

::R3646 : page 310::

"BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS"

—GALATIANS 6:2—

THOSE WHO LOOK upon the Bible as a collection of moral precepts designed for the regulation of the world in general, are very far from the proper estimate of its object and scope; for the Bible is not addressed to the world at all. The whole book, from beginning to end, is the inheritance of the saints—"the sanctified in Christ Jesus." To them, all the apostolic epistles are addressed.

The book of Revelation is also similarly addressed. And the Apostle Peter, in referring to the prophecies of the Old Testament, says even of the prophets that "not unto themselves, but unto *us* they did minister." (1 Pet. 1:12. See also Dan. 12:4,8,9.) And the Apostle Paul says that "*whatsoever* things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning, that *we* [the sanctified in Christ Jesus] through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4.) Consequently, all that was written aforetime by Moses and the prophets—whether of history or law or prophecy or type or precept—was designed specially for us who are in Christ, for the instruction and comfort of the children of God. And not one iota of it belongs to the unregenerate

::R3646 : page 311::

world. It is a "light which shineth in a dark place" *to Christians*: it is "a lamp to *our* feet, and a light to *our* path." And whatever light the worldly get from it, reaches them indirectly—as reflected from the children of God, who "shine as lights in the world." "Ye," said our Lord, "are the light of the world."—Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:14.

The plan of God, once discerned, indirectly inculcates every principle of morality and virtue by showing just what God designs to have us do; by showing, first, how he created us perfect and glorious in his own image and designed us for everlasting life in the enjoyment of his favors; next, that everything in us which is short of that original perfection is due to sin and renders us unworthy of life. Then there is the recognition of sin; and thus the glorious plan for both our legal and our actual deliverance from sin and death is opened up, and the final restitution of all things is assured to the loyal and obedient sons of God; and all the necessary provisions thereto are made manifest.

As the plan is now clearly outlined we see how history and prophecy and type and law all minister

to the one grand design of the Book of books, in which the reverent and careful student finds the highest incentive to purity and holiness, and the most perfect delineation of that praiseworthy character which he should seek to build up, and in contrast with which the deformity of every evil is manifest.

Among the instructions to the children of God is the one above cited—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The law of Christ we have seen to be the law of love: and Love says, "Bear ye one another's burdens." There are times in the experience of almost every one when the surges of trouble roll high, and the timid, shrinking soul is almost overwhelmed by them. And then how soothing is the sympathy and counsel of a fellow-member of the body of Christ! Worldly-minded friends may sympathize, but their counsel is almost sure to be wrong. Hence the

::R3647 : page 311::

necessity of fellowship in the body of Christ, and of disfellowship with the world.

It is not always necessary to tell one's sorrows and perplexities to another, and to have their sympathy and aid: in most cases they are better untold, except to the Lord. But Love's quick discernment is always watchful and ready with the word in season, the cordial friendliness and the helpful hand if need be, to help bear the burden.

There are various kinds of burdens to be borne: there are burdens of bereavement, of financial embarrassment, of business and family cares, of physical and mental suffering, of sudden disasters and great perplexities and anxieties; and there are burdens also of conscious sins. In all these, if we are diligently seeking to fulfil the law of Christ, we may be able to cheer and strengthen fellow-members of the body of Christ with sympathy and counsel, and such aid as may be most needful and timely.

But the Apostle calls particular attention to this last kind of burdens—burdens of sins—and counsels the exercise of this disposition specially in cases of acknowledged sin. We are all to remember our own liability to sin, and therefore to be patient and considerate with others when they are overtaken in a fault. Such patient, forbearing love is one of the most beautiful adornments of the Christian character.

In the body of Christ the various members have their various inherited weaknesses, against which they must wage a lifelong warfare; and these weaknesses are sometimes of such a nature as to interfere to some extent with the rights and comforts of others as well as of themselves. And just here the Apostle offers a word of counsel, saying, "We, then, that are strong ought to bear the

infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. 15:1,2.) This does not imply that we should not exhort with such a one and endeavor to help him get rid of his infirmity. This we should do, in the spirit of meekness and kindness, while we patiently endure the trial of our patience, not seeking to please ourselves, but rather to help a weaker brother or sister. "Let every one of us," as the Apostle counsels, "please his neighbor [brother]

for his good, to edification"—i.e., not by simply ignoring his fault as though you considered it all right, but, while kindly urging him to strive against it, still humbly and patiently submitting to the discomfort it brings to you.

If this spirit prevails, the Apostle further shows (1 Cor. 12:24-26), there need be no schism in the body; because the members all have a mutual care and a mutual love one for another—a care which seeks to encourage and strengthen all that is good and to discourage all that is unbecoming, and a love which throws its mantle over the deformity and endeavors to conceal a fault, rather than to expose the weaker brother to the reproach of others. Thus in the true body of Christ, which is knit together in love, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with him, in proportion as they are more or less directly associated with him; or, if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with him, and to some degree share the honor; just as when in an earthly family one member rises to honorable distinction all the members partake of the honor and the joy.

For such self-sacrificing love how necessary is the spirit of humility and gentleness and patience and faith! How forceful are the Master's words, "Except ye be converted [from the spirit of the world to the spirit of Christ] and become as little children [in meekness and teachableness], ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 18:1-6.

And again says the Master, "Whoso shall receive one *such* little child [one such humble, teachable child of God] in my name receiveth me." Let us, therefore, be in haste to receive and to heartily fellowship every such one.

And here he adds a caution which all would do well to heed, saying, "But whosoever shall ensnare one of the least of these who believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were sunk in the depth of the sea." With what carefulness, then, should we regard one another.

Dearly beloved, bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ—the law of love; and so bind up the body of Christ that there be no schism in the body, but that it be more and more knit together in love. Let this blessed law of Christ rule more fully in all who have taken, by

consecration, the name of Christ: and let its hallowed influence shine out upon the world, showing them how it brings peace and harmony and

::R3647 : page 312::

happiness—how it makes more tender and devoted wives, more noble and good and kind husbands, more loyal and loving children, more kind and good neighbors; and how it puts oil upon all the troubled waters of present experience and prepares the heart for the enjoyment of all the fruits of righteousness.

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