

# BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Dowlen Road, March 29, 2009 AM

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. One of the sad changes that has occurred over the last generation is the loss of community and family in our culture.
  - 1. Think about the way our neighborhoods have changed. Houses used to be built with large front porches where families would sit in the evenings and visit with their neighbors. A generation ago backyards were surrounded by a chain-linked fence that allowed neighbors to visit.
  - 2. We don't build houses this way any more. Few have a front porch, and those that do are largely for show. Now we build six foot privacy fences to block out the neighbors view.
  - 3. But the change in the architecture is only symptom. It's not just that our houses have changed, our attitudes have changed. We are more isolated from each other; we keep to ourselves. Neighbors can live next to each other for years and know nothing about each other.
  - 4. What we've lost is our sense of community.
  
- B. I mention this because it is one of the things that brings people to our door.
  - 1. People are lonely. They are disconnected or even alienated from their families. They are searching for a place to belong, for people who care.
  - 2. I understand that we need to be drawn to Christ by something higher than a need for community. Our greatest need is our need for salvation. I'm only asking us to consider that this is one of the factors that causes people to begin searching, and sometimes brings them to us.
  
- C. I wanted to mention all of this because one of the things people should discover about us is that we are family.
  - 1. The Bible uses family language to describe us.
    - a. I Timothy 3:15 "the household of God"
    - b. Colossians 4:9 "Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother"
    - c. Romans 16:1 "I commend to you our sister Phoebe"
  - 2. These are more than empty labels. They describe what we are – family. People should be able to find among us that family spirit – the unity, connection, love, care that describes families at their best. We've been talking about this periodically since last fall when as a group we said that we wanted to work harder to cultivate the family spirit. In fact, last Sunday we examined one of our critical family duties – to restore the brother who falls into sin (Galatians 6:1).
  - 3. In this lesson we want to continue our study of this text. In the verses that follow Paul has more to say about family responsibilities and some of the challenges we face as we go about fulfilling them. He continues in verse 2 by laying out another critical duty we have toward each other.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY: *"bear one another's burdens"*

- A. Paul opened this chapter by telling us to restore a brother who has fallen.
  - 1. In verse 2 he expands this responsibility with a more general statement (v. 2). Not only do we help the brother in sin, but we should help each other with any life burden that has become too great to bear.
  - 2. Can you remember the last time you made a move? You probably had a moment – we all do – when we tried to pick up a box or a piece of furniture that was too heavy. As we struggled, friends jumped in, grabbed a corner and helped us lift. Can you remember that feeling when all that additional "muscle" was added to the burden and, suddenly, it was so much easier to handle?
  - 3. This is what the Holy Spirit is telling us to do for each other. We are to shoulder life's burdens that are too great for our brother to bear.
  
- B. The details of this duty are spelled out in countless passages.
  - 1. Romans 12:15, weep with those who weep
  - 2. Romans 15:14, admonish one another
  - 3. Galatians 5:13, serve one another
  - 4. I Thessalonians 4:18, comfort one another
  - 5. I Thessalonians 5:14, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak
  - 6. Hebrews 10:24, stimulate one another
  - 7. James 5:16, confess our sins to each other, pray for each other
  - 8. I Peter 4:9, be hospitable to each other
  
- C. We see these principles in action among the early disciples.
  - 1. Acts 2:44-45. Early disciples helped their brethren shoulder financial burdens (also Acts 4:32-37).
  - 2. Acts 4:23-24. When burdened with opposition and persecution, they carried the load together.
  - 3. Acts 6:1. Special efforts were made to address the needs of widows.
  
- D. We should do the same for each other.
  - 1. It is the law of Christ that requires this of us (v. 2); it's what love demands (John 13:34-35).
  - 2. One of my duties to my brethren is to look around, notice who has a burden too great to bear and help them lift.
    - a. It might involve literally lifting a heavy box and helping someone load the moving van.
    - b. It might require that I sit next to an anxious sister in a hospital waiting room.
    - c. It might be that I need to listen quietly as a struggling mother pours out her frustration with her impossible schedule.
    - d. It might require offering counsel, perhaps a stern rebuke, to a brother who is struggling on his job because he's always losing his temper.

- E. Now notice verse 3. At first this statement may seem out of place.
1. He's been talking about our duty to bear each other's burdens and restore a brother caught up in sin. How does this fit?
  2. Actually, what is said in this verse is a vital part of the equation. Paul is identifying a great obstacle that often prevents disciples from executing the duty Paul has assigned us.

### **THE OBSTACLE: "if anyone thinks he is something"**

- A. Why is it that we sometimes find it difficult to bear each other's burdens?
1. Paul says that, sometimes, the problem is pride. A proud man thinks he's something. He sees himself as being above other people or superior to others. His concerns are more important than theirs.
  2. This arrogance becomes an obstacle to helping others bear their burdens.
    - a. He has no time to sit in a hospital waiting room. He has too many important, pressing things to do. The proud man says, "Let someone else do that, someone who does not have all these important things to do."
    - b. You will never find him loading a moving van or cleaning up a widow's yard. This kind of work is beneath a man of his stature. He leaves this kind of menial labor to people who are beneath him – more suited for this kind of work.
    - c. He is certainly not going to waste his time helping a brother who struggles with drug abuse or internet pornography. He doesn't understand why anyone would ever have a problem with such things, although he would hate for you to know about the ugly things he said to his wife in their private moments. Everyone has their battles; he just thinks their failures are far worse than his own.
- B. Paul tells us that this guy is deluding himself.
1. Think about it: Why do people see themselves as better than others?
    - a. For some it is because of their material prosperity and the status they believe this gives them.
    - b. For others it might be their education that they believe makes them smarter, wiser and thus better than others.
    - c. For still others, it is the fact they have not struggled in certain areas: "I'm better than you because I have not caved to the temptations to which you have surrendered."
  2. It's not difficult to see why a person who thinks this way is deceiving himself.
    - a. Whatever we might achieve in life (finances, education), we've done it with God's stuff. Our bodies, our minds are His creation.
    - b. The material things to which we attach such great value are destined to deteriorate, to be lost (Matthew 6:9), and ultimately they will be destroyed (II Peter 3:10).
    - c. In the one area that really does matter – a man's relationship with God – we are all in essentially the same place. We are sinners and need the blood of Jesus to save us (Romans 3:23).
  3. Think of the tragic process that is taking place.
    - a. Men use some false measure to fill themselves with pride.
    - b. This pride becomes an obstacle to serving their brethren and they neglect this work.
    - c. This neglect put them in conflict with the law of Christ for their lives (v. 2) and robs us of that family spirit that should exist among us.
  4. How do we overcome this terrible obstacle to this vital work disciples do? Paul would go on to provide an answer (vs. 4-5).

### **THE SOLUTION: "each one must examine his own work"**

- A. If we are to overcome this obstacle that pride imposes, then we must learn to measure ourselves by the right standard.
1. In verse 4 Paul challenges us to examine our own work.
  2. Greatness in God's kingdom is not measured by comparing our material wealth or educational achievements with others.
  3. True greatness will be defined by the work we do (Matthew 20:25-28). Jesus said that the greatest in His kingdom are those who serve, those who do the kinds of things Paul has been talking about in this passage (Galatians 6:1-2).
    - a. It is this work that impacts eternity.
    - b. It is this work that makes a man truly valuable.
    - c. It is this work that makes a person great in God's eyes.
    - d. It is this work that we must do.
- B. There is an interesting contrast between verses 2 and 5.
1. There are times when we all need someone to help us with life's burden.
    - a. But Paul also makes clear that we have kingdom responsibilities that we are to fulfill – our own load to carry (v. 5). This responsibility includes my duty to help others with their burdens.
    - b. Sometimes people are helping me; sometimes I'm helping them. It's a two way street.
  2. If I'm listening to all of this and thinking, "That's right! People ought to be doing these things for me", then I'm not seeing the whole picture and I'm missing the point.
    - a. The more a church is dominated by those who are focused on what others ought to do for them, the less this family spirit will flourish.
    - b. But there is another option. I can focus on my duty and get busy doing my thing, serving others. I can do this without concerning myself with what others are doing for me.
    - c. After all, I have to do my thing, even if others do not.
    - d. When this mind set takes hold, a family spirit will thrive among us.
  3. We can grow closer as a spiritual family. To make that happen, we must each recognize that we have work to do and get busy doing it.

### **CONCLUSION: What do you see as you examine yourself?**

If you're a Christian, can you say that you are busy doing the work God has given you to do? If not, it's time to get started. If you're not a Christian, you're not part of His family and missing all the blessings that come with the privileged position. You can do something about that right now!