

Fulfil the Law of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to the end of the book of Galatians. It's been a great book to work through and if you're new or visiting, I'll just bring you up to speed real quickly about where the book's been going from start to finish.

Really the big issue is that the church in Galatia is a church that Paul had planted and what Paul tended to do was go and plant a church and then move on to a new area, plant a new church and move on.

So he's planted this church, he's moved away, and since then the people of the church had started to be deceived by a bunch of false teachers. We call them the Judaizers because they were people who were coming in, teachers who were saying that, sure, you need Jesus.

Jesus' death on the cross is what saves you from your sin, but in addition to that you need to fulfil these laws. And particularly they were saying, if you're a man, you're a Christian, you need to be circumcised in order to be a true Christian.

And the reason that Paul has reacted so violently against that, if you read the words of this book you'll see that he's pretty ticked off. The reason that he's so ticked off is because I think he has the heart of God in this situation.

[1 : 1 2] See, God sent Jesus to die on the cross so that when he died and gave up his spirit, he said, it is finished. The work's been done. No longer do you need to kind of fulfil these laws or try and make up what's lacking in your sinful self in order to be made right with God.

Everything was done for you on the cross. You inherit Jesus' righteousness, which is perfect, when you accept Christ into your heart. And so he's really annoyed that these people would come into his church that he planted and lead people astray and make them think that they need to do this or that in order to be a real Christian.

I think he has the heart of God according to, I think it's Isaiah 64 verse 6. God compares our acts of righteousness, our good works, to, the Bible says filthy rags or some derivative of that.

What it really is saying is dirty used tampons. That's what God thinks of our acts of righteousness. So when someone comes into Paul's church and starts saying, you need to do those good works in order to please God, he's really upset.

And we've seen over the course of the book, he gives several reasons why we are saved by grace through faith and not according to our works. He also, as we're going to see tonight, at the very same time, calls us to do good works as an expression of that faith, the fact that we're saved.

[2 : 3 8] And we'll see that, as I said, tonight as well. So let's just get to work. I've sort of broken up tonight's chapter into a couple of segments and so I just want to start off by reading for you verse, let's just go with verse 1.

He says, My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

I think that's a pretty bad translation so I'm just going to reinterpret it for you the way I think it should be written and the way that it's written in some translations. It should be something like, My friends, if there's anyone among you who is walking in sin, then those of you who are walking in the Spirit should restore that person with gentleness.

That fits the context much better. If you remember last week, Paul was saying, You ought to walk in the Spirit, therefore you will be reaping a harvest of spiritual fruit.

Remember the list of fruits there? It was in the end of chapter 5. The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

[3 : 54] He says, If you walk in obedience, that's another way of saying if you walk in the Spirit, if you're obedient to Jesus, if you walk in the Spirit in that way, then these fruits will abound in you.

But if you don't, if you walk in the flesh, if you commit acts of the flesh, then you will prove yourself not to be a Christian. You won't inherit the kingdom. So I think what he's really saying is, if anyone's walking in transgression, not detected in a transgression, like I walk in and see you downloading porn or something, it's not like, you know, I sprung a trap on you and found out.

It's more, if you are continually falling in that area, if you are continually gossiping after church, if you're continually caught in sin, then those of you, not just those of you who have received the Spirit, because even we who have received the Spirit can fall into sin, but it should be those who are walking in the Spirit, those who are obedient, those who are mature Christians, who have a good sort of few years worth of maturity and sanctification and obedience under their belt, not that they're sinless, not that they're super spiritual, not that there's levels here in the church, but mature Christians should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

I really felt this speaking to me this week, because I've sort of got a history of sometimes being a little bit too harsh in reproof and correction, especially with some of you young guys that sometimes come down pretty hard, and so when I saw this restoring in a spirit of gentleness, not in a spirit of face punching, that really struck me, and I remembered last week, we saw that gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Remember that? One of the fruits of the Spirit is gentleness. And last week I said gentleness, according to Jesus, when He identified Himself as being gentle, had to do with the fact that people could come to Him and have their burdens relieved.

[6 : 00] He said, Come to me, I am gentle of spirit. My yoke is easy. Come to me for the refreshment of your souls, is my paraphrase.

So our gentleness should not just be the kind of gentleness that lets people do whatever they like or allows people to continue in sin, because that's not a loving thing. But gentleness is the kind of gentleness that wants people to be godly, wants people to stop acting in folly, but does it in such a way that their burden is lifted from them, not so that they're condemned.

So the goal is, if you see someone, you know someone, is in a situation of habitual sin that may lead them out of the kingdom of God, may lead them to walk away from their faith, then we ought to confront them for sure.

You're not going to be able to identify their sin without confronting them, but do it in such a way that their burden is lifted, that their sin is taken away, not compounded, so that they're condemned.

There is a place for us, all of us, not just your pastors, for all of us to confront and restore sinful members of our church.

[7 : 18] He continues, verse 2, sorry, he continues in that verse, second part of that verse, at the same time, take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Sort of twofold thing going on here.

Partly he's saying, you need to take care of yourselves. He'll say this throughout, when he says that we need to carry on our own load. We need to make sure that our spiritual life is functioning well.

At the end of the day, you can't go to Jesus at judgment day and say, you know what, the teaching at the 6pm service was really bad, I just wasn't getting fed there, the songs were sucked, and the prayers were all over the place.

You can't appeal to that, because Jesus will say, what did you do to maintain your faith? Were you walking in righteousness and godliness? Were you maturing yourself by way of commitment to daily Bible reading and prayer and striving for godliness?

Take care of yourselves. Watch out for yourselves, is another way of saying it. And I think the other side of that coin is also that when we confront people about sin, we open up ourselves to temptation.

[8 : 35] I'll give you an example. If you are counselling someone, like I have in the past, about this issue of pornography, I'm always talking about this, because this is constantly coming before me, as a real issue.

You start counselling someone about their addiction to pornography, they start talking about what they're looking up, there's a temptation there for you to fall into the sin. They start talking about this or that website, and you start making notes, like the website, right?

There's a temptation there to fall into sin. So we need to be, that's partly why he says, you who are walking in the spirit, you who are being obedient, you who are strong and able to confront other people's sin without falling in yourself, you do the restoring of that person with all gentleness.

So we need to be on our guard, generally, in our spiritual walk, and also, particularly, when we're restoring people who are in sin. Verse 2, let's keep going. He says, bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you'll fulfil the law of Christ.

I wonder if he's sort of picking up a little bit of a contradiction there. He's just said, take care of yourself, you're responsible for your own spiritual walk, watch out for yourself, and then he says, bear one another's burdens.

[9 : 51] It's important to see that there's not a contradiction there. It actually fits together really beautifully when we flesh it out a little bit more.

So let's do that. Keep in mind that we do need to look out for ourselves spiritually, that we're responsible for ourselves. At the same time, when there's someone in the church, a brother or sister, who is really struggling, and the word burden there is a particularly heavy burden.

In the Greek text, that's a real slog of a thing to carry. When it comes to those kind of burdens, we need to bear them for one another.

Early church, this was particularly true for widows who had no way of sustaining themselves and their families. There was no social security. There was no chance of them getting a job. Those people had heavy burdens.

We need to help them out. People who are very unwell. People who are also, this could include people who are struggling with heavy sin.

[11 : 02] They just can't seem to get over it. They're repentant. They're trying. They just can't seem to kick it. They're the kind of heavy burdens that we need to shoulder for one another.

He says, if you do this, you will fulfill the law of Christ. What's the law of Christ? It's a pretty dangerous thing to be writing if you think about it. He's railed against anyone who would try and submit the Galatians to a law for five chapters.

He comes to the sixth and he talks about a law that they should be keeping. But this law is different. I think it's James 2. Let me just check that.

James 2, verse 8 talks about this law as well. He says, you do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to scripture, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Remember Jesus summed up all the law and the prophets, love God and love your neighbour as yourself. That's the law of Christ, I think, that Paul's talking about here. And it fits perfectly with shouldering each other's burdens that we would love God and love our neighbours as ourselves.

[12 : 09] That makes sense, doesn't it? So it says, there is a law to fulfill, but it's not a law that earns you righteousness. It's just a law that you ought to keep as an expression of who you are in Christ.

Bear one another's burdens. Love each other as you would love yourself. So you've got those two things there. Shoulder your own burdens.

Take care of yourself. And if the burden is really heavy, then help each other out. How about an illustration?

This is how the brotherhood should function in the church, brothers and sisters. This is how my brotherhood functioned growing up. I had two brothers and it was a pretty rough and tumble kind of upbringing.

There were a lot of pretty big fights among us growing up as we wrestled for who had the ascendancy, all pretty close together in age. And so for us, growing up, it was very much take care of yourself.

[13 : 12] So if you're walking to school and you're bagged really heavy, your brother's not going to help you out with that. My brothers wouldn't do that for me.

You're on the footy field and you get crunched. Your brothers aren't going to come, my brothers weren't going to come and help me up and dust me off and band-aid me. That wasn't going to happen. We just weren't that kind of family.

We weren't those kind of brothers. I don't think many brothers are really like that. You make your own way through life. But, if the burden was heavy, then help would come swiftly.

I remember my little brother starting school and I still cringe when I think about this particular part of the story. When he first came, we were all at high school, my older brother and myself and my little brother came along and we just gave him so much grief.

He was in the part of the school that had to pull up their socks, which is never, ever a good look for anyone. Sorry guys who are over 40. You know, he had to wear the hat and so we'd give him so much trouble and that was just part of helping him along the way, right?

[14 : 29] You've got to bear your own burden. This is the way you get tough and you grow. But pretty early on, he's now considerably bigger and stronger than me but at the time he was quite fat and so he used to get teased a lot.

Now, getting teased continually at school is a heavy burden. And so, very quickly, my brother and I found ourselves in regular Saturday detentions as a result of beating the snot out of these bullies who were making fun of my brother.

Another situation that might be less sinful and indicting is when I was, for a lot of my older teens, I was going up with this girl who was just not good for me and my brothers would often tell me that she was using me and she was just a waste of my time and bear your own burdens, be responsible for yourself, break up with her, it's killing you, right?

Then when the time came and she kind of left me, I was crying and crying and crying myself to sleep in my room and suddenly my two brothers who are pretty, pretty blokey kind of guys were in the room around me embracing me, telling me, you know, that they wanted to hear all about it.

Take care of yourself, you watch out for yourself, but when the burden is heavy, your brothers and sisters are here to help you lift it. If you come to us and you want help because you're just incompetent or lazy or can't be bothered, you won't receive it.

[16 : 10] If you come to us as a widow, as someone who is very ill, as someone who has this habitual sin that you can't kick, we'll be there in a flash, I pray God, we'll be there in a flash to help you bear that burden.

All right, verse 3, 4, 5, let's do that chunk. He says, For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.

All must test their own work. Then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for pride, for all must carry their own loads. It's really important that we see that this chunk he's particularly talking to his opponents in the Galatian church.

All right, so these are the Judaizers. He sort of switches from a general for the people of God and he's particularly targeting these guys who are causing him so much grief.

They are the guys who think they are something. They're the super apostles. They're the ones who are saying, Paul's not really an apostle. He never really, you know, hung out with Peter and James and those guys in Jerusalem.

[17 : 19] We're the real apostles now get circumcised. Those guys, they think they're something but they're nothing and they deceive themselves. And so he says, all must test their own work.

If you think you're something more than you are, you need to test yourself. Of course, there's elsewhere that you need, no one should think more highly of themselves than they ought.

when we start focusing on other people, other people's problems, those sinful Christians, those strugglers, it's very easy for us to deceive ourselves and think that we're really something special, that we're the super Christians and these guys are the strugglers.

He says, no, no, no, you will deceive yourself if you think you're something when really you're nothing. Everything that's come to you is by grace. If you know Greek, if you know Hebrew, if you know theology, if you know the big words, that's great, but it's all by grace.

You can't look down on anybody who hasn't received grace in that way at this time. Don't deceive yourselves. Test your own work. See where you're at.

[18 : 38] And then when he says, they should test their own work rather than their neighbour's work, I think he really means rather than my work, Paul's work. Remember, they're in his church.

They're comparing their own spiritual status to what he's done and they're belittling him when really they ought to be repenting for their sorry spiritual state.

And he reaffirms what he said, all must carry their own load. everyone's going to be accountable for their faith. Pastors, teachers, churches are going to be held accountable for how we taught, how we pastored, but at the end of the day you need to take responsibility for testing yourselves.

He wants the Judaizers to know that. He wants us to know that as well. verse 6, those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

This is really a bridge verse between two major parts of this chapter. Okay, so there's not a lot for us in that. I think it's particularly talking to the Galatians in their situation.

[19 : 55] Basically, it's a euphemism for saying if you've got pastors in your church you should pay them. So I'm all for it. I like this verse in practice. I could reinterpret it to say you should pay them more, but I won't say that.

That would be unfaithful. That was a joke by the way. Treasure is laughing. Thanks, mate. I think he's speaking to them in their situation.

I think he's even saying even the Judaizers, they deserve their wages. That might be pushing it a little bit, but I think he's even saying that. And it's just a general principle for us that we ought to pay our teachers, pay our pastors.

So let's keep going. Verse 7, he says, Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh.

But if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time if we do not give up.

[21 : 05] So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith. This kind of perfectly carries on from his metaphor about the fruit of the Spirit.

Right? So it's all about reaping, harvesting. It's this agricultural analogy that he's been going with. He goes with regularly. It's common in the New Testament.

It would have made heaps of sense to those people there who are subsistence kind of farmers. What he's saying is, again, don't be deceived. Don't think your way out of this one.

God's not mocked. God's not to be made a fool of. Another way of saying it is, you can't get away with stuff without God knowing.

God sees all. He sees into your very hearts. Those who continue to walk in sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[22 : 09] Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. You will reap what you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, remember, that's our sinful nature. If you indulge in that sinful nature that every one of us wants to go to all the time, we want to sin.

It's part of who we are that is being continually redeemed over time and will be fully when we meet Jesus in heaven. But if you indulge that sinful nature, if you sow into the flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh.

Two things there. Two ways you reap corruption. Morally. You will be morally corrupt. That's plain. When you look at the acts of the flesh that are mentioned back in chapter 5, fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, all of that that we talked about last week, that corrupts you morally.

You can't just do it and remain divorced from the corruption. But also, not only will it be morally corrupt, but your flesh will be corrupt. Another way of saying it is, your flesh will disintegrate.

It will waste. It will disappear. Why? Paul has in mind here his whole theology of resurrection.

[23 : 29] resurrection. resurrection. When we die in faith, like my good friend Tom Wilkinson, who is a New Testament scholar, died on Friday, 90 odd years old.

He has died in fantastic faith in Jesus. He is now awaiting Jesus' return. When that trumpet sounds and Jesus returns, he will receive a new body.

A new body that cannot be corrupted, that cannot be wasted, that will not see death again. If you don't have faith in Jesus, if you don't walk in obedience, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You will not see that perfect resurrection body and so you will see corruption from the flesh to the flesh. Sure, you are going to get morally corrupted on this earth, but that is kind of fun, isn't it?

Sin can be fun, but not when it is perpetuated throughout eternity with judgment forever. In contrast to that, if you don't want to sow to the flesh and reap corruption from the flesh, you want to sow to the spirit so that you will reap eternal life from the spirit.

[24 : 51] That is exactly what he is talking about. You sow into the spirit. You will grow in these fruits of the spirit. That fruit will grow in response to your sowing and you will, when the time comes, inherit eternal life, a new body, uncorruptible without the propensity to sin, without the possibility to sin that will never fade away.

You will enjoy a new creation on a new earth with a new body and with experiences that none of the acts of the flesh could touch for pleasure.

They are the choices that are before us. Now in response to that, if you are saved, if you are going to spend eternity with God, if you are going to receive that uncorruptible body, how do we live then?

Verse 9, let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time if we do not give up. Here is a situation probably with a lot of churches at the time and maybe in ours tonight.

They are trying to do their good works, they are trying to be obedient to Jesus and love God and love their neighbours as themselves, they are trying to shoulder each other's burdens while being aware of their own spiritual walk, they are trying to do good to all but there is so much suffering going on, there was so much disappointment.

[26 : 17] disappointment. These false teachers were coming in dividing the church. Jesus didn't look like he was going to come back. There was a tendency to want to give up.

Paul says, don't grow weary in doing good. I know a lot of stuff is going on there in your church but don't give up in doing good for we will reap at harvest time.

Two ways to think about harvest time, both true. One, harvest time comes when Jesus returns and you receive what you sowed into the ground, the harvest comes, you receive that incorruptible body.

There is also a harvest time that comes every now and then throughout our spiritual walk. Jesus himself, God in heaven, determines when the harvest comes, right?

In reality, he determines when the flowers bud but also in ways that satisfy us for the works that we've done. So that you might plug away at an impact thing like you might do the bushfire relief thing continually for years and just feel like you're not getting a lot out of it.

[27 : 41] You might go to the anchorage like we're going on Monday night to spend time with those guys and just think, nothing seems to be happening. Suffering still exists. You might sponsor a child.

You give money every month and the child is still malnourished and the suffering still exists and his mum has still died from AIDS and all of this stuff still happens.

But Paul says, keep on doing it. The harvest time will come. Eventually and finally in Jesus' return but also along the way. Jesus will enable you to have little experiences of heaven that reward you for doing good.

Little satisfying moments where you see your good works come to fruition and the harvest comes. So let us not give up doing good.

the harvest is coming finally and you're going to see some fruit along the way more than likely according to God's plan. And he says, verse 10, so then whenever we have an opportunity, mark that, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.

[29 : 01] What he's saying is do good to everyone. It doesn't matter if they're a Christian or a Muslim or a secular humanist or whatever. Do good to all because our hope is that they'll see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, that they'll see who we are as Christians and want to be a part of that.

But particularly, especially, we want to be doing those things for the brothers and sisters of the faith. So it's both and. It's not either or, both and.

We should be working for all, for the good of all and particularly for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And then he finishes the letter in that last section, verse 11.

See what large letters I make when I'm writing with my own hand. This is his signature. So throughout his letters to the churches he'll be using a scribe, he'll be dictating to someone whose profession it is to write really nice, neat letters that everyone can read and to make sure it's all spelt correctly and he's not a scribe.

He has really large letters when he writes, they're probably all over the page, they look like a three year old with a crayon. They're not really into writing in the way that we are regularly these days but he's saying, in other words, this is to let you know that this is from me, this is actually Paul.

[30 : 18] You recognise my writing, I have large letters. This is my way of finishing the letter off, this is my signature. And he finishes with really the theme of the whole letter.

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. See, they're going to avoid persecution from the Jews because they are telling them to do what the Jews are telling them to do.

So they're in, put in both camps, they're in with the Christians kind of, but they're also in with the Jews. Remember, Paul was really ticked off with Peter for being that way back in, I think it was chapter 2.

And what they're doing is really just for earthly rewards, they want to make a showing in the flesh, they want to show people that they've got this many circumcisions.

It goes on, even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. They want the numbers. I don't know how they kept score, whether they nailed them up to a board or, but they counted, obviously counted, the amount of circumcisions they had.

[31 : 32] This is their way of quantifying how good their ministry was. We might be doing the same thing with how many baptisms we do, how many numbers we count every night. It's tempting for me to think, we only had 80 instead of 100, we must be doing something wrong.

He says, don't worry about that. That's just for a showing in the flesh. They just want to boast in a worldly sense. He says, may I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

He's saying, I'm not going to boast in anything except the cross because he knows that every blessing he has received has come through the cross. It's been from Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus.

Everything he has is by grace. He can't boast in anything himself. He's not going to boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 15, for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything. You're circumcised? Good on you. Not circumcised? Alright. It doesn't matter. God doesn't care.

[32 : 55] What truly matters is the circumcision of the heart. That is, that our hearts reveal that we are part of the people of God. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything.

That's what counts. How do you become a new creation? You get born again. Put your faith in Jesus and you become a new creation in Christ. As for those who will follow this rule, that is the rule to be new creations, to walk in faith and obedience, to be producing that fruit of the Spirit, peace be upon them and mercy and upon the Israel of God, that is the people of God, not just the Jews, but everyone who calls on the name of Jesus to be saved, both Jews and Gentiles, all who are saved.

They are the new Israel of God, the people of God, God's own chosen people. Then he finishes, from now on, let no one make trouble for me, for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen. What he's saying is, he's not saying, don't give me any more work to do as your pastor, as your apostle.

He said elsewhere that he wants to be working like an athlete, like a farmer. He wants to be working to the day he dies for the good of the church. He's concerned of all other things for the people in his churches.

[34 : 32] What he's saying is, don't make any more useless trouble for me with your little arguments about this or that. He's not concerned about those things.

He's come to the end of his life and ministry and all he wants to do is boast about the cross. He wants to see people become Christians. He doesn't want to meddle in inconsequential things.

Why? He bears the brands. He carries the marks of Jesus on his body. He's been beaten. He's been whipped. He's been stoned, like with rocks pelted at his body.

He's got scars all over his face and back and body. He doesn't have good medical care. He's probably a complete mess.

Why? Because he's standing for Jesus and that's getting him throttled, beaten on, whipped by Romans and Jews.

[35 : 31] I wonder if a good thing for us to finish with would be just to think about that, that very verse.

Paul's carrying the marks of Jesus on his body. I don't think any of us are. I don't think anyone here has been stoned by an angry mob for their faith in Jesus.

But I wonder, I just wonder, what are our marks? What sets us apart? If it's not physical, what is it about us that shows that we bear the marks of Jesus?

What sets you apart? If you're anything like me, you have a tendency within you, almost irrepressibly, to fit in and to not stand out as a Christian amongst your colleagues, amongst your fellow students.

That's a sinful nature. So what is it? What can we do? What is it about us? Something we do or something we are, the way that we behave, what is it that sets us apart as Christians?

[36 : 53] Not as a work that kind of earns us righteousness points, but just sets us apart. I think it might be good for us, as we close this series, thinking about this point of application in particular, just to talk about it for a bit.

So if it's alright with you, Matt, can I buy five minutes? I think it would be really good for us just to share with each other, and just be real, what is it about us, what is it about you in your situation that sets you apart?

What brand are you carrying around that shows that you are a servant of Jesus? If you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, please don't let this be an uncomfortable moment.

We have people coming every week who aren't Christians, and I just love it, man. I love it when you come along. So you just say, I'm not yet a believer. I'm listening to what it is about other people that sets them apart as Jesus, as followers of Jesus.

If you're here tonight and you're starting to feel really guilty because you can't think of anything, well, just let that sit on you. And let those who are perhaps more mature Christians teach you about what it is they do to set themselves apart as Christians.

[38 : 13] Christians. I know this is dicey. I know that this is risky, but I think we could benefit from doing this. Five minutes. I reckon groups of maybe five, five or so people, and just discuss what is it that sets you apart as a servant of Jesus.

Then I'll wrap it up and pray for us.