

- *The law of Christ*

We are to bear one another's burdens

- *The law of Moses is too low a standard*

- *The whole law is fulfilled in one word - love*

- *The law of Moses is inadequate to define love although it pointed to it*

- *Love your neighbour as yourself*

- *Love can be defined – but not by the ten commandments*

- *Paul's definition of love – bearing one another's burdens*

Does the Christian ever use the word 'law' at all, when speaking about what it is that guides his life? Yes, he can speak of 'the law of Christ'. Paul says, 'Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ' ^{☞1}.

^{☞1} 6:2

We are to bear one another's burdens. What kind of 'law' is the Christian under? The Mosaic law is actually too low a standard for us. Of course we worship only one God; we honour our parents; we do not murder or commit adultery or steal or commit perjury in a law court. I don't think we keep the Sabbath (with its death penalty if you walk a short distance on a Saturday). And I don't think we ever get entirely free from wanting things we ought not to want. But these 'ten commandments' are less than 1% of the total Mosaic law! What Paul says is, 'The whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"' ^{☞1}. There is one supreme thing we must concentrate on. Jesus said the same thing ^{☞2}. The one 'law' of the Christian is the law of love. You may ask: but should not 'love' be defined? Do we not need the Mosaic law to define what love really is? I answer, we do indeed need to define love and it can be done! But love is not defined very successfully by the Mosaic law. Slaughtering Canaanites or executing people for cooking on Saturday is not the best definition of love! The law pointed towards love, and it took some steps in that direction. As a thirteenth-century BC document it was more loving than the legislation of countries surrounding Israel. But it does not go high enough for the Christian. There is one verse of the Mosaic law – Leviticus 19:18 – which is adequate for the Christian. 'You must not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against any who come from your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Jesus widened the definition of 'our neighbour' (no longer one of 'your people') and made it our one supreme law!

^{☞1} 5:14

^{☞2} Matthew 7:12

Love can be defined. This is what Jesus is doing in the Sermon on the Mount, and what Paul is doing in his various letters. We are to walk in the Spirit, but in case we make any mistakes Jesus and the apostles are telling us what is involved in walking in the Spirit. It is possible to put it into words! But we do not have to use the words of the ten commandments. Actually, the exhortations of Jesus and the New Testament go higher than anything in the law except Leviticus 19:18.

Paul is defining love in Galatians 6:2. 'Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.' We have a responsibility towards other people and we begin with those who are nearest to us. Of course it is often easier to be generous to people who are a thousand miles away than it is to be sweet to those who share our home or our office. We are to see what is troubling others and lift the weight from them as much as we can. Jesus carried our sins as if they were His own. He carried on the cross all of the consequences of our sins. We do something similar. We feel what others feel. We intercede for them as if we were praying for ourselves. We are generous to them financially, as God leads us. This is the kind of law we are under. In some ways it is easier than the law of Moses. But it goes much higher! You can keep almost all of the requirements of the Mosaic law and still be quarrelsome, bitter, envious, self-defensive, jealous. This is why turning to the Mosaic law is turning to the flesh! The Holy Spirit's demands are much higher.

The 'law of Christ' allows no pride

- The danger for all of us is that without realizing it we get to hold too high a view of ourselves

The law of Christ demands we be realistic

- Part of the Godly life is self-examination
- Not concerning the matter of salvation but to see whether we are pleasing God

- We are each responsible to test whether our lives are pleasing to God

The 'law of Christ' allows no pride. Paul continues, 'For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves' ^{☞1}. He is still explaining ('For ...') the need of pursuing the godly life. The danger is that we feel we do not need this kind of word from God. The law-keepers feel they are something; they think they do rather well in keeping the Mosaic law! But the rest of us need this word from Paul as well. For those who know they are not under the law of Moses still need to be told to pursue the law of Christ. The danger for all of us is that without realizing it we get to hold too high a view of ourselves. If we feel we are better than the person who has fallen (Paul is not far from verse 1); if we feel we do not really need this word of exhortation – we are deceiving ourselves. True, we can rejoice in our freedom. There is no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus. But we still need to make serious progress in the godly life, and – if we are honest – we all have much about which we should be ashamed. If we think we are something in the kingdom of God, we are fooling ourselves!

The law of Christ demands we be realistic. 'All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for self-congratulation ^{☞1}. For all must carry their own loads' ^{☞2}. Part of the godly life is self-examination. We do not need to be endlessly examining ourselves to see whether we are God's children. It is not difficult to know whether you are trusting in Jesus as your Saviour or not. It can be settled quite quickly. Jesus is either your only hope – or He is not! You can know whether you are looking to no one but Jesus for your salvation. If you think about it for a few seconds you can know now! But there is a more difficult kind of self-examination. Without losing our assurance of salvation (and there is no need for that to happen) we need to examine ourselves to see whether we are pleasing God. The Galatians were undoubtedly Christian people (but the Judaizing false teachers were not!). Yet they were legalistic, critical, judgemental. They were not doing much bearing of each other's burdens. They felt they were doing rather well in going back to the Mosaic law!

Paul says: Don't look at other people. Test the kind of life you are living. You may be law-abiding in a certain way, but are you pleasing God? What does God like about your life? What displeases God? If you know you are pleasing God (and it is possible!) then you can be happy about it. In the final analysis we each have a 'load' that no one can bear except each of us alone: the responsibility we each have of pleasing God by living out the law of Christ. We shall always need the blood of Christ. We shall never be sinless till we get to heaven. But it is possible to please God – now in this life! That is a responsibility we each carry for ourselves.

^{☞1} 6:3

^{☞1} 6:4
^{☞2} 6:5



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