

## 5. Learning to Bear the Burdens of One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to admonish one another. Today, we will look at another way that we show the love of Christ to others. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The law of Christ is His new commandment that He gave in John 13:34-35 where we read, “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.” Here, we see that one of the ways that we fulfill that commandment is to bear one another’s burdens. It is a key area to show our children how to practice bearing one another’s burdens as they grow and mature. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Burdens are the weights that are pressing down on another. The night before He was crucified, Christ told the disciples that He was going to die. He also told them that He would soon be returning to heaven. As the disciples heard these words, they became troubled in their hearts. The words that Christ was speaking to them were like a heavy burden to them. As a result, Christ said in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Christ understood that His words were like a heavy weight on the disciples because they suddenly realized that Christ would not be physically present with them any longer. That is why He told them that He would give them His peace.

People around us also have many burdens that press down on them like heavy weights. That is why it is important to help our children learn how to bear the burdens of others. They will learn best from our example. That is why we need to give them opportunities to watch us as we are ministering to those with heavy burdens. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” We need to help our children learn through imitation as they see how we minister to others during the times they are burdened down with heavy loads.

The word translated “burden” is used first in Matthew 20:12. In that verse, we read, “Saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’” This passage is from one of the parables of Christ. In that parable, the men who were talking had just finished working out in a vineyard for a twelve-hour day. They said that the work had been hard and the day had been hot. In this context, we see that hard, physical work can be described as a burden. Some people need encouragement when they have been involved in long and tiring physical work.

In Acts 15:28, we read about a different kind of burden. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem had just made a very important decision that they wanted to communicate clearly to the Gentiles that had become Christians. As a result, Acts 15:28-29 says, “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.” The Jewish Christians had grown up knowing the Old Testament law and had lived under the law for their entire lives.

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However, that was not true of the Gentile believers. The leaders of the early church reached the decision that learning and following the Jewish law would be a great burden to the Gentiles believers. As a result, they said that they would lay on them no greater burden than the things that are mentioned in these verses. However, even these things can be a great burden when they have been a part of the past life of a person before that person became a Christian.

This is illustrated in John 4 as Christ talked to the Samaritan woman. Christ actually complimented the woman for telling the truth but at the same time He also revealed her burden. John 4:16-18 says, “Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband,” for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.’” This woman had a great burden because of her past lifestyle. This is actually all that is recorded that Christ told this woman about her past life.

However, the woman said in John 4:28-29 as she talked to the men of the city, “The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ‘Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’” Here, we see that the woman felt that Christ had described her entire life by just that one statement. She was carrying a heavy load from the past and needed someone to help her bear her burden. Christ both helped her bear her burden and also set her free from that burden as He changed and transformed her life.

Some people have a burden because of their present lifestyle. John 8:1-11 describes one such person. We see that the scribes and Pharisees used this heavy burden as a way to try and trap Christ. They had no concern for the woman. John 8:3-6 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.” This woman had a heavy burden because she had been caught in the very act of adultery (that sin requires two people and only one was brought to Christ so there may have been an accuser with a double standard in his own life).

This was a heavy burden for several reasons. She had been caught in the act of sin. She was being accused alone and without her partner in this sin. She was being publicly accused in a very public place. She was facing the threat of being stoned to death. She was being used by her accusers to find an excuse to accuse Christ. These things together created a very heavy burden for this woman. When the men kept accusing her, we read in John 6:7, “So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’” As you know, these men were all convicted by their own conscience and left one by one.

However, Christ still had a concern to bear the burden of the woman. John 8:10-11 says, “When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are

those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’” Christ was the One without sin but He chose not to condemn her. Instead, He chose to set her free from her heavy burden so that she could begin a new life.

The next place this word is used is 2 Corinthians 4:17. The context is given in 2 Corinthians 4:8-12 where we read, “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” As you can see, Paul was experiencing a great deal of persecution and suffering.

Then, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Paul looked to the future reward of glory and was able to consider these things mentioned in verses 8-12 as light affliction. However, many Christians view great persecution and suffering as a heavy weight and need to have someone help bear their burden by reminding them of the future glory that is eternal.

Paul, Silas and Timothy realized that just their presence as extra people to care for could have been a burden to the Thessalonians that were new Christians. Instead, they chose not to be a burden but cared for their own needs and cared for the spiritual needs of these new Christians. 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9 says, “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” Paul, Silas and Timothy chose to both help new Christians grow and work to support themselves to avoid being a burden.

Living among people who are practicing idolatry can be another kind of burden according to Revelation 2:24. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to minister to their friends that come from families with false worship. God can use our children to minister to others in many ways. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to bear the burdens of others.