The Personal Care for One Another

Friedhelm Runkel · Galatians 5:13 · October 9, 2026



Galatians 5:13

> 13 For *you* have been called to liberty, brethren; only do not turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

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Through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13

Besides the unique care of the Lord Jesus, the “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20), and the task of the shepherds among the people of God at the local level or above (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–4), God’s Word shows yet another aspect of pastoral care: the personal care of the individual members of the body for one another. This concerns relationships between parents and children, between older and younger people, and, more generally, among brothers and sisters in the faith.

Each Individual is Called upon

It is striking that the word “one another”—also in combination with various prefixes—occurs well over 100 times in the New Testament. This frequency alone shows the enormous value that God’s Word attaches to the fellowship of brothers and sisters in faith with one another. “One another” means reciprocally, i.e., not only “Brother A” toward “Brother B,” but also the other way around, “Brother B” toward “Brother A.” To love one another means to show love to each other. No one is exempt; no one can exempt himself from this obligation—it concerns all of us; each individual is challenged!

The commandment “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) applied to every Israelite. Deuteronomy 22:1–4 makes clear that one could not evade mutual care within the people of God: If an Israelite realized his brother was threatened with material harm, he was to do everything to prevent it. Numerous New Testament exhortations reflect this attitude of mutual care.

Love One Another

The Lord Jesus explicitly left the repeated exhortation to love one another in the form of a commandment: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). The new, divine life that we received at our conversion enables us to comply with this exhortation of our Lord. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us gives us the strength to love our brothers and sisters in faith.

Care for One Another

“But God has so composed the body, … so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:24–25). Loving, mutual interest in the other’s well-being should characterize fellowship among believers. Motivated by divine love, we “must” care that members of the body of Christ—my brothers and sisters in faith—can fully develop the task God assigned them for the body's benefit.

This mutual care begins with praying for one another and culminates in help and support, as each case requires. Cain's attitude, by contrast, is the opposite: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Instead of care and interest, Cain shows indifference and jealousy, all the way to deadly hatred.

Serve One Another in Love

In Galatians 5:13, Paul exhorts us: "… only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Again, a contrast makes the core idea clear: Instead of living out the freedom given to the Christian in selfishness, it is about being available to one another, i.e., reciprocally. Divine love looks for how the other can be helped forward in the life of faith. Love motivates—the Holy Spirit dwelling in us gives the strength to do so.

Pay Attention to One Another

Keeping other brothers and sisters in faith in view is an exhortation that the writer of Hebrews lays to our heart. This, too, applies reciprocally. And the context also shows what it is specifically about: "to spur one another on to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). The development of divine love and the practice of "good works" to the "honor of the Master" (2 Timothy 2:20–21) and for the benefit of believers is at the center of this instruction in the Word of God.

Further Aspects

In the New Testament one finds further exhortations to live out this reciprocal relationship among brothers and sisters in faith in the mind of the Lord Jesus:

• wash one another's feet (John 13:14)

• comfort one another through the faith that is in the other (Romans 1:12)

• build up one another (Romans 14:19)

• accept one another (Romans 15:7)

• admonish one another (Romans 15:14)

• serve one another (1 Peter 4:10)

• help one another in bearing burdens (Galatians 6:2)

• bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)

• forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)

• be subject to one another (Ephesians 5:21)

• regard one another as more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)

• encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; Hebrews 10:25)

• do good to one another (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

• confess to one another (James 5:16)

The above list makes no claim to completeness. But it clearly shows how relationships among God’s children should be lived out and cultivated. What a wide field of tasks in personal service for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in faith!

A final remark: We must not make our commitment in this service depend on the behavior of our brother or sister. The Lord Jesus is our impressive example in this, serving his neighbor tirelessly—even when the reaction does not turn out as we might wish.

Summary

• How grateful we can be that the Lord Jesus from heaven cares for His own and provides them with everything needed on the way to glory. In Him we find only perfection.

• How grateful we may also be that the glorified Lord has enabled brothers, both supra-locally and in the individual localities, to exercise a shepherding ministry in His mind.

• But that does not release the individual believer from the biblical obligation to be concerned for the well-being of brothers and sisters. Unlike the servants appointed by the Lord, however, this obligation applies reciprocally to all members of the body.

• The Holy Spirit who dwells in us wants to give us strength and wisdom to continue carrying out this personal service for the benefit of others—even when there are disappointments in our fellowship with one another.

Let us be encouraged by the example of the apostle Paul:

“I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Source https://thebiblestudy.site/article/der-personliche-dienst-am-nachsten/