

# Mutual Restoration - Bearing One Another's Burdens

by Michael Flowers

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*Michael Flowers emphasizes the importance of mutual restoration and community support in the Christian faith, urging believers to bear one another's burdens through prayer and love.*

**Duration:** 27:28

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:17, Galatians 6:1-2, Galatians 6:9, James 4:7

**Topics:** "Restoration"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Galatians and draws parallels to the story of Nehemiah. He emphasizes the importance of not becoming weary in doing good and encourages the audience to rely on the Holy Spirit for strength. The speaker highlights the need for a community of sinners who confess their faults to one another, as this leads to a deeper understanding of the cross. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of drawing near to God and resisting the works of the flesh through prayer and love for Jesus.

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## Transcript

Hey, if you if you have your bulletin, turn over to the New Testament passage. We're going to finish up Galatians today. We're just going to focus in on a couple of points in the first 10 verses.

As I was reading this passage of Galatians and thinking about the whole story that these actually these communities, these various churches in Galatia were going through, I thought about Nehemiah and Nehemiah four and sort of the parallels of the way Galatians six said this morning, don't be weary and well-doing, you know, sometimes we do become weary and well-doing, but there's a way in the spirit not to become weary and well-doing. So it's one of those checks that Paul's giving us. If you're tired and burning out, then check your level of dependency on the Holy Spirit, because he is our strength as we sing.

So we sang the sermon this morning and all these lyrics, you know, you are my strength. We have to continually come back to the Lord for our strength. Right.

We can't do it. You just can't do it by ourselves. Who wants to do it by yourself? Right.

Not just without the Lord, but without one another. You know, this is a one another endeavor. It's a corporate endeavor.

It's a family. It's a community. It's new creation.

And so Paul is giving us that grand vision. But he also calculates that people are going to sin and people are going to miss it. You know, just don't be weary and well-doing.

I know you will be. I know that's the temptation. I know that that is the leaning, but there's a new way to live.

And we're all learning that new way to live a little wobbly. It's OK to wobble. Wobbly is good.

I mean, because you're sitting still. I mean, there's no such thing in physics, right, as absolute stillness. Anyway, you just have the right kind of microscope.

You can see how wobbly things are, even though they appear to be still. That's juxtaposed with Nehemiah and what Nehemiah was going through as a leader, which, by the way, Nehemiah, it means comforter. That's what his name means, comforter.

And we've been talking a lot about the Holy Spirit, who is the comforter in Galatians. And in both of these communities, Nehemiah and Paul, they describe serious challenges that they're all facing, both are facing, that the churches in Galatia are facing all of these challenges of false teaching and how that has affected their community, where they're biting and devouring one another. That's what it says.

And they're arguing and they're fussing. Both communities are becoming weary and well-doing as primary burden bearers for accomplishing their respective callings. Both communities are under attack.

OK, spiritual attack in the form of Sanballat and Tobiah and all of these, you're not going to make it, you're not going to do it, give up, you know, and all the sarcastic sort of arrow throwing. And Nehemiah, what does he do? He goes to prayer, he calls the community to pray. And so both of these communities are called to prayer.

They engage in prayer and leadership strategies, right? How to set these people on the wall and build the wall back up. And they've been burned with fire, right? The destruction of the city, they come back to restore this great city. And in a sense, that's what Jesus does to the whole cosmos.

He's come back to the restore, not only a city, but the cosmos, new creation. That's all that matters anymore. That's the way this book ends.

The only thing that matters is new creation. And that's in another age, brothers and sisters, that's invading this present evil age. So there's a collision of kingdoms.

There's a collision of this present evil age with the age to come. And you know why? Because we pray it. We ask it, thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

That's why it's happening. It's your fault. Prayer.

Yeah, that's the way it happens. It's the way the kingdom is going to come down. And that's the way we rule and reign with Jesus Christ.

Now, it's through prayer, it's through worship, it's through the liturgy, it's through everything that we're doing. It matters. It really, really matters.

On behalf of the whole cosmos, we offer the Eucharist up. It's on behalf of all that we offer this great sacrifice up, this once for all sacrifice. It's a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Both communities, their settings call for united, reciprocal cooperation. You know, united, reciprocal, mutual cooperation. They can't do it alone.

They must pull together. And those bearing the fruit of the spirit will, through love, serve one another. So many people church shop like a consumer on Amazon.

And we're just not a good place for that. We've never wanted to meet those kinds of needs. We want to build a real community.

Something, something like Paul is talking about where restoration occurs in our weaknesses. And where we bear one another's burdens, phoniness is in the old creation, this present evil age that causes us to be unreal. You know, out of all kinds of insecurities and reasons, I want you to like me.

There's a big need for acceptance. And so we have to put up a front that will be acceptable so that people will like me. Pastors don't have these problems.

I don't know what I'm talking about, but hey, it's germane for all of us. This is the human condition. This is why he's rescuing us from this present evil age.

We have to define what's evil and how it's affecting us. Evil will affect us. It's not over with yet, right? The coming of the kingdom of God and the grace of God and the spirit of God is what we've been offered and we have to grab it.

We have to grab it now, we have to pray and we have to ask him to be like a little bird saying, mama, feed me now. Because, you know, if we try to do it on our own through works of the law, works of the flesh. You'll reap that kind of fruit.

But those who are led by the spirit will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. So they last week. It's a promise.

If you live by the spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. That's a promise. I want it.

I really want to put that on my fridge. How does Paul resolve the theological and relational crises here? We might ask the question, what does daily life look like now that we've gone through all of this big story of theology and Abraham and how we're connected into that family through faith? What does that look like? What does that look like when God is making things right? That's what he's doing. God is in the process of making things right.

It's what righteousness is. Last week, we looked at describing the spirit's liberating war against the enslaving flesh through love, become slaves of one another. It sounds so it is.

It's so counter intuitive. It's so countercultural. It's so countercultural through love, become slaves to one another.

We talked about that last week and week before last. Baptized into Christ, receiving the spirit of the sun into our hearts, we live a new life, learning what the spirit desires against what the flesh desires. Galatians 5, 16 and following, we begin to move away from the works of the flesh to eating from that tree of corruption, to eating from the tree of life.

Producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, right, what does it mean to eat from the tree of life? It's drawing near to Jesus. It's drawing near and saying, Lord, you have sought me out. Now I'm seeking you, but you've already found me.

So I just want to draw near to you, because James says, if we draw near to God, God will draw near to us. And then that's how we resist the devil. And that's how he flees from us.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you, resist the works of the flesh. And the enemy will flee. It's all by the power of the spirit and drawing near to God, people of prayer and love for Jesus.

Yeah, it's just saying, I'm a child, I need God. I don't care what my bank account looks like. I need God.

I need God. And so, number one, Paul is saying in verse one today. Number one, the church is an extended family of mutual responsibility.

It's an extended family of mutual responsibility. Here he is, verses one and two. My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, that's new RSV, it's really better.

The picture here is caught. The literal word is if anyone's caught, it's like a trap that's been set. And you've been caught and you and so it's something like an animal being caught.

And that's the way sin catches us, it catches us. And just note that Paul is counting on this happening. It's not like, well, once upon a time, somebody sinned in the church.

That's not his intention here. He's saying, my friends, brothers and sisters, the Delphi is the word brothers and sisters. If anyone is caught in a transgression, if you have the NIV, it says you who are spiritual.

That's a bad translation because who would think. Right. Does anybody think they're spiritual in here? Really, we're not called to be spiritual.

What does that mean? You could be oaming on top of Mount Shasta or something. And that's spiritual. Christians are called to be more than that.

They're called to be baptized into Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection and receive the Holy Spirit, receive God himself. It's not being spiritual. It's actually being a temple of God.

We are temples of the Holy Spirit. And so new RSV, I love the translation. You who have received the spirit, that's all of us.

You don't have to be spiritual. You just need to be baptized and living that out. Right.

That's remember last week, our baptismal covenant that we reinstated. Oh, wow. Powerful stuff.

All because of Christ in our union again. I mean, we can't pull off that covenant by ourselves. No way.

You have received the spirit. Let me say this. If you've been baptized, you've received the spirit.

This is not some special class of charismatics here. This is all baptized Christians, you've received the spirit and baptism should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

Bear one another's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. I thought about calling and smart to preach this sermon this morning because she is the person who does this.

And there's many of you, but I just kind of want to brag on and mama and today. And, you know, one of the ways that and does that is through like you don't even have to fill these cards up, but we've got a lot of them. And she loves burying your burdens in prayer.

And it's not her alone. She's got a team. Every week, prayer requests go out and we bear the burdens of people in prayer.

Right. It's a beautiful thing. And so we get on the phone or we go out and have lunch and we talk community every Monday or Tuesday.

How are people doing? What's going on in people's lives? And how can we pray for you? She is the instigator of that. Yeah, she is. So we just want to thank you, Anne, for the formation of Christ, the intercessor and pastor, the good shepherd.

You've got that. You've really got it. Paul offers us a few directives about how a community walks together in the spirit here.

The first two verses describe mutual, interdependent relationships, right? One another reciprocal. It's a reciprocal pronoun that he's using here. The first two verses.

And he's describing an extended family of sorts, an oikos that he uses the Greek word for family. Household. Paul thinks that members of this family, this little oikos should take care of one another as brothers and sisters, which is the first word.

Dear friends, it's really Adel Floyd. It's a translation, but it's really literally brothers and sisters. N.I.B. says brothers.

There is no perfect translation out there. And so this is why it takes understanding biases and translations. And so we have to kind of ferret those things out.

So brothers and sisters is more inclusive than brothers. Right. Yeah.

But it's rarely translated that way in these evangelical translations. And so this mutual supporting of each other through the hardships of life is so critical for us here in Kansas City in this present evil age. Because of this sense of family responsibility, they cannot look the other way when members of the family both go astray.

Right. We can't look the other way. A lot of times when one is caught in a transgression, if we're in a safe, peaceful, no fear based, no shame based community, then we can come before we're found out.

You know, it's kind of like I caught you sinning. That's not the picture here. It's like it's really I'm caught and I need prayer and I want to confess.

That's the better picture. I am struggling with sin like we all do. Every one of us in this room and I'm caught right here.

There's an addiction. There's something that I keep coming back to, perhaps. And it doesn't have to be a repetitive thing that catches you.

It can be a one time. And you need prayer. You need restoration.

You need confession. You can't hiding it will not do because it will be like ingesting a poison that needs to come out. Right.

And the way that happens is through confession, through coming into the light. These are hard things to do for all of us in the best of situations. They're hard things.

I mean, you know, when there's times when I've done this with my bishop and I had to like, I'm going to have to say this. This is what I'm struggling with. And I confess and I receive grace and mercy.

And I mean, my bishop is like the most uncondemning bishop on the planet. I mean, he's like, tell me your struggles. You know, in fact, a lot of times he wants to he wants to hear my struggles first.

Hey, come on, Stuart. Let's talk about the good stuff first and then we'll get there. But it's a discipline.

It's a discipline. And I have that with Stuart. I have that with Anne many times, you know, confess my faults, my frustrations, my fears, whatever I'm struggling with because of the pastoral grace in her.

She got a gift. It's a gift. So your priest goes to another pastor in the church and goes, you know, feels so good just to vomit all over her.

She's got a couple of showers. So, I mean, you know, she gets rid of it. She knows what to do with my stuff.

She's spent four years. Come on. This is good.

This is good. This is how I have made it as a leader. Right.

Not having to like put up all of these like I'm I'm great. I'm Mr. Spiritual, you know. No, no, no, no.

I can't ask you if I don't go there. Right. I have to go there, too.

And I have a bishop that expects it. He doesn't want me to be spiritual, you know, in the worst sense of the word. You know what I'm talking about? Phony.

He wants me to be authentic and real and understand that I'm in the gospel story and I'm a sinner and I need help because I have a function and a gift and a calling as a priest doesn't mean that I'm exempt all of a sudden with this great anointing that's delivered me fully from the struggles of sin and temptation. Wow, I wish, brothers and sisters, you all had that, even if I had to struggle with it alone, I wish you had that. But we don't.

We we're in this together. And it's kind of like G.K. Chesterton said, we're all in the same boat and we're all seasick. But the good news is, is that there's a lot of dramamine that Jesus gives us, right? Yeah.

Restoring in a spirit of gentleness. Remember when Jesus restored Peter? Remember, you know, the bishop of Rome, Peter, the one who upon his confession, I will build my church and the gates of hell. Well, you know, during the crucifixion scenes and everything, he's denying him one to three times.

Big center like all of us. Right. He's out.

He's gone back fishing. He's probably thinking, I'll never be in ministry again. I blew it.

And there's no turning back. You know, that sense of utter failure, really just like I'll never be able to answer the call of Jesus to follow him because I denied him three times. And so he's out there fishing.

Here's the way we need to be. Jesus is making a fire and he's looking out and he knows this is all strategic. He says, OK, Peter's gone fishing.

He's got a fire going. The coals are there, which kind of represent the coals that Peter denied Christ with as well. But we won't go there.

So it was it was a symbol. And Jesus sees him out there and, hey, cast your nets up because they're not catching anything. Right.

In that sense of failure, not catching anything. I'm a professional fisherman and I'm not catching anything. Jesus said, hey, cast your nets out on the other side.

They did. And all this massive fish come in and Peter says, it's the Lord. So he puts his clothes on because they were fishing in the buff.

Right. He puts his clothes on and that's just the way they did it. And he puts his clothes on.

He starts swimming. You know, he gets there and he sits down with Jesus. Jesus makes him breakfast.

It's just a beautiful, like, relax, relax before he even says anything. The gestures are I love you. And then he got in a conversation about what love is.

Hey, do you love me? Agape. No, Lord, you know, I phileo you. Brotherly love.

Do you agape me? Second time, Jesus says, you know, I phileo you. Now, Jesus, at that point, doesn't say, no, I'm asking for agape. Jesus says, do you phileo me? Third time in the Greek, other language.

It's love, love, love in your translation. It's bankrupt. This is the whole point.

Do you love me a third time? He's just not repeating the same thing. And Peter said, yes, you know, I phileo you. And Jesus met Peter where Peter could go.

He wasn't asking from Peter something that he couldn't pull off. He had such a sense of failure in his life. He says, I can phileo you, but I don't even want to envision agape because, you know, I just can't go there right now.

Jesus didn't demand that of him. Feed my sheep, tend my lambs. That's the reinstatement of Peter.

That's how you restore one another, right, to gentleness. It's not making demands. It's not causing shame, but it's listening, providing a peaceful place.

And love and embrace and say, hey, we're co-centers together in this. You know, Jesus couldn't say that, but we can. Then he concludes, Jesus says, follow me.

The very thing he thought he couldn't do because of his failure. You know, many of you may be here this morning, but one of those failures going on, I can't really do this. You know, I've failed and I'll never get the forgiveness.

Just know that that's a lie. You can do all things through Christ strengthens you. And so bearing one another's burdens in that verse, too, then.

And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. It's connected, isn't it? It's connected, restoring people. Jesus was bearing Peter's burden and he knew how to lift it.

Through the breakfast, through the discussion, through the conversation, through that, you know, this is who you are, this is your identity and I want you to do this. Feed my lambs. I don't care about your failure.

Feed my lambs. Right. I mean, brothers and sisters, there would be no ministry if it was any other way.

Because we would all be utter failures, caught in a sense of failure, being frozen in a sense of failure. Somebody else would have to do it, but nobody else is going to do it. Right.

It's all of us. And so what we need, though, is that you can't have fellowship if we're just a fellowship of saints, holy people. Bonhoeffer said the problem that obstructs fellowship was my book here, Life Together.

Awesome book. Dietrich Bonhoeffer hung for resisting the Nazi regime, a martyr. Great book.

If you want to go deeper in the community, I would recommend it. Great book. He says the problem with most of us is that we don't want to be a community of sinners.

We only want to be a community of saints. And so if we can't be a community where we confess our faults one to another, right, as James says, then we will never go deep into the reality of the cross. We're enemies of the cross if we play act and don't take full benefits of this humbling community practice.

It's humbling. The thing is, is that Jesus humbled himself and says, I didn't come to be served. I came to serve, you know, and so this is how we serve one another through listening to each other's sins and faults and joys and joys.

Yeah, share those party, have fun, find a place to go. I do the sacrament of reconciliation. People come to me to confess sin and I pronounce absolution.

But the scriptures giving you all of you that ability to hear one another's sins and to be healed, confess your faults one to another and be healed. James 5. And then what does that do as we confess the faults that we have and we we open up our lives? What does that do? Well, Paul is saying that it fulfills the law in Galatians. If you've been hanging with me, it's all about the law of Moses being a pedagogue, a temporary au pair until the coming of Christ.

And now we're no longer under this law of Moses. But we heard today in the gospel reading, you have heard it said you have heard Moses say he's on a mountain and he's enacting a new Moses. It's not Mount Sinai, it's Mount Zion now.

And there he is, the new Moses saying, you've heard it said the law that was given on Sinai, no one could ever talk this way unless you were Jesus. But I say to you, you have heard it said in the law of Moses, but I

say to you, the law of Christ, empowered by the spirit, it's not free from the law. Oh, happy condition.

Sin as I please and still get remission. No, that's receiving the grace of God, what Paul says in vain. What we're calling for today is confessing in reality and not abusing that.

Another way of bearing your burdens is through soul healing. Sherry is down bearing our burdens at the lake with Ted this morning. Praise the Lord.

You know, burden bearers, they need vacations, too. Right. Yeah.

So I'm going to get one of the next two sons, but soul healing. This is awesome. You can see, you know, you can go and sign up and for two hours you can go and sit in silence.

What does Sherry call the birthing thing that she does? What's that word? She is a she's a doula. Yeah, yeah. Well, that's what she does in prayer as well.

She's a doula there and she's listening and letting you talk and soul healing and silence, you know, and then she'll check in. And it's kind of like birthing something that needs to come out that the Lord wants to say in the midst of the silence. That's another way that we collectively can bear one another's burdens.

But you can do this in your small groups, but you can do it unofficially. You don't have to wait. Oh, we don't have enough small groups.

We don't. But but you can ask this guy over here out for lunch and start developing relationships that don't have to be institutionalized. Don't wait on an institutional form of ministry to happen.

This is an organic relational thing where we're friends and we're we're trying to make that kind of friendship and find out who those people are that we're really connected with and we can start bearing one another's burdens. Amen. So, Father, thank you so much that you sent Jesus.

Your son is the good shepherd. You're the great shepherd of the sheep. And so thank you for being a good shepherd, a loving shepherd, a restoring shepherd, forgiving shepherd, empowering us to go do the same.

Feed my sheep, tend my lambs. Lord, I pray that we would all hear that call today. It's not just me, but this is all of us to tend each other and to feed each other and to care for each other and to fulfill the law of Christ.

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