I to do with other people?” You are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, while you talk like that! Any man who is selfish is an unsaved man, for the chief point in salvation is to save us from ourselves.

As long as you live simply within your own ribs, you live in a dungeon. You will never come into the palace where the many mansions be—the liberty of our great Father’s house—until you can say, “I love others more than I love myself. Above all, I love the great Burden-bearer, who took my burden of sin upon His shoulders, and carried it up to the tree, and away from the tree, and now, through love to Him, the love of self is gone, and I will live to glorify His name forever and forever.”

God bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GALATIANS 5:13-26 AND 6:1-2

Galatians Chapter 5. Verse 13. *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Do not turn your liberty into license. The apostle, in this epistle, had been urging the Christians of Galatia to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and never to be again entangled with the yoke of legal bondage. He warned them against that error into which many have fallen. But you know that it is often our tendency, if we escape from one error, to rush into another. So the apostle guards these Christians against that Antinomian spirit which teaches us that freedom from the law allows indulgence in sin, “Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another.”

14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Oh, if that “one word” were so engraven on our hearts as to influence all our lives, what blessed lives of love to God and love to men we should lead!

15. *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

When dogs and wolves bite one another, it is according to their nature, but it is indeed bad when sheep take to biting one another. If I must be bitten at all, let me rather be bitten by a dog rather than by a sheep. That is to say, the wounds inflicted by the godly are far more painful to bear, and last much longer, than those caused by wicked men. Besides, we can say with the psalmist, “It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it.”

It is natural that the serpent’s seed should nibble at our heel, and seek to do us injury, but when the bite comes from a brother—from a child of God, then it is peculiarly painful. Well might the apostle write, “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” I have lived long enough to see churches absolutely destroyed, not by any external attacks, but by internal contention.

16. *This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

If your life is guided by the Spirit of God—if you are spiritual men, and your actions are wrought in the power of the Spirit—“ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:*

They will never agree, these two powers are always contrary one to the other. If you think that you can help God by getting angry, you make a great mistake. You cannot fight God’s battles with the devil’s weapons. It is not possible that the power of the flesh should help the power of the Spirit.

17-18. *And these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

The law is ever to you the blessed rule by which you judge your conduct, but it is not a law of condemnation to you, neither are you seeking salvation by it.

19-21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:*

The list is always too long to be completed, we are obliged to sum up with a kind of *et cetera*, “and such like.”

21. *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

A very solemn, searching, sweeping declaration. Let each man judge himself by this test. “The fruit of the Spirit” is equally manifest, as the apostle goes on to say—

22-23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Neither human nor divine. Good men make no law against these things, nor does God, for He approves of them. What a wonderful cluster of the grapes of Eshcol we have here! “The fruit of the Spirit”—as if all this were but one after all—many luscious berries forming one great cluster. Oh, that all these things may be in us and abound, that we may be neither barren nor unfruitful!

24. *And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

It is not yet dead, but it is crucified. It hangs up on the cross, straining to break away from the iron holdfast, but it cannot, for it is doomed to die. Happy indeed shall that day be when it shall be wholly dead.

25-26. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Do Christian people need to be talked to like this? Ay, that they do, for the best of men are but men at their best, and the godliest saint is liable to fall into the foulest sin unless the grace of God prevent. Oh, that we could expel from the church of Christ all vain glorying, all provoking of one another, and all envying of one another! How often, if one Christian brother does a little more than his fellow workers, they begin to find fault with him, and if one is blessed with greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightly!

This spirit of envy is, more or less, in all of us, and though, perhaps, we are not exhibiting it just now, it only needs a suitable opportunity for its display, and it would be manifested. No man here has any idea of how bad he really is. You do not know how good the grace of God can make you, nor how bad you are by nature, nor how bad you might become if that nature were left to itself.

Galatians Chapter 6. Verse 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,—*

If he travels so slowly that his faults catch him up, and knock him down, “If a man be overtaken in a fault,”—

1. *Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;*

Set his bones for him if they have been broken, put him in his proper place again.

1. *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

What would you wish others to do to you if you were in the position of this fallen one? The apostle does not say, “Considering thyself lest thou also be overtaken in a fault.” No, but “lest thou also be tempted”—as much as to say, “It only needs the temptation to come to you, and you will yield to it.”

2. *Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.