

The Glory of the Way

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of bearing one another's burdens as a pathway to experiencing the glory of God and the joy of Paradise in our lives.

Scripture: John 8:12, John 10:9, John 13:34, John 14:12, John 15:7, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 1:15, Ephesians 6:18

Topics: "Bearing Burdens", "Christian Community"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the concept of bearing one another's burdens to fulfill the law of Christ, emphasizing that heaven begins now for those who follow Jesus. He illustrates the journey to Paradise as giving our burdens to the One with nail-scarred hands, symbolizing the exchange of our sin for Christ's righteousness. By joining hearts in love, sharing each other's burdens, and praying for one another, believers can experience the glory of God, the light of the Spirit, and the power of the resurrection as they walk the road of bearing one another's burdens.

Transcript

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Jesus promises that if we follow him we don't have to wait until we die or until he comes back in glory to enter heaven.

Heaven begins now.

"I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

.....that's heaven.

"He who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he/she do, because I go to the Father." John 14:12

.....that's heaven.

"If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.... by my Father who is in heaven." John 15:7

.....that's heaven.

But, most of us admit that while we have tasted this, our actual day-in-and-day-out experience is something much less. Much of the time we seem to feel as if we're on the outside looking in. We know that we should be dwelling in the realm of eternity all the time, day-after-day, hour-by-hour, knowing the presence of God and living in that light. Yet, it's not that way

..... what's wrong?

It's like a man, who, for as long as he could remember, was living in a desert wasteland. He just knew it was not his home. "There's got to be something better than this." One day he meets an old, old man with long white hair who tells him about a door at the foot of one of the thousands of mountains that surround this desert. "Beyond that door," says the old man, "is Paradise."

"But how do I find the door?" he asks.

"Look for it. Everybody who looks for it finds it."

And so he begins to seek. One morning this man wakes up and looks toward the mountain in front of him, and off in the distance he sees this shining door. He leaves everything behind and runs toward it ... places his trembling hand on the knob and tries to turn it. He pulls on it - pushes on it ... nothing happens. Just then a man with nail scarred hands says to him, "The only way you will ever enter that door is for you to give me your burden."

"What burden?" he asks.

And even as he's speaking, he becomes aware of tremendous weight bearing down on his shoulders. Materializing before his eyes is this big rock, wrapped around his neck. "Where did this come from?" And the man with the nail scarred hands tells him it's been there all the time, "It's your life ... it's your past... give it to me and the door will open."

And so the traveler gives the One with the nail scarred hands his burden and passes through the door. He finds himself in a totally new world. Before him is this narrow road that goes like a thin ribbon as far as he can see on the top of a high wall. And beyond the end of the road is a shining City which gives light to this world ... the only source of light there is in this new world. On either side of the road is a cliff. There are no guard rails.

"You call this Paradise?"

"This is Paradise," says the One with the nail scarred hands. "This city and this road. The minute you begin to walk on this road you're in Paradise."

About fifty feet up the road is a man struggling with a giant water jug ... he almost slips off the road about five times. The One with the nail scarred hands says, "Go up and help him." And so the traveler goes up and takes the water jug, carries it for a while.

Then a woman comes and takes it from him and carries it. Pretty soon there's a caravan of souls carrying water jugs, boxes, baskets of fruit, bags of flour ... bearing each other's burdens. And they discover that every time they take the burden from the shoulders of someone else, the City comes closer.

So there is a door, and there is a way. The door brings us to glory, the way is glory.

"I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9

The door from the wasteland and wilderness of this world into the glory of heaven...God's Paradise, God's Kingdom ... is merely giving the burden to the One with the scarred hands. We don't have to wait until we die... we don't have to wait for anything. At any point, when we begin to look, we find the door. If we want to give him our burden he'll take it and the minute he takes it, we're in.

And the way through that door is by means of a mysterious exchange. The Lamb of God, Jesus, becomes sin for us. And we become the righteousness of God in him.

All our sin, our guilt, our troubled conscience, our stained past flow into him.

His life,

his righteousness,

his holiness,

his awesome peace,

his fathomless love, flow into us.

"I am crucified with Christ," says Paul. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Galatians 2:20

And so now I'm through the door. I'm in Paradise even while I'm in this body of flesh-and-blood ... in this realm of death. I'm already in Paradise if, having come through the door I start walking on the road.

- There is a door. - There is a road.

"I am the door," says Jesus. "Give me your sin and I'll give you my life."

But he also says,

"I am the way. I am the road you have to walk. And to walk that road you do for each other exactly what I did for you."

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

What's the law of Christ? Just as he literally takes our burden into himself, makes it his, and exchanges his life for our death ... gives us his life ... so now we take each other's burdens into ourselves and in his name we minister his life to each other:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, (by bearing your burden) that you also love one another (by bearing each other's burdens.)" John 13:34

And so, Paradise literally begins for us the minute we begin to bear each other's burdens.

- The glory of God rests upon us,
- The Spirit of God shines inside us,
- The power of the resurrection begins to move through us and works miracles when we begin to walk .that road....

.... when we start to bear each other's burdens.

So what does it mean to bear one another's burdens?

Think of three things. To bear each other's burdens means first of all the joining of our hearts. It secondly means I take the thing that weighs this person down and I also allow someone else to take the thing that weighs me down. Thirdly, it means intercession ... prayer for each other.

1. To bear one another's burdens means the joining of our hearts.

We join our hearts to each other in love. That's precisely what our Lord did for us. He joined his heart to us when he was on that cross, and drained our sickness and our death and gave us life. And now we are to join our hearts to each other...

... to rejoice with those who rejoice,

... to weep with those who weep,

... to watch with those who watch,

... to wait with those who wait.

When Jesus took Peter, James and John deeper into the Garden of Gethsemane with him and said,

"Sit and watch with me while I go yonder to pray,"

he was asking these three men to join their hearts to his. "Help me.....hold me up."

And of course in spite of the tremendous protesting that went on in the upper room just a short time before....

"If I have to die with you, I'm not going to deny you,"

...and they all said it...but they don't do it. They fall asleep. Because the one thing they aren't yet ready to do is open their hearts ... really open their hearts. And we're the same way. We'll do almost anything ... almost anything ... short of really opening our hearts and joining them to another person.

We know our Bibles upside down and backwards ... we quote scripture ... we do wonderful things for each other, but we find it so hard to really, really open our hearts ... to join that person.

- We keep them at a little distance.

- We guard ourselves.

- We keep one mask. If we have fifty masks

we take off forty-nine, but we keep one.

But now we are called to take them all off and join our hearts. That's what he did for us and that's what he's called us to do in his name toward each other.

2. To bear each other's burdens means that I'm willing now to take the thing that's weighing down my sister or brother and grab it and hold it, but at the same time I have to be willing to allow some sister or brother to take the thing that's troubling me and weighing me down.

Jesus is staggering under the weight of the cross ... he's bloody and bruised and he can hardly make it toward Golgotha, (they really worked him over down in Pilate's palace.) So now as he's staggering and falling under this cross, they take Simon of Cyrene and compel him to carry Jesus' cross. Simon is bearing Jesus' burden... taking his cross up to Golgotha. But then when Jesus is on the cross, he takes Simon's sins.

- That's the glory road.

- That's the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

- That's the law of Christ.

So, I have a brother who has a financial problem and I'm aware of it. Now I have to share that. I have to get hold of his problem by digging in my pocket to help him. Let's say I have a child, or someone close to me, sick in the hospital; so somebody comes there and sits and watches with me. Or here's somebody who is obsessed with a fear, they just can't handle it. Now we take that fear, literally grab hold of it and draw it into ourselves. We let that fear enter into our hearts in the name of Jesus. We take it on our selves in the Lord's name.

At the same time, we have an obsession that's kind of nutty and we can't seem to get rid of it. Now we find somebody to whom we can give it. We're going to share, we're going to talk about it. This person reaches out and takes hold of it and holds it for us.

For this thing to work we have to be willing to do both ... to take the other person's burden and to let somebody take ours. The minute we begin to do both, the life of God begins to flow and we're on that glory road.

3. To bear one another's burdens means to pray.

"Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you (plural) (all of you), that he might sift you like wheat, but I've prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you're turned again, strengthen your brother."

"...I'm praying for you Simon; your faith isn't going to fail. When you turn again, strengthen your brothers."

How will Simon strengthen his brothers? Primarily by prayer. And when we read the epistles of Peter or look through the book of Acts, we see Peter praying, strengthening his brothers and sisters again and again.

Likewise, almost every letter that Paul writes begins with prayer of some kind.

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him...."

Ephesians 1:15

"I'm praying that you may have the eyes of your hearts enlightened...I'm praying that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you ... I'm praying that you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ... I'm praying that you may know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe..."

....praying, praying, praying.

He ends almost every letter by asking for them to pray for him.

"Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains;...."

Ephesians 6:18-19

"Pray for me, that I may declare it boldly the way I should."

And so in prayer we take hold of the cross with one hand and with the other hand we grab our brother or our sister's need. We allow the need, the sickness, the sin, the trouble, whatever it is, to flow through us into the cross. We don't hold it, we simply channel it. But we also allow the life of his resurrection and his atoning blood to flow through us into them. And as we do we raise them up before the throne and the light of the living God bathes them. Awesome things begin to happen when we pray for each other awesome things!

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

When we come together we gather at the table of the Lord ... his body and his blood will come to us. And as we eat this holy feast there is this exchange which goes on. We give Jesus our sin ... he gives us his life. Now we're through the door. But we also have to walk the road. So we get up and we become broken bread and poured out wine for each other and for the world ... in Jesus' name. Which means that we join our hearts to each other. We grab hold of that burden that's weighing that person down and we're willing and humble enough to let somebody take ours and we pray.

- The glory of God will rest upon us,

- The light of the Spirit will burn inside us,

- The power of the resurrection of Jesus will rush forth from us, working miracles, when we walk that road, bearing one another's burdens.

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