

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 6 (PART 1)

PAUL TURNS ON HIS PASTORAL VOICE AS HE BEGINS ON WHAT WE WILL KNOW AS THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THIS LETTER. CHAPTER 5 ENDED WITH A CALL TO LOVE AND CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. BUT HOW?

"IT IS EASY TO TALK ABOUT "LOVE" IN AN ABSTRACT AND GENERAL WAY; IT IS MUCH HARDER TO GET DOWN TO CONCRETE, PARTICULAR SITUATIONS WHICH WE ACTUALLY DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. IT IS SOME OF THESE WHICH PAUL NOW UNFOLDS..." (JOHN R.W. STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF GALATIANS", PAGE 155)

GALATIANS 6:1-5 - BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

THESE ARE REALLY IMPORTANT AND HELPFUL VERSES FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO HEAR, UNDERSTAND AND OBEY. IT'S INTERESTING HOWEVER TO CONSIDER THEM FIRST IN THEIR ORIGINAL CONTEXT. PAUL BEGINS WITH A BROTHERLY APPEAL "BRETHREN," HE BEGINS, "IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN A TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS..."

I WONDER IF PAUL WAS SADDENED TO KNOW THAT THE GALATIAN CHURCH WAS UNABLE TO PULL ITSELF OUT OF IT'S SITUATION BUT NEEDED HIS INTERVENTION. PAUL LOVED THESE SAINTS AND INITIATED THE HELP, BUT THESE VERSES HIGHLIGHT THAT THE CHURCH OUGHT TO BE A SELF-SUSTAINED BODY - CARING FOR AND SUPPORTING EACH OTHER.

LET'S BREAKDOWN SOME OF HIS CALL FROM **VERSE 1**:

"**CAUGHT**" - THIS IS THE WORD ALSO TRANSLATED AS "OVER TAKEN". THINK ABOUT SOMEONE WHO IS STUCK IN SOMETHING AND CAN'T GET OUT. IT ALSO IMPLIES SOMETHING THAT HAS COME UPON SOMEONE AND "OVERTAKEN THEM" SUDDENLY AND TO TAKE OR ENTANGLE IN OR AS IF IN A SNARE.

"**TRESPASS**" - THIS WORD IS USED FOR A SIN THAT IS A "FALSE STEP" OR "MISSTEP". IN OUR CULTURE WE SEE "DO NOT TRESPASS/NO TRESPASSING" SIGNS WHICH TELL US WE SHOULDN'T CROSS OVER THAT BOUNDARY TO A PLACE WE DON'T BELONG. THIS IS WHAT SIN DOES - IT CAUSES US TO END UP IN A PLACE WE SHOULDN'T BE OR A PLACE THAT IS FORBIDDEN OR DANGEROUS.

"**SPIRITUAL**" - PAUL JUST FINISHED TALKING ABOUT THE EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN SOMEONE'S LIFE. HE CALLED THE GALATIANS TO "WALK BY THE SPIRIT". FROM THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT, ONE WHO IS SPIRITUAL IS LIVING BY THE SPIRIT'S POWER AND EXHIBITING "THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT". THIS ISN'T SOME SPECIAL GROUP OF SUPER CHRISTIANS OR SINLESS CHRISTIANS - BUT PEOPLE WHO ARE YIELDING THEIR LIFE TO THE SPIRIT'S WORK AND LEADING. PART OF BEING SPIRITUAL IS HOW WE THINK WHEN A ANOTHER MEMBER IN THE FAMILY OF GOD HAS TRESPASSED. IF WE ARE SPIRITUAL, WE SHOULDN'T THINK "EH, WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?" BUT WE SHOULD FEEL A CONNECTION TO THAT PERSON AND LOVING COMPASSION FOR THEIR STATE. IF WE DO FEEL THIS WAY, WHAT DO WE DO AND HOW DO WE DO IT? WE CONTINUE ON...

"**RESTORE**" - THE GREEK WORD IS "*KATARTIZO*" AND IT IS TRANSLATED IN OTHER PLACES "PREPARE", "COMPLETE", AND "MEND". IT'S USED THIS WAY IN **MATTHEW 4:21**:

"GOING ON FROM THERE HE SAW TWO OTHER BROTHERS, JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE, AND JOHN HIS BROTHER, IN THE BOAT WITH ZEBEDEE THEIR FATHER, MENDING (KATARTIZO) THEIR NETS; AND HE CALLED THEM."

THE WORD PAUL USES FOR "RESTORE", IN THIS SENSE IS HELPING TO HEAL, PUT BACK TOGETHER, FIX. WHEN SOMEONE IS "MENDING" A TORN NET, THEY ARE SEWING IT BACK TOGETHER. WHEN SOMEONE IS ON THE "MEND", THEY ARE HEALING UP. KATARTIZO "WAS USED IN SECULAR GREEK AS A MEDICAL TERM FOR SETTING A FRACTURED OR DISLOCATED BONE (STOTT, PAGE 160)."

IT'S ALSO USED IN LUKE 6:40:

"A PUPIL IS NOT ABOVE HIS TEACHER; BUT EVERYONE, AFTER HE HAS BEEN FULLY TRAINED (KATARTIZO), WILL BE LIKE HIS TEACHER."

HERE THE WORD IS USED TO TALK ABOUT THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP AND MATURING AS A DISCIPLE/APPRENTICE/STUDENT OF JESUS. WE ARE NOT WHERE WE SHOULD BE AS WE START OUT AND HE TRAINS US TO GET US TO THE PLACE WE SHOULD BE. THIS ALSO HAPPENS IF WE GET "CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS" - WE NEED TO BE INSTRUCTED AND CORRECTED TO GET BACK WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE. WE NEED TO BE PUT BACK IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

"GENTLENESS" - OUR ENGLISH WORD "GENTLE" MEANS "FREE FROM HARSHNESS, STERNNESS, OR VIOLENCE" (MERRIAM-WEBSTER). THIS DESCRIBES THE ATTITUDE AND APPROACH WITH WHICH WE LOOK TO RESTORE SOMEONE CAUGHT IN A TRESPASS. HERE ARE ANTONYMS OF GENTLE: ABRASIVE, CAUSTIC, COARSE, HARD, HARSH, ROUGH, SCATHING, STERN, UNGENTLE.

IF WE UNDERSTAND OUR ROLE AS TO HELP "RESTORE" IT MAKES SENSE THAT WE DO IT WITH GENTLENESS. A DOCTOR RESETTING A LEG IS GOING TO INFLICT PAIN UPON THE PERSON - BUT NOT BECAUSE HE OR SHE IS ROUGH AND AGGRESSIVE, BUT BECAUSE THE PERSON HAS A DISLOCATED BONE! THE BEST DOCTORS CAN ACTUALLY MINIMIZE THE PAIN, NOT BY AVOIDING THE ISSUE, BUT BY APPROACHING THE ISSUE WITH GENTLENESS. HOW WOULD YOU WANT SOMEONE TO TREAT YOU? THAT'S A GOOD GUIDING PRINCIPLE WITH THIS, WHICH IS WHERE PAUL WILL GO NEXT.

"LOOKING TO YOURSELF..." - THIS IS THE IDEA OF CONTEMPLATING YOUR OWN HEART AND LIFE. THE ESV TRANSLATES THE PHRASE "KEEP WATCH". NET: "PAY CLOSE ATTENTION". I DON'T THINK THAT THIS MEANS WE NEED TO WATCH OUT WHEN CONFRONTING A SIN THAT WE MIGHT FALL PREY TO THAT SAME SIN BUT MORE THAT WE REMAIN MINDFUL OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS AND PROPENSITY TO SIN AND SUBSEQUENT NEED FOR GRACE AS WE APPROACH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. IF WE DO NOT REMAIN HUMBLE AS WE CARE FOR THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY OF GOD, WE WILL END UP DISQUALIFYING OURSELVES FROM THE "YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL" CAMP AND BE CAUGHT IN OUR OWN TRESPASS NEEDING RESTORATION!

GALATIANS 6:2

ULTIMATELY THIS IS WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT. WE ARE CALLED NOT TO GO ON OUR OWN OR SIMPLY CARE FOR OUR OWN SPHERE. BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS IS THE WAY WE "FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST" WHICH IS AN IRONIC PHRASING FROM PAUL SINCE SO MUCH OF GALATIANS HAS BEEN ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT YOU NEED TO FULFILL THE LAW OF MOSES TO BE SAVED! THE REAL LAW WE OUGHT TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT KEEPING IS CHRIST'S.

Q - HOW DO WE BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS?

A BURDEN IS SOMETHING HEAVY THAT YOU ARE CARRYING. TO BEAR, OR CARRY, A BURDEN OF SOMEONE ELSE LIGHTENS THEIR LOAD AND HELPS THEM TRAVEL ALONG. WHAT A BLESSING IT IS TO HAVE HELP WHEN THINGS IN LIFE ARE HEAVY AND HARD! WHAT A BLESSING TO RECEIVE HELP IN TIME OF NEED. WHAT A BLESSING TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SOMEONE.

CERTAINLY WE ALL KNOW THAT THE GREATEST BURDEN BEARER WAS JESUS WHO CARRIED THE CROSS, LITERALLY AND SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING, FOR US. HE BORE OUR BURDEN! AND AS HIS PEOPLE NOW WE DO THIS FOR EACH OTHER.

AND EVERYTHING THAT THE MESSIANIC LAW REQUIRES IS GOING TO BE FULFILLED BY US AS WE DO THIS!

GALATIANS 6:3-5

THERE IS A PARADOX IN THIS SECTION BECAUSE WE'RE CALLED TO HELP EACH OTHER, CARE FOR EACH OTHER AND LIGHTEN BURDENS FOR EACH OTHER BUT ALSO WATCH OUR OWN SELVES AND EXAMINE OUR OWN WORK AND BEAR OUR OWN LOAD. AT THE END OF THE DAY WE WILL STAND BEFORE CHRIST ALONE. BUT PAUL IS REMINDING US THAT WE WANT TO STAND BEFORE CHRIST WITH A TESTIMONY THAT IS FILLED WITH INSTANCES OF HELPING AND SERVING AND LOVING AND TRUTH SPEAKING. AND PAUL IS REMINDING US THAT WE MAY JUST ARRIVE AT THAT PLACE BECAUSE WE OURSELVES HAVE BEEN HELPED BY OTHERS ALONG THE WAY.

"THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION HERE BETWEEN VERSE 2, 'BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS' AND VERSE 5, 'EACH MAN WILL HAVE TO BEAR HIS OWN LOAD.'" THE GREEK WORD FOR BURDEN IS DIFFERENT, *BAROS* (V. 2) MEANING A WEIGHT OF HEAVY LOAD AND *PHORTION* (V. 5) BEING A COMMON TERM FOR A MAN'S PACK. SO WE ARE TO BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S "BURDENS" WHICH ARE TOO HEAVY FOR A MAN TO BEAR ALONE, BUT THERE IS ONE BURDEN WHICH WE CANNOT SHARE - INDEED DO NOT NEED TO BECAUSE IT IS A PACK LIGHT ENOUGH FOR EVERY MAN TO CARRY HIMSELF - AND THAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. ON THAT DAY YOU CANNOT CARRY MY PACK AND I CANNOT CARRY YOURS. 'EACH MAN WILL HAVE TO BEAR HIS OWN LOAD.'" (STOTT, PAGE 159-160)

AND SO WE SHOULD MAKE SURE WE ARE CONSISTENTLY LOOKING AT OUR OWN LIVES AND NOT JUST SPENDING OUR DAYS CONCERNED ABOUT OTHERS. HOW FOOLISH IT WOULD BE TO COMPARE OURSELVES TO OTHERS TO MAKE OURSELVES SEEM BETTER (OR WORSE).

AND SO WE LOOK AT OUR OWN LIVES AND WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER. THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. AND HERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO SAY THIS SAME TRUTH: LOVE GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR.

SO HERE'S A GOOD QUESTION FOR US TO CONSIDER: WHY DIDN'T THIS HAPPEN? WHY DIDN'T THE GALATIANS CARE FOR THEMSELVES AND BEAR EACH OTHERS BURDENS AND GET INVOLVED WHEN ONE OF THEM STARTED TO DRIFT AND TRESPASS? WERE THEY NOT PAYING ATTENTION? WERE THEY AFRAID? DID THEY LACK LOVE? MAYBE THEY HAD CERTAIN SINS THEY KNEW TO CONFRONT AND OTHERS THAT THEY DIDN'T TAKE AS SERIOUS? MAYBE THEY DIDN'T CONSIDER EACH OTHER TRULY SPIRITUAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS? MAYBE THEY HID THEIR LIVES FROM EACH OTHER? MAYBE THEY LIED WHEN ASKED "HOW ARE YOU DOING?" MAYBE THEY WERE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTSIDE APPEARANCE THAN THE INNER LIFE? MAYBE THEY WERE ALL PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN LIVES AND BUSY AND OVERCOME THAT THEY DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE WHEN THEIR BROTHER WAS STRUGGLING?

WHO KNOWS FOR SURE? BUT WE OUGHT TO CONSIDER THESE THINGS AND COMMIT NOT JUST TO GOD AND OBEYING HIS WORD - BUT TO EACH OTHER! OUR SALVATION IS PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL BUT IT'S NOT PRIVATE NOR IS IT NOT ENJOYED AND LIVED OUT IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH. WE ARE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER, OR AT LEAST WE OUGHT TO BE.

MAY WE HAVE THE LOVE, SPIRITUAL MINDSET, COMPASSION, GENTLENESS AND CARE TO BEAR EACH OTHER'S BURDENS, AND NOT ONLY WHEN THEY ARE BURDENS THAT ARE CONVENIENT OR BURDENS WE DON'T PARTICULARLY MIND CARRYING. FOR THIS KIND OF LOVE IS NOT ONLY WHAT MAKES US SPIRITUAL, BUT WHAT FULFILLS THE LAW OF CHRIST.