

The

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PLUMBLINE

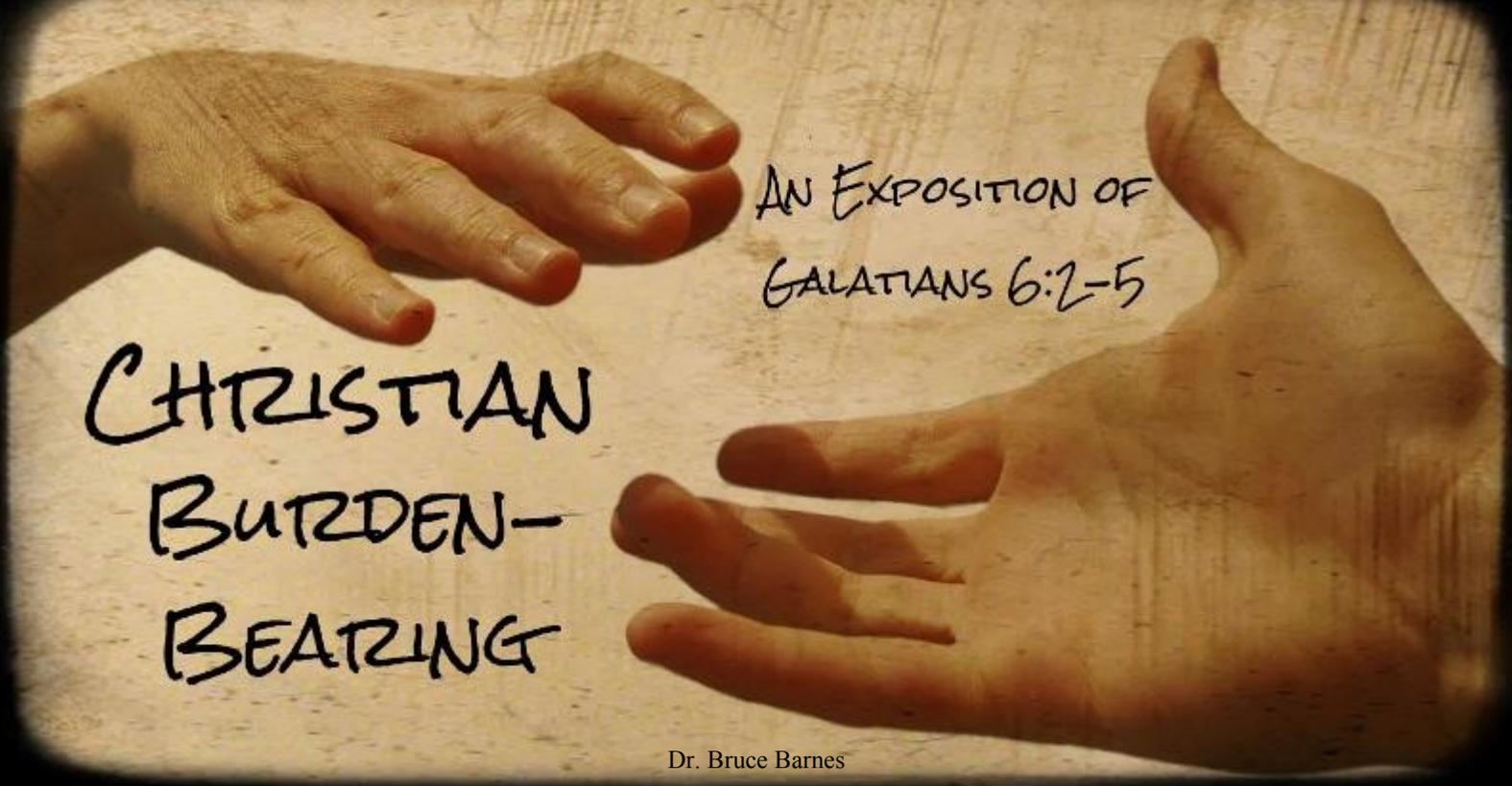
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This Issue
Emphasizing
Christian Care



AN EXPOSITION OF
GALATIANS 6:2-5

CHRISTIAN BURDEN- BEARING

Dr. Bruce Barnes

Ga 6:2-5 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.

Although the text is Galatians 6:2-5, verse one sets the basis for the verses that follow. There is a Christian responsibility involved in helping another in the Christian walk, especially when that person has been "overtaken in a fault." It will be such times when a brother may need guidance, correction, or rebuke; and someone lovingly needs to be there to give the necessary help. Along with that help comes a believer's personal responsibility to consider his own needs as well. With proper self-examination and a heart of love, we can find the importance and application of Christian burden-bearing.

**RESPONSIBILITY TO FELLOW BELIEVERS:
Help bear their burdens (2-3)**

The passage says to "bear ye one another's burdens." Before we can best understand what it is to "bear," we must first understand what load is in-

involved. The word for "burden" in verse two, *baros*, has the meaning of "weight."¹ This idea is exemplified in the non-canonical writing Ecclesiasticus 13:2 where the son of Sirach said, "Take not up a *burden* above thy strength." This word's usage mostly indicates a burden or weight that is too heavy to bear, although it is not the only use of it.² However, the contrast between the burdens of verse two and verse five is significant. Every indication is that the burden represented here is a weight too heavy for a brother to carry alone.

Because one has a weight to carry which is far too much for him to bear, other believers are called in to help bear the load with him. The word "bear" (*bastazo*) means "to bear what is burdensome."³ Bearing these burdens are not merely "enduring" them but that of having a compassion and heart for the need of another, but the commitment goes further. It is the personal bearing of something unpleasant for the benefit of another. There is a spirit of self-sacrifice involved. Paul speaks of this same spirit in Romans 15:1, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

To live for and to serve others in this way truly shows that we are fulfilling "the law of Christ."

This whole context is surrounded by the truth of brotherly concern. Jesus made it clear to His disciples, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). It is this love and concern whereby the Spirit inspires John to write, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John 3:16).

There is a law by which the Christian must live: the law of love. Jesus has provided it, exemplified it and commanded it. To disregard the Christian labor of love is to ignore basic Christian living. From the context of verse one, Christian love will cause one to be considerate of a brother who has fallen to a particular fault (sin). Christian love and concern will cause one to confront that brother in helping him to be restored. Confrontation is not an easy obligation any more than the sinning brother will find it easy to repent and to go through the complete restoration process. Yet here, the teaching concerns a brother’s heart and sacrifice that is driven by a love of heart and a humble demeanor.

Therefore, a faithful Christian motivated by the law of Christ—which is love—will bear the burden of another who through weakness may have been overcome by a fault. The faithful Christian goes outside of himself, seeking not his own needs, but the concerns and needs of another. In this way, the faithful Christian has helped bear a weight under which another brother has fallen.

I will admit that following this pathway with a brother is not easy, and it has its own burden. When there is an honest desire to be of help, a fallen brother does not always accept it. On the part of a brother in fault, I’ve seen it range from denial to complete rejection to avoidance to self justification. But other than the constraint of the love of Christ, what will keep us attempting to help? “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” We’ve heard the adage, “There but for the grace of God, go I.” The condition that a fallen brother finds himself in is beyond his ability, reasoning, or desire to resolve at this time, else he would have done so already. To give up on a brother because of his condi-

tion is to justify ourselves in not having acted in the same way. That type of reasoning is always wrong, always self-deceiving, and always a matter of pride. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). We might just as quickly find ourselves in need of compassionate care to the same level that our brother at present does. That which a brother faces is a burden that we have to take up even when it is an unpleasant weight for us.

In summary, every believer should come to the place of caring for his brethren by taking responsibility in helping bear burdens. The bearing of these burdens results in the restoration of a “fellow-saint” who has fallen into sin (vs. 1). A person who does not bear the burdens of others has not only shown himself to be unchristian in conduct but also disobedient to the law of Christ. Such a person is living under a delusion of what he is. The reason a person may refuse to bear a brother’s burden is because he thinks too highly of himself. Verse one indicates that such a person may think of himself as self-sufficient—not believing he could be tempted in the same way as the brother in need. This is spiritual pride and spiritual self-deception. No man is greater than another except by the grace of God. Therefore, Christian living is not a self-centered living, but one of seeking to help bear the needs of others. The burden-bearing Christian is one who looks beyond himself. This look encompasses the will of the Savior in his life and his duty to his brothers in Christ.

RESPONSIBILITY TO ONESELF: Bear One’s Own Burden (4-5)

Paul enjoins the believer to “prove” his own work. Christian labor might help others and might be seen by others; yet, true spiritually is not determined by sight or visible works alone. Therefore, every man should put his labor to a test. This is an “examination [of...] individual responsibility.” The usage of “prove” has the idea of “testing...metals to see whether they are pure. This makes an apt metaphor for tests of moral works.”⁴ Following the context, a person should not judge others on the basis of the sins

CHRISTIAN BURDEN-BEARING Cont'd.

which they fall and might be in need of help. In the midst of fulfilling a faithful duty of bearing up the weaknesses of other brethren, let a person also consider himself and the weaknesses to which he is susceptible.

When such personal scrutiny and reflection comes to bear on one's life, he is not likely to find himself of a spirit to claim "moral or spiritual" supremacy over others.⁵ This type of self-examination safeguards against self-deception. For that reason, Paul can say, "Then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."⁶ The idea of this phrase is, "in regard to himself alone—and not in regard to the other person." The testing is to be a personal one and not related to comparison with someone else. Our testing is personal in relation to the Word and in relation to Jesus. Ironside states, "Each one should recognize his own individual responsibility to God, and therefore he is to be careful that his own work is in accordance with God's revealed mind, as indicated in His Word. As he thus walks obediently he will know that joy which comes from fellowship with God and will not depend on others for his happiness."⁷

Because of this personal responsibility, an individual must responsibly bear or carry his own burden. "For every man shall bear his own burden." The word "burden" in verse five (*phortion*) is the weight suggested by a soldier's pack.⁸ Paul also used it of the weight of cargo ("lading") going into a ship which was designed to carry it (Acts. 27:10). In contrast to the usage of burden (*phortion*) in verse five to the burden (*baros*) of verse two, "the latter suggests the idea of an...oppressive burden which is not necessarily implied in the former; so that *bara* points to a load of which a man may fairly rid himself when occasion serves; *phortion* to a load which he is expected to bear."⁹

Guthrie states it well when he says, "In many ways this verse supplies the key to verse two, for only those who know the measure of their own weaknesses are qualified to share the burdens of others. Here is the paradox of human sympathy. Those are best able to

sustain another who have proved their own power to be sustained in trials of their own."¹⁰ This not only helps us understand verse two but also verse one as well. Only the person who considers the difficulties and weaknesses he has in his own life can best sympathize and go out of his way to help a brother in need. The one who labors at bearing his own burden is also better enabled to help bear the burdens of others.

We have been given Christian responsibility, and it begins in examining and adjusting ourselves spiritually. As we are able to carry out Christian responsibility—which is expected!—we will then be prepared to help our brethren shoulder significant loads under which they have fallen. It is by this method that we fulfill the law of Christ. May we examine our personal lives today and how we can then be used to serve Christ better by better serving our brethren.

¹Gingrich, 33; ²Custer, 1; ³Wuest, 167; ⁴Guthrie, 153; ⁵Wuest, 169; ⁶Len-ski, 301; ⁷Ironside, 216; ⁸Custer, 2; ⁹Lightfoot, 297-298; ¹⁰Guthrie, 154.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SEMINARS: Helping Churches Reach Out

(report from the Promotional Director)

I have already conducted two sets of seminars within Virginia, one in the west (at Central FWB Church, Norton) and another in the east (at Hyde Park FWB Church, Norfolk). Each set had over 20 Sunday school teachers, workers, and leaders represented in the sessions. From all feedback, the attendees were challenged and encouraged; also, both groups have indicated that they would like to have more of the same.

Please go to the website and check out the events calendar (under the information menu tab) for upcoming seminars in your area. There are several more scheduled right now within the next two months. I would enjoy holding seminars at your church.

These seminars not only help the workers within the classroom, there is a strong challenge and method provided for helping the Sunday school reach out to more and more people. I encourage you to arm your teachers and workers with the help they would like and with an encouragement that will feed growth.



by Jack Ketteaman, Family Pastor
First Free Will Baptist Church, Bristol, VA

IT WAS NO VACATION

Short-Term, Big Deal

Incredible beauty: white sands, clear blue water, green mountains towering in the distance, palm trees rising high in the sun, herds of goats roving from yard to yard, fresh fruit growing all around...These are some of the pleasant images of Jamaica that the tourist bureau uses for post card images that draw visitors from around the world.

Then there are other images: massive gated mansions of drug lords next to tiny shacks, unfinished block and concrete houses sitting empty, starving stray dogs wandering everywhere, trash littering the grass, pubs and bars dotting the roadside mile after mile, glassy-eyed men mindlessly smoking their ganja in broad daylight, underemployed people scraping a living from the fruit trees in their yard, delicious fresh cashews being roasted and hand-shelled in the middle of a junk yard, orphans selling candy in the city streets...An island full of stark contrasts. Here lives a charming, easy-going people quick to smile and say "no problem," yet, as with any people, their problem is still their need of the Savior.

We traveled to Jamaica to spend eight days serving with Merciful Shepherd ministries, conducting Vacation Bible Schools and Medical clinics, and

constructing walls that will one day surround the orphanage property. While I trust that we made a difference for the Kingdom of God, the greatest impact of such short-term mission trips is often on those who go. What we learned over the past several months, though, is that the repercussions don't end there. Ten students and eight adults boarding a plane created ripples far beyond the walls of First Free Will Baptist Church!

Cooperation within the Body of Christ

Two brief invitations, casual yet sincere, set the trip in motion. The Gibbons, members of our church, have made several trips to Jamaica, all in conjunction with Pardue FWB Church, where they attended while living in the Clarksville, TN, area. They provided the inroad. Pastor Len Scott has led nearly a dozen such trips and asked us to join them this year.

It was such a pleasure and a tremendous blessing to see members of two churches serving and sweating side by side so smoothly. Thirty-three of us crammed into a bus day after day without a moment of feuding. One of the Jamaicans with whom we worked said at the end of the week that he thought we were all from one church. In truth, we *are* one Church,

one Body, and it was beautiful to see that played out.

Another encouraging surprise came when I got word from Brett Keese, a local youth worker at Cornerstone FWB. When his students heard about our trip, they took up a collection and sent \$100 to support their brothers and sisters. How awesome to see young believers united for the Gospel.

Faith Exercised & Increased

I must confess, my faith was small going in. When we began preparing, I *hoped* we would have a few volunteers in addition to the Gibbons, my wife Ashley, and myself. When the team came together, though, we had not only exceeded my expectations, we had to turn some applicants away. Others wanted to participate but were unable. Our people were ready, and they jumped at the chance to participate.

The larger team meant greater expenses. As we began raising funds in earnest, we had a little more than four months to raise around \$20,000. Because of His people, the Lord provided through their creativity and generosity, and even through some inexplicable means that point to His mighty hand. He proved His faithfulness at every turn!

Faith was also exercised as parents sent their kids overseas, some flying for the first time. The Lord took care of His people, brought us through a little adversity, and helped us trust Him more. Before the team left, we asked our church family to commit to praying continuously during our trip. When we returned, we found that as our brothers and sisters spent increased time on their knees, the Lord having stirred their hearts. While we worshipped in a Jamaican church that Sunday, our church experienced a powerful moving of the Spirit as God's people were especially in tune to His heart. How wonderful to return and find that ours was not the only exciting experience in the Lord that week!

Impact In the Community

Through several fundraising endeavors, we had opportunity to meet neighbors and share with them about the trip as well as our church. Members of our community also donated both money and items

for the ministry. My wife and I even got to share at yard sales as we searched for clothes and flip flops to take to Jamaica!

Impact Inside the Church

Leading up to the trip, we saw students and parents step up to serve in fundraising efforts. We saw coordination and fellowship as families worked together. During the trip, we discovered and saw gifts exercised by team members, some of which were unknown even to themselves. Since our return, those gifts are being put into practice in new ways with greater willingness and confidence. Several of our students have been much more involved in reaching out to their friends and inviting them to church. Even as I write, we are fresh off the heels of a packed-house youth event, largely because of invitations from our Jamaica team members.

Unexpected Blessings

We expected to see the Lord bless as we prepared this trip, but we couldn't have anticipated all the ways He showed up. One of the most beautiful experiences was watching our senior saints' group volunteer and put together our final fundraising meal. It was unexpected, and it was a visible demonstration of what had been happening in our church throughout this endeavor - the Body was becoming unified as we committed ourselves to the mission! Our pastor, David Mizelle, was right in pointing out to our team and the congregation that missions is not just about a one-time experience, but about our obedience to His commands here, week by week. The Lord continues to use this one trip to Jamaica to shape His work in Bristol. I pray we never outlive the impact it has made on our lives, our community, and His Church.

This article was written by Jack Kettman who is the Family Pastor at First Free Will Baptist Church, Bristol, VA. David Mizell is the pastor.

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Perhaps you have the means of supporting the promotional office in a more significant way. Brother Barnes would welcome your committed, monthly gift to aid the work of Free Will Baptists in Virginia.

You can become a “Fast-Snacker” by signing up and donating online. Go to www.vafwb.org and look for the donation link; you can manage your own one-time gift or monthly draft. If you prefer not to give online, go to the website “Contact Us” page and send him an email to let him know of your desire to support the promotional office. You can also call him (757-407-1183) or send him a letter at the following address.

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