

Sunday, January 27, 2019—Body Building: Forbearing One Another in Love

### **Introduction**

- I Timothy 4:7-8—this series has been about a particular kind of exercise, spiritual exercise. Spiritual exercise that is designed to build a spiritual body not a physical one. Our goal is to learn how to flex our spiritual muscles with the goal of building up the body of Christ.
  - Philippians 2:12—this type of exercise is going to require working out and spiritual discipline. Our goal is to take the life of Christ that is in us and work it out through us or manifest it in our mortal flesh.
- Ephesians 4:16—the body of Christ was designed to edify itself. The focus of our current series has been on the self-edifying nature of the body of Christ. How does the body edify itself?
- Romans 12:5—in our first study in this series, I introduced you to a concept that I am calling the one-anothering principle. The phrase “one of another” is a translation of a plural pronoun which means: “reciprocally” or “mutually.”
  - Reciprocal—“Mutual; done by each to the other” (Webster’s 1828)
  - Reciprocally—“Mutually; interchangeably; in such a manner that each affects the other and is equally affected by it.” (Webster’s 1828)
- Thus far we have observed the following one-anotherings:
  - Kindly affectioned one to another (Rom. 12:10)
  - Preferring one another (Rom. 12:10)
  - Not judge one another (Rom. 14:13)
  - Likeminded one toward another (Rom. 15:5)
  - Receive ye one another (Rom. 15:7)
  - Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14)
  - Salute one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16)
  - Same care one for another (I Cor. 12:25)
  - By love serve one another (Gal. 4:14)

- **Should not** be biting, devouring, and consuming one another (Gal. 5:15)
- **Should not** be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, or envying one another (Gal. 5:26)
- Bear ye one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Three weeks ago, we studied Paul's statement in Gal. 6:2 to "bear ye one another's burdens." In summation, we observed the following points:
  - Bear—means to lift, literally or figuratively (endure, declare, sustain, receive, etc.):—bear, carry, take up.
  - The verb translated "bear ye" is a present active imperative which means that Paul is commanding the Galatians, and by extension us, to actively bear each other's burdens in the present.
  - Burdens—is a reference to heaviness, weight, or trouble. Given the immediate context (Gal. 6:1), it makes sense that Paul would instruct believers to carry each other's burdens in verse 2. Believers are to be helping one another bear these burdens not harshly judging or excoriating them for their missteps.
  - When believers bear one another's burdens they "fulfill the law of Christ." This statement harkens back to what Paul said in Gal. 5:13-14. If the Galatians who were so worried about keeping the law would use their liberty to "by love serve one another" they would actually be fulfilling what the law required, namely to "love thy neighbor as thyself." When believers "by love serve one another" by bearing "one another's burdens" they "fulfill the law of Christ."
    - Romans 13:8-10—the liberty of grace gives believers the spiritual ability to fulfill the law.
  - Galatians 6:3-5—Paul's command that believers "bear one another's burdens" does not alleviate the individual believer's responsibility and accountability before God for their thoughts, attitudes, and actions.
- Two weeks ago, I tried to address two different questions I had received regarding the issue of bearing one another's burdens in Gal. 6:2.
  - *Question 1*—Should we bear the burdens of non-believers in the same way and with the same regularity that we do for those who are saints?
    - Believers do not have the same obligation towards non-believers in terms of bearing their burdens. All of Paul's one-anothering statements are made to

believers and presuppose that the people he is addressing are members “one of another” in the body of Christ.

- Romans 12:4-5
- Those who are outside of Christ, are coming at things in their lives from an entirely different system of values. They are following the course of this world that they have been programed by the adversary to follow.
  - Ephesians 2:1-3
- While believers don’t have the same obligation towards non-believers in terms of bearing their burdens. I do, however, believe that saints have an obligation before God to do good and exhibit the love of Christ to those who are outside of the household of faith.
  - Galatians 6:10
  - Philippians 2:12-15
  - Colossians 4:5
  - I Thessalonians 5:15
- Upon further reflection, I would offer the following priority list in terms of assisting the lost: 1) Family, 2) Friends, 3) Coworkers, 4) Acquaintances, 5) Everyone else.
- *Question 2*—At what point does bearing the burden of another saint become an enabling of that saint’s bad behavior?
  - I Corinthians 5:11-13—Paul instructed the Corinthians “to not company with fornicators” and “to put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” If the Corinthians continued to fellowship with this man, they would have been enabling his sinful behavior.
  - This means that when it comes to bearing one another’s burdens believers are going to need to exercise some discernment. I cannot give you a one size fits all answer to this question.
  - I Corinthians 6:12, 10:23—I believe that honestly and prayfully employing Paul’s discussion making grid will help a believer discern how to handle circumstances such as these:

- Is it expedient? Is it profitable? To myself and/or other believers.
  - Does it edify? Myself and/or other believers.
  - Does it make for peace among the brethren?
  - Am I allowing it to have power over me?
- Even if you determine that you need to walk away from a given situation with saint there is one thing you can still do for them and that is pray for them.
- Illustration—tell the story of what happened to my elbow and how other parts of my body have been forced to pick up the slack. If this continues long enough, I run the risk of a secondary overuse injury to a different part of my body.

### **Forbearing One Another**

- Ephesians 4:2—is where we encounter Paul’s next one-anothering statement. In this verse Paul beseeches the Ephesians to be “forbearing” towards “one another in love.”
- The Greek word translated “forbearing” means to hold oneself up against, i.e. (figuratively) put up with:—bear with, endure, forbear, suffer.
  - Matthew 17:17— “. . . How long shall I suffer you? . . .”
  - Colossians 3:13
  - II Thessalonians 1:4
  - II Timothy 4:3
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines “forbearing” as follows:
  - 1. Ceasing; pausing; withholding from action; exercising patience and indulgence.
  - 2. *adjective* Patient; long suffering.
  - A ceasing or restraining from action; patience; long suffering.
- Proverbs 25:15—“long forbearing”
- Ephesians 4:2—Paul is saying that believers are going to need to be patient and long suffering with one another. Notice the connection in this verse between longsuffering and forbearing.

Lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering are the mindset that make the activity of “forbearing one another in love” possible.

- Philippians 2:3
- Galatians 5:22-23—the mindset of lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering is the mind set of God the Holy Spirit. Put another way, our ability to be “forbearing” is going to come from the Spirit of God working in us to produce His own mindset within us. Our natural flesh programming is expressed in verses 19-21 and they are all about speaking and acting out for self.
  - Galatians 5:26—note how what we are talking about this morning is the opposite of what we studied in this verse.
- Colossians 3:12-13—putting on the mindset of God the Holy Spirit in verse 12 enables the believers to act like God the Holy Spirit in verse 13. Note the connection again between putting on the mindset of “longsuffering” in verse 12 with the believer’s ability to be “forebearing” in verse 13. Only the Spirit of God working in the believer is capable of accomplishing this.
- Ephesians 4:2—notice that we are instructed to be forbearing one another in love. This is not the first time that we observed the idea of “love” tied to a one-anothering statement.
  - Galatians 5:13—“by love serve one another.”
- I Corinthians 13:4, 7—one reason that “charity” is the more excellent way is because it produces and manifests the life of Christ now in our mortal flesh. Charity allows us to suffer long. Charity enables us to bear and endure all things. Charity is what allows us to be “forbearing” toward “one another in love.”