

Burden Bearers

Introduction:

We've come to the end of our study. Paul has expressed his disappointment and warned the churches. He's defended his apostleship and message: justification is promised to everyone who puts their faith in Christ, not works of the law. He's encouraged faithful living and will now encourage the brethren to bear each other's burdens and not grow weary of doing good.

Vs. 1-5 Caught Up In Sin

- Vs. 1-2: Considering some may be led by the flesh, those led by the Spirit should lend a helping hand.
 - This should be done gently. The sharp rebuke from Paul is interesting. It reminds us to pay attention to our audience and circumstances.
 - Titus 1:10-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Jude 17-23
 - Remember that we all have weaknesses. Sometimes, we've been in the "hot seat" ourselves. Maybe you haven't been, but you may one day. Perhaps you need to see yourself clearly. We can and have sinned against the Lord. Every one of us. Put ourselves in their shoes.
 - Jesus taught many things, but He especially emphasized the need to love your neighbor as yourself. His love reached never-before-seen depths. Yet, He's not one of those athletes who enjoys record-breaking status for a season. It never has been broken. It never will be. Everything we're discussing demands humility.
 - Before considering the humility required, we must take our time with the call to help others. This, indeed, can be burdensome. If you've never felt the burden, you should rethink how you view this command. Are you too easily burdened? Are you quickly irritated with others? Are you an "I tried to help twice and now I'm out" kinda guy and gal? What kind of burdens have you witnessed? Addictions such as drinking, drugs, and sex? Know someone with a bad attitude? Know someone struggles to make a change? Someone who needs help to prioritize? Someone who seems to be blind? Someone who struggles with loneliness, which has led to bitterness? Someone who has experienced the death of a loved one resulting in anger or a loss of confidence? Someone who's been hurt and is now doubting God's existence? How quickly should this turn around? Someone who plays the victim, how long will it be before they stop acting like one? So on and so on. The world is filled with stories, trials, and tribulations. One person's "walk in the park" is another one's "uphill battle."
- Vs. 3-5: We all need sober judgments of ourselves, especially when correcting others. Do not over-value yourself. Our value is based on the fact that we're made in God's image, and He values us. Some run from such talk - always looking to uplift another when they may be training them to boast in one's-self. We need to be reminded and placed back in reality during these times. Paul did not have a problem making such statements about himself and others; I view him as a sincere servant.
 - Remember Luke 18:11? He was comparing himself while simultaneously not seeing himself.

- 2 Cor. 10:13-18; Romans 15:17-20. We don't boast because of what we accomplished compared to others, but what Christ accomplishes through us. The emphasis is on Christ. We look at what we do and acknowledge God's work. We do not find our boasting by comparing ourselves to others' failings. We will stand by what we do by the strength of Christ. Considering the context - we will stand for how we treat others in times of need.
- Which one is it? They're both true. We have our own responsibilities and will answer individually to God. However, that doesn't mean others don't need help at times. At times, you may need to be the one who needs it.

Vs. 6-10 Don't Grow Weary

- Vs. 6-8: I tend to think Paul is shifting his focus to supporting preachers of the gospel message. On one hand, this seems random; on the other, Paul has been attacked for preaching the truth. We should support such men.
 - This isn't the only time Paul discussed the need to do so - 1 Corinthians 9:1-11
 - It's a wonderful opportunity to remind you that you are part of my work and your own because of your support. When I'm teaching others, you are also in a principal way. When I'm spreading the gospel, it is because you've supported me. You've given me the time to do so; otherwise, my availability will be limited.
 - Remember that we're following God, the Spirit, in this way. When you help and participate, you are obeying God and selflessly helping others.
- Vs. 9-10: Things may seem to be going nowhere. We don't see what God sees. We also forget the principle: we are to help regardless of how others react. In that, we need to rejoice because it's pleasing to the Lord. We're doing our part, and that's all we can do. We leave the rest to the Lord. Whatever you're doing (helping those struggling, supporting the gospel, etc.
 - While we do need to especially look out for those inside the body, we are to have a generous eye towards all people. We do this as we have opportunity. Let's not let these opportunities pass by, but let's not stress about opportunities we don't have either. As always - harmonize these truths in your heart and mind.

Vs. 11-18 Conclusion

- Vs. 11: Large letters, not long letters (this was a short letter).
 - Sometimes, Paul had others write letters for him (Romans 16:22). Sometimes, he would add his greeting (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17), which came at the end of his letters. Perhaps that's what he's doing here.
- Vs. 12-13: Paul reminded them they were being taken advantage of.
 - What's their true motive? They didn't want to be persecuted for the sake of Christ. They'd rather be accepted by man than God. They were trying to force the Old Law to please the Jews. Yet, the Jews rejected Jesus. Those tried to be friends of both, but that wouldn't work.
 - The funny thing is that false teachers don't really follow the law. They're just using it to show those who demand keeping the Old Law. They enjoyed being part of the club over the Kingdom. They wanted to eat their cake and have it too, but that didn't work.

- Don't be naive. Others will absolutely destroy you if need be. Many will go to any length in order to thrive and be accepted.
- Vs. 14-18: Paul turns his attention and boasts in the Lord.
 - Paul has put the world behind him.
 - Paul is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - The true Israel of God (Christians) enjoys peace and mercy.
 - Paul wanted to put an end to the accusations. He wasn't like the false brothers. He was willing and *had* suffered for Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).
 - See how he calls them brothers. He's concluding this letter with a gentle and hopeful tone.