

28 December 2014

Bear a burden for the lost & so as one body bear the Lord's burden for all to be saved (Bear one another's burdens – Pt 2 & final)

This is our second and final study on the topic "bear one another's burdens". In our first study we covered four points as we sought to answer the question; how do we carry, or help to carry our brother's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ? We answered that question with four points:- (1) think nothing of ourselves, and (2) forgive our brother when he sins against us, and (3) suffer ourselves to be defrauded, and (4) carry our own burden.

In this study we will cover three points:- (1) those who have the rule over us bear a burden of the people, and (2) Christ is our example on how we are to bear the burden of our brethren, and (3) bear a burden for the lost & so as one body bear the Lord's burden for all to be saved.

Let us add a little more detail to our points.

1. Those who have the rule over us bear a burden of the people.

Ex.18: 22 "And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, [that] every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear [the burden] with thee."

See also Num.11: 17 & Deut.1: 12.

Ever since the days of Noah and Abraham who led their families under the direction of the Lord, to be the head of their families, and for Isaac to be the head of a nation, there has been responsibility on their shoulders, there has been a burden that they bear.

When God chose Moses to lead His fledgling nation out of Egypt it was only Moses that initially bore that burden. Whether it be Moses, or Joshua, David or Solomon, the burden that the leaders felt was mostly when the people disobeyed God. How were they to judge them? Moses' father-in-law (Jethro) suggested that he share that burden, and it was from our verse in Ex.18 which formed part of Jethro's counsel that we establish our point; those who have the rule over us bear a burden for the people. In this example it was to help Moses make judgments when there was a dispute. God gave part of Moses' anointing to those who helped carry the burden.

In David's day the Lord spoke to David directly, communicated through the law, and the prophets like Samuel, to assist David in knowing the will of God.

In Paul's day as a Christian he had the Scriptures, Jesus' revelation of Himself on the Damascus Road, the subsequent revelations of the gospels, and the mysteries, and the Holy Spirit that guided him by opening and closing doors.

But David and Paul, as leaders, still carried a burden of judgment for the people. There were times when Paul rebuked the people in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and other times he asked, "should I come to you with a rod, or in love". So Paul not only carried the burden of the imprisonment, and other sufferings for Christ (see 2Cor.11: 23), but also the burden of leading the churches and the overseers of those churches.

As a side note: Paul's other name was not Peter (who is claimed to be the Bishop of Rome), from which all other church leaders/Bishops/Popes have been ordained. No, the man that was given that responsibility by Christ, was Paul, he carried the burden for the early church after Acts 15. It is Paul's epistles that were written to the Gentile churches in Ephesus, Rome, and Colosse, etc. Peter did not carry the burden of the early church and their murmurings, their sin, but rather he was the appointed apostle to the Jew (Gal.2: 7).

Paul experienced first hand the burden of perils of false brethren, and therefore having to discern false brethren that crept in unawares, and those who were true brethren and those overtaken in a fault (Gal.6: 1). Paul not only experienced true and false brethren but he wrote letters that later were added to the Canon of Scripture and become God's words on how a leader of the church is to bear the burdens of those whom he leads. Today our leaders, our teachers, those who labour over us in the word have a burden to bring the judgment of God on those whom they lead, and today they do so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the authority of Holy Scripture.

Have you been in a church where you have been burdened by something and been unable to share it with those in positions of responsibility, perhaps the minister, the pastor or deacon? Now that might be a difficult job for a leader to be aware of every dispute, but that is why Jethro counseled Moses to have men under him to be accountable for small groups, and only judgments that were difficult came before Moses, which meant Moses shared the burden of the people with others.

Let us remember that our leaders carry a burden for those whom they lead, let us pray for them and support them in all they do, as they seek to obey God and lead His people and bear the burden of judgments and guidance for their flock.

2. Christ is our example on how we bear the burden of our brethren.

1Jn.3: 16 “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.”

See also; Jn.15: 13.

The greatest burden that any one can bear for another man is their sin, and “scarcely for a righteous man will one die” (Rom.5: 7). And we know that none of us can carry another man’s sin, or our own. In the world when a man in the army jumps on a bomb that would have otherwise killed ten men, he has clearly born the burden of others, he has taken the burden of death that was for the ten, on himself. But Christ died, not just for one man, or for ten, but for every “ungodly” sinner (Rom.5: 6). How do we look to what Christ has done and see an example of how we are bear our brother’s burden?

We “ought to lay down our life for the brethren” (1Jn.3: 16). And even though we do not, and cannot ever carry our sin or another mans, we can I suggest, carry another’s burden by laying down our life for his (a brother in Christ).

When we look to the Scriptures for an example we see that Peter told the Lord that he would follow him, and that “he will lay down my life for thy sake” (Jn.13: 37 & 38). How did that eventuate for Peter?

Well, after the cock crowed three times he denied the Lord when asked if he was one of His disciples. Hence, in his zeal he was prepared to die for the Lord, but when the rubber hit the road (so to speak), he denied that he was one of his followers. Which meant that if he had owned up, he may have been persecuted, so Peter feared persecution for Christ, he did not want to partake of his burden by owning up to being a believer. In doing so he denied taking ownership of his faith in Christ and the consequences of his belief.

On reflection, the example of Peter is useful to show what not to do, as an opposite to our example of Christ, who stood up and did what His Father required of Him regardless of the cost, He bore the burden of their sin (Heb 9:28). In doing so, the Lord became an example to all who believe God, all who believe on Christ Jesus, of how we are to bear our brother’s burden, how we are to lay down our own life for our brethren (1Jn.3: 16).

Following Christ’s example to bear any burden because of Christ, we ask, have you:-

- * been rejected by your family for proclaiming your belief in Christ, and
- * lost a friend for sharing the gospel of Christ, and
- * been to prison for preaching Christ?

I know there are brethren in our midst who can say “yes” to either one or all of these questions, whereas others struggle with following Christ’s example.

Today, no man is called to bear the judgment of another man’s sin, there is no need for anyone to commit suicide for their fellow believers as you see in some cults in America. The Lord Jesus is our example of how we are lay down our lives for our brethren, and in doing so Christ is our example of how we are to carry our brethren’s burden.

Perhaps like the students at some of the high school shootings where a lone gun man goes around the school shooting people. And there was a case some years back, where teenagers were asked if they were Christians, and when some stood up and said “yes” and were shot. They followed their Saviour and were prepared to proclaim His name in the face of being shot, and so partook in the burden that Christ bore and did not deny Him, regardless of the cost.

So let us all be challenged by the example of Christ who bore the burden, for not only His brethren Israel, but the whole world, and seek His help to lay down our life for our brethren.

3. Bear a burden for the lost & so as one body bear the Lord’s burden for all souls.

2Cor.5: 15 “And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

God does not need the saved to evangelise the lost, for He could raise up stones to preach (Lk.3: 8). But when a man gets saved and is baptised as a sign of his inward death and resurrection in the Lord, that “they which live should not henceforth live unto to themselves but unto him which died for them and rose again” (see also Gal.3: 20), then they desire to obey the Lord. And if being obedient means bearing the burden of preaching Christ to the heathen, evangelising the lost, or challenging a Roman Catholic about his belief in purgatory, then each will bear the name of the Lord Jesus and His burden to save those who are lost.

But not everyone is called to preach, teach and evangelise, and for those who are not, how do they bear the name of the Lord and His burden to save the lost, and so partake of this burden that the body of Christ bears as one body?

First, by prayer and asking God for a burden for the lost, such that you have compassion and weep for those whom Satan has deceived.

Second, by having “your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph.6: 13).

Third, being prepared to sow a seed, then stepping out and doing some seed-sowing, i.e.; leave a tract, speak with a friend, taking the opportunities as they arise.

Fourth, by having an answer to those who ask “a reason of the hope that is in you”, and to reply “with meekness and fear” (1Pet.3: 15).

If you feel unable to do any of those things, then pray for those who do the work and give what money your heart desires to the churches that are involved in the work.

If you do any of these then you will participate with others in the body of Christ, and so together bear the name of the Lord Jesus and His burden to save the lost.

If you do any of those four things then let them be done in the knowledge that you are in a race, so “run, that ye may obtain” (1Cor.9: 24). In other words you need to pace yourself till the end, till you either hear the trumpet and we meet the Lord together in the clouds, or the Lord takes you home before the rapture. There is no point in going out seven nights a week for a month because a preacher compares you to other men (2Cor.10: 12) and you run out of motivation for the work.

There are brethren who would come out on the street each Friday, which our church has been doing for over 8 years now, and they have come with all “gusto”, they have stood on seats and preached, handed out gospel tracts, and talked one-on-one with passers-by about their eternal home, but then after two years or so they slow down, and then often stop. So set a pace and stay with that, do not seek to please other men, especially those who do not have the rule over you, who may set targets or objectives for what they believe is acceptable. But rather set your own goals in prayer with the Lord, and discussion with those who are accountable before God for your souls, for it is ultimately Christ, through the word of God, and the Holy Spirit, that directs our paths, not man. And when you set your goals, be content, don’t look to what others are doing, who might be spending more time in the work, or taking more opportunities than you, because the devil loves you to be discouraged about not doing enough. If you seek God’s direction and his guidance to open-doors, to be involved in sharing the Lord Jesus with the lost, and then seek His help and boldness to act when those doors open, then you will bear the name of Jesus and His burden to save the lost.

Let us together seek to build up the body of Christ, to bear Christ’s burden to save all those whom Satan has deceived, and so together as one body we bear Christ’s burden for the lost.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our second and final study on the topic “bear one another’s burdens”, we have covered three points:- (1) those who have the rule over us bear a burden of the people, and (2) Christ is our example on how we are to bear the burden of our brethren, and (3) bear a burden for the lost & so as one body bear the Lord’s burden for all to be saved.