

Galatians 6:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For every man shall bear his own burden.

Analysis

For every man shall bear his own burden. The apparent paradox with verse 2. "For every man shall bear his own burden" (hekastos gar to idion phortion bastasei, ἔκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει)—each person will carry his own load. Phortion (φορτίον) is different from baros (verse 2). Phortion is a soldier's pack, normal load each carries; baros is crushing weight beyond one person's capacity. We bear each other's excessive burdens but carry our own normal responsibilities.

Future tense "shall bear" may reference final judgment: each will give account for himself (Romans 14:12). Or it's general principle: everyone has personal responsibilities that can't be delegated. Both meanings work. The tension with verse 2 isn't contradiction but balance: bear others' crushing burdens (mutual aid) while carrying your own load (personal responsibility). Don't neglect others because "they should carry their own load," nor neglect your responsibilities claiming "we should bear each other's burdens." Wisdom discerns when to help and when to let others develop by carrying their own packs.

Historical Context

Roman soldiers carried personal gear (phortion): weapons, rations, tools—perhaps 60 pounds. This was normal soldiering, not exceptional burden requiring help. Similarly, all Christians have normal responsibilities: work, family, discipleship, stewardship. We shouldn't expect others to carry these for us. But when crushing weights (barē) come—tragedy, persecution, overwhelming trial—we bear these

together. Early church balanced personal responsibility with communal care. Contemporary application: healthy communities neither coddle (doing for people what they should do for themselves) nor isolate (failing to help those truly overwhelmed).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between normal loads you should carry yourself and excessive burdens where you need others' help?
2. In what areas are you either refusing to carry your own responsibility or refusing to ask for help with crushing burdens?
3. How does verse 5's emphasis on personal accountability balance verse 2's call for mutual burden-bearing?

Interlinear Text

ἔκαστος	γὰρ	τὸ	ἴδιον	φορτίον	βαστάσει
every man	For		his own	burden	shall bear
G1538	G1063		G2398	G5413	G941

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 32:19 (Parallel theme): Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

Revelation 2:23 (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Jeremiah 17:10 (Parallel theme): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Matthew 16:27 (Parallel theme): For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

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