

18. Learning to Bear One Another's Burdens

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how their lives can bear the fruit of the Spirit. We saw that will usually only happen as we provide an example of what it means to yield to the Spirit so that He causes our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We saw that these are the attitudes that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we yield to Him. We also saw that Christ will cause our lives to bear fruit as we abide in Him. That fruit is our ministry for Christ as we minister in His strength. In this topic, we will look at some examples of the way that the Lord causes our ministry to bear fruit that brings glory to Him.

One of the ministries that the Lord may give to us is the ministry of restoring a fellow Christian that has been overtaken in a trespass. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." The word that is translated "trespass" means *a deviation from uprightness and truth*. It is used six times in Romans 5 to speak of the sin of Adam. It is the word that is used in the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. It is used twice in Ephesians 2 to speak of the fact that we were dead in trespasses and sins. In this verse, it is talking about a fellow Christian that is caught in the very act of committing a sin. The word that is translated "overtaken" speaks of a person that is caught before he can flee or conceal his crime.

However, even when a person is caught in the very act of committing sin, we are not to condemn or judge that Christian. A person that would judge such a Christian actually shows that the one doing the judging is carnal. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says, "For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?" Romans 14:12-13 says, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way." Instead, we are to seek to restore our fellow Christian.

To "restore" means *to mend, to repair, or to make perfect what is lacking*. It speaks of helping a Christian that has committed sin learn how to deal with that sin and restore his fellowship with Christ. It can also talk about helping young Christians grow in their faith. An example of this use is found in 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 which says, "For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?" Since the Christians in Thessalonica had only been Christians for a very short time, Paul and the team with him realized the need to bring the faith of the Thessalonians to maturity and that concern caused them to pray for the Thessalonian Christians night and day.

Galatians 6:1 also says that this ministry of restoration is for those who are spiritual. The reason why it needs to be a spiritual Christian that restores another is the fact that a carnal Christian will be judgmental and will condemn rather than restore. A spiritual Christian is one that is yielding to the Holy Spirit so that he or she is filled and guided by the Holy Spirit. Such a Christian will be effective in restoring a brother or sister that is guilty of a trespass because the person will restore the guilty person with a spirit of gentleness. That spirit of gentleness is important for both people.

It is important to the one being restored because that person will feel accepted. It is important to the one who does the restoring or the person doing the restoring will open their own life to pride and temptation.

Another ministry that God gives us that bears fruit is the ministry of bearing the burdens of another person. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The word that is translated “burden” speaks of a heavy weight or load. People often have to deal with difficult problems or other difficulties in their lives. Mary and Martha experienced a great burden when their brother died. John 11:33-36 says, “Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’” Here, we see that Jesus was bearing the burden of the death of their brother with Mary and Martha.

In Acts 15:28-29, we see that the early church leaders at the Jerusalem Council talked about a different kind of burden. Those verses say, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” Here, the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were shown by the Lord that the Jewish law would be a great burden to the Gentile Christians. Instead of adding that burden to the Gentiles, they chose to make it clear that the Gentiles were not under the burden of the Jewish law.

We see that as we help our physical and spiritual children learn to bear the burdens of others, we are actually helping them learn how to fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is the new commandment that Christ gave in John 13:34-35 when He said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” In fact, this is part of the reason why we are called to liberty. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We are called to liberty so that we are able to serve one another in love.

Galatians 6:3-4 says, “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” We also see the attitude that we should have as we serve the Lord by ministering to others. We need to avoid thinking that we are something or a person of importance. That is an attitude of pride. Instead, Philippians 2:3-4 says, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Here, we see that as a part of our ministry, we want to help our children learn from our example how to focus on the needs of others. We want to show them by our example how to notice the needs and interests of others so that they can minister to others by meeting those needs.

In order to avoid deceiving ourselves, we are each to examine our own works. Some of our works

only have earthly value and others have eternal value. That is why 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” Our works that have only earthly value are like wood, hay and stubble. When such works are tested by fire, they burn up quickly. In contrast, some works have eternal value. They are like gold, silver and precious stones. The fire has a very different effect on them. Fire only burns out the specks of dirt so that the gold and silver and precious stones shine in all of their beauty.

Here, we see that any of our ministries for the Lord that have eternal value will be rewarded. That is why we will be able to rejoice because of the opportunities that the Lord gave us to carry out ministries that have eternal value. We will be able to rejoice because the Lord has chosen to work through our lives. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Here, we see that we are not to think our works are better than others. In contrast, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 says, “But ‘he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’ For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” Here, we see that we are to bring glory to the Lord and have an attitude of thankfulness for the fact that the Lord chose to work through our lives.

Galatians 6:5 says, “For each one shall bear his own load.” The word translated “load or burden” is the ministry that the Lord has given to us as individuals. The Lord wants us to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between the burdens of the world or the burdens of the law and the opportunities that the Lord gives us for ministry. Luke 11:46 tells us about the burdens of men when it says, “And He said, ‘Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.’” In contrast, Christ gives us opportunities to serve Him. Matthew 11:29-30 which says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Here, we see that the load or opportunity that the Lord gives us is light. In fact, Christ gives us opportunities to serve Him that bring joy to our lives. We can help our children realize that they can be filled with joy as they see how the Lord works through their lives to minister to others.

It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve the Lord and carry out ministries that have eternal value. Both our physical and spiritual children will be filled with joy as they see how the Lord chooses to work through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to experience that joy.