

**Pastor Paul Bawden
Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, July 26, 2009
"Lightening The Burden"
Galatians 6:1-5**

I been looking for love
In all the wrong places
And now I finally found
Someone who cares for me
No matter the storm
It was you who helped me face it
And now it's safe to say
That you really care for me

Just like the wings
You took me, flew me away, yeah
And now my ground is underneath my feet
This man had nowhere to go
Then you gave me direction
And now the rest of my days
I can't help but give you the praise
(R. Kelly Lyrics "Looking For Love")

Yes, people are looking for love, someone to care for them.

David expressed these feelings when hiding in a cave (at Adullam or Engedi) as he fled from Saul pursuing his very life.

"No one cares for my soul" (Psalm 142:4). Maybe you have felt like that at times, perhaps this past week.

But in the midst of feeling that no one cared for his soul, David continues,

"I cried unto the LORD; I said, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought low; deliver me from my persecutors for they are too strong for me. Bring my soul out of prison, so that I may give thanks to Your name.'"

In the midst of feeling that no one cared for his soul, David then realized that God was there with him and He did care for his soul.

That's why David in Psalm 55:22, in the midst of having a friend become a traitor, "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you." David adds, "He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."

David recognized that the eternal God cared for him!

Peter picks up on these words from Psalm 55:22 and pens in I Peter 5:7, "Casting (throwing) all your anxiety (what divides your mind, what takes your focus off of the Lord as number one in your life), yes, all your care on Him (the Lord), because He continually cares (present tense) for you, or what concerns you have that causes your mind to be divided or double-minded." God is concerned about what concerns you and me, is the idea here.

Then in our text today in Galatians 6:2 we are told, "Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

The word, bear, means to lift, to raise, to help remove, to lighten. It is a present imperative, meaning that believers in Jesus don't have the option to minister to each other. It must be an on-going experience for the believer in the body of Christ. The word, burdens, means what is hard and difficult to deal with in one's life, that which is weighty or brings heaviness, that which affects one differently from the normal daily activities.

So we have:

- (1) Individuals today looking for love, wanting to find someone who cares for them.
- (2) David, of old, who eventually became king of Israel, crying out in a cave that no one cares for his soul. Then, realizing that God was with and the LORD did care for him.
- (3) The Bible telling us **as followers of the Lord to cast our cares, our anxieties, what divides our minds, on the Lord, for He is concerned about what concerns us.**
- (4) **Our text in Galatians 6:2** adds that as believers in Christ we are to help remove, help lighten each other's experiences that are difficult to go through, yes, care for one another, and help one another remove each other's burdens.

So, when we hear those words as we are experiencing various challenges in life, it is easy to think, "Well I have enough going on in my life. I certainly don't have the time nor energy to be reaching out to others who are having their challenges and seek to help them lighten their burden.

Before we get into that kind of thinking, let's see how we can make some sense of the passage before us where we are continually commanded to reach out to one another to help remove each others' cares, that which causes us to become divided and anxious in our lives.

Let me approach out text this way by asking some questions.

I. Who is the ultimate care giver, the ultimate burden bearer, in our world?

1. Humanity?

Certainly in our great country, there are people like you and me who give care to others in our families, and in our church families, yes there are counseling centers, care centers, and medical centers throughout our city, state, and nation. There are also those who are seeking to minister in different ways to the homeless, and to those who have different financial/material needs. Our country gave something like \$26 billion in foreign aid in 2008 which doesn't include funds related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 150 countries get financial assistance from the U.S.

But is the care we can express and exhibit to one another as humans, and what our country does to help other nations, the ultimate in care giving?

Of course not, for we as humans are limited in what we can do for each other. We can give money to help others. We can go and minister to someone in need. But our help ends, for our lives are limited. We are here for awhile on planet earth, and then we are gone.

If the ultimate in care giving is done by you and me, it starts with us and ends with us. Any care giving done by humans is only done for humans. It goes no further than that – which in reality is a very bleak way to live for what is done has no lasting value. It's for time and time alone.

2. The eternal biblical God?

But I trust that you are grateful to the Lord today that the ultimate of care giving resides in HIM, the eternal, personal, loving and holy God revealed in the Bible.

(1) The Scripture.

****Psalm 55:22**

That's why the Psalmist in Psalm 55:22 said for us to cast our burdens, our anxieties, that which cause our minds to be divided, cast these challenges on the LORD."

****I Peter 5:7**

Then Peter added in I Peter 5:7 –“Cast, throw your burdens, that which divides your mind, that which cause your life to be hard and heavy, cast those things on the Lord for He continually cares for you, is continually concerned about what causes your mind to be divided, and that which weighs you down and makes life extremely difficult.

(2) Examples.****Adam and Eve.**

After God created Adam and Eve, and then they sinned, we see that the biblical God is a caring God, for He came searching out Adam and Eve after they sinned against Him, confronted them, forgave them, yet their disobedience brought consequences, which are still a part of our lives and world today. Still God maintained fellowship with them, and continued to work with Adam and Eve. The biblical God is a caring God.

****Moses and Israel**

When Israel was suffering in Egyptian bondage as slaves of Pharaoh, they cried out unto the Lord in their misery, and God heard them, and came down to help them, providing Moses as their deliverer along with Aaron. The biblical God is a caring God.

Later, during the time of Moses' leadership, God wanted to do away with the nation of Israel for their making the idolatrous calf while Moses was in the Mt receiving the Ten Commandments. Moses appealed to God on the basis of His eternal covenant with Abraham that He would multiply his seed and give them the promised land. God listened to Moses, and didn't destroy the nation of Israel, although He brought certain judgment. Still, God listened to Moses because the biblical God is a caring God.

****Elijah**

As God took care of Elijah after he fled some 120 miles south from the threat on his life by Bathsheba. He wanted to die, but God came with His angel provided him food and encouraged him to eat. Then he went another 200 miles south to Mt Sinai where God appeared to him again to encourage him in his spirit and reassure him he was usable to the lord. The biblical God is a caring God, the burden bearing God.

****The incarnation of Jesus Christ.**

Let's fast forward into the time of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus' life.

Did Jesus care for humanity during His time on planet earth? The question really doesn't need to be asked, for He went about doing good, healing the sick, making the blind to see, raising the dead, and above all forgiving sin. Jesus has inspired many to do good deeds for others.

But Jesus didn't stop there and just leave an example of caring ultimately for humanity.

2. Jesus' death and the open tomb.

It wasn't enough for Jesus just to be an example of caring for people. He knew that people had a spiritual problem, of being separated from God by their sin of disobedience to God. He knew that forgiveness and eternal life must be won for the world in order for their to be eternal forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with people's Creator. God loves the world, He loves all people. So, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us to pay the penalty for our sin, which is death, and conquered the grave bodily for each of us.

Obviously, then, the cross and the open tomb become the ultimate signature that the biblical God is a caring God. He did not just lay down His life for His friends, but for His enemies as well.

Of course, in our world today, there are those who try to deny the value of Christ's death, while also denying His bodily resurrection.

The atheists deny Christ's deity and work on the cross and the open tomb. The cults mix their man made ideas with a little of the Bible as they see it. Even the world religions distort who Christ is and His completed work of redemption for humanity. Even the new agers, and those who like to follow the thinking of movie and television personalities, find themselves not describing the person and work of Christ as the Bible teaches. They think that they are god, which means that life begins and ends in them. What they do only counts for time which is here

today and gone tomorrow.

Regardless of the thinking of men and their different ideas about Christ and His work on Calvary and the open tomb, the eternal record is clear and accurate.

The biblical God is a ultimate caring God because, He not only showed us how to care for one another, but His Son won for us His eternal life and forgiveness through His death and bodily resurrection for us. He cared so much for us that He won for us the greatest experience in life -- to have eternal fellowship with the eternal and personal biblical God.

So whenever we hear God saying lift the weight of others, help lighten their load, we need to reflect a moment on who is the ultimate Care Giver, who is the ULTIMATE LIFTER of our burdens?

For God never tells us to do something that He has not done for us. Yes, Jesus Christ knows all about life in its joys and in its sorrows as He was also rejected, suffered, even crucified. Still, as we mentioned, the Lord reached out to those with different needs, while being tempted in all points like we are.

Who cares for your soul? Who cares for my soul? Basically, only one ultimately, Jesus Christ, who gave His life to redeem our souls so we could through faith in Jesus could know that He truly cares for us.

Which brings us to our second question.

II. How does the eternal action of the ultimate care giving biblical God apply to us today?

1. We need to know personally the ultimate Care Giver – bringing a vertical relationship for us with the Lord, our Creator and Redeemer.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We all find ourselves in need of God's forgiveness in Christ. That is why Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be declared righteous before Him.

"As many as received the Lord to them He gave the authority to become the children of God, to come into His forever family, even to those who believe in His Name" (John 1:12).

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, for with the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). "For whoever will call on the Name of the Lord shall be Saved" (Romans 10:13).

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as His personal Savior, Christ lives in his or her life, and one is joined with a vertical relationship with the true and living eternal and personal God.

2. The believer in Christ, the ultimate Care Giver, is also joined horizontally with other believers, in the world-wide church and in the local church of Jesus Christ.

We become members one of another, having the same Father, the same Savior, the same Holy Spirit, the same hope, the same faith. We are one spiritually in Jesus Christ. In our differences of backgrounds, of occupations, of different opinions and ideas, we are one in Christ and vitally related to each other in the church, the body of Jesus Christ.

Since believers in Christ all have the same resurrection life of Jesus Christ, eternally related to each other, what happens in each believer's life in the body has an effect on the other believers' lives.

That's why Paul told the Corinthians that when one member of the body suffers, members of the body suffer with him or her. When one member of the local church body rejoices, the other members rejoice with him or her.

3. Since the Lord is the Ultimate Care Giver, and believers are all united to Him and related to one another, God gives believers that privilege and responsibility to lift up, to lighten the burden that other believers are encountering and experiencing

This is what our text today in Galatians 6:2 is all about.

(1) That is why the bearing, the lifting up, the lightning of another believer's burden or difficulty, is a present command.

By virtue of our being vitally related to Christ and each other, we have the privilege and responsibility to be an instrument of the Lord, His channel to minister to one another in the challenges that come our way.

(2) Bearing each other's burdens, difficulties hard to bear, has different areas of ministry.

****It may mean** helping restore someone to fellowship in the Lord who has gotten into sin by yielding to temptation (Galatians 6:1).

The person helping should have some maturity in the Lord, and the individual needing help should be approached with a spirit of gentleness (the spirit of Christ), realizing that he could have been in the same situation if he had yielded to temptation.

Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:15ff that this should be done privately first of all, brother to brother. If the person doesn't listen, a couple of individuals, better the elders of the church should talk with the individual who needs restoration to Christ and to the body of Christ. If there is no restoration then, the matter should be brought before the entire elder body and if need be to the entire church family.

Such is not easy to do, and must be handled with grace and wisely.

****It may mean** going to see someone, and letting them know that you are praying for them, and ask if you can help in any way. Many times, it involves being a good listener not giving great counsel. Or it may mean just being there with a person in their time of need or loss.

****It may mean** having someone over for a meal or dessert that you know who is having some challenges, or taking someone out to lunch to see how the person is doing.

****It may mean** visiting a person in the hospital or the care center.

****It may mean** getting together with a person on a weekly basis for a Bible Study and prayer to bring encouragement.

****It may mean** giving a person a phone call who you notice hasn't been in church for awhile, and telling the individual (s) that they have been missed.

****It may mean** for you to be involved in Grace with friends, as we seek to provide the opportunity to be involved on a social level, or be in a fall bible study for growth and fellowship.

****It may mean** knowing of someone's challenge and praying for that individual.

The elders have been in the process of putting together a Care Ministry whereby the congregation is divided up, and then calls are made once a month to those in a group asking if there are any prayer needs. These will be prayed for over the phone and then given to the elders and pastor. The individual who makes the calls can also be contacted by the people in that group if there are any prayer needs or other concerns they might have. There will be more information coming about this Care Ministry later in August or the first part of September.

The elders feel a Care Ministry like this will enhance this exhortation to be involved in caring for one another in the Grace Family in a little more defined way.

Now we realize that there are different levels of friendship. We have close friends, and then friends we know more on a casual basis, and then those we talk to occasionally even in the Grace Family. Jesus had Peter, James, and John as more intimate friends, then his other disciples. Jesus also sent out the 70. The elders just want to make sure that people know we as leaders are concerned about each one in this body and any prayer needs they have.

4. As a care giver, the believer needs to keep a biblical perspective as he serves the Lord by ministering to another believer (Galatians 6:3-4).

****The believer ministering as a burden lifter keeps the proper view of himself or herself (Galatians 6:3-5).**

Note the text, "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another."

As the believer ministers to someone who needs a burden lightened or lifted, he realizes that he is a servant of the Lord ministering to another servant of the Lord. Each is on the same level, a brother or sister in Christ. The person seeking to minister to the one needing care realizes he could be in the same situation. He comes with a spirit of grace, of Christ's acceptance and compassion, speaking the truth with God's love as indicated in Galatians 6:1 when one has fallen into sin and needs God's restoration. The one ministering has an attitude of humility not superiority. Any condemnation is out.

****The believer who ministers and the believer ministered to need to realize that each one is responsible for his own life, his own actions (Galatians 6:5).**

"For each one will bear his own load."

The word "load" here is different from the word, burden, in Galatians 6:2.

It means his own freight, his own cargo, telling us that each individual must take responsibility for his own actions and the normal happenings in life. Co-dependency must be guarded against. Even financial help can be given, but the individual must still become one who can take responsibility for his own life. God desires that each person be able to exercise his individual freedom in Christ, and be the person He intended him to be – to glorify him in all that he thinks, says, and does.

This leads to our third question.

III. What happens when we bear one another's burdens in the body of Christ?

Note the text in Galatians 6:2.

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

1. We fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

When in Christ's love we seek to lift one another's burdens, hard circumstances, we in so doing are fulfilling the very law of Christ.

That means we are doing God's eternal business, ministering as He does doing it through us.

The law of Christ is entirely different from the law of Moses. Christ has fulfilled the law of Moses in His life, and paid the penalty for our breaking God's law which is death, when He died on the cross, was buried, and rose again bodily from the grave.

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

Now there is the law of Christ which each believer is under today in God's economy of the church, or of grace as it has been called.

The law of Christ for us has many facets to it. But is there one ingredient that summarizes what the law of Christ is all about?

2. The love of Christ is demonstrated (John 13:34-35).

I like to think it is summarized in what Jesus taught in John 13:34-35. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Francis Shaeffer wrote a little book many years ago entitled, "The Mark Of A Christian."

His conclusion was that the MARK of a Christian, a biblical Christian, is that there is love for one another, the love of Christ following through believers to one another in the good times and in the challenging times as they bear each other's burdens.

That's why our text from last week in Galatians 5:14 that loving one's neighbor is the fulfilling (continually – a present tense) of the whole law of God.

3. The character of God is displayed (Galatians 5:22-23).

Whether serving one another or bearing each other's burdens in Christ's church, we are displaying the very character of God – that He is the God of holy and pure love.

In fact Galatians 5:22-23, describing the fruit of the Spirit has been said that love (agape, Calvary, sacrificial, unconditional, and giving love), which is the first fruit of the Spirit, is the fountain out of which the other fruit of the Spirit come which is really Christ-likeness

Love, then is joyful, peaceful, patience, kind, good, faithful, gentle, having self-control.

The text ends by saying, "Against such things there is no law."

There is no law against a life that displays Christ's love, the fruit of the Spirit at work in the believer's life, for the believer showing the Love Of Christ fulfills continually the very law of Christ, the very heart of God.

4. The time God gives us to use in the power of the Holy Spirit makes it happen (Ephesians 5:16).

Now I know it is easy for me to talk about bearing each other's burdens, but it's quite another matter to become involved in people's lives. For it takes time to do so, but I'm here to remind you today that it is time well spent and God will reward you for becoming involved in lifting up another believer's life.

It had been some time since Jack had seen the elderly man. College, girls, career, and life itself got in the way. In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams. There, in the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son. He was working on his future, and nothing could stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday." Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days. "Jack, did you hear me?" "Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago," Jack said.

"Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him he'd ask how you were doing. He'd reminisce about the many days you spent over 'his side of the fence' as he put it," Mom told him.

"I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said. "You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said "He's the one who taught me carpentry," he said. "I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important...Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said.

As busy as he was, he kept his word. Jack caught the next flight to his hometown. Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

The night before he had to return home, Jack and his Mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time

The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture....Jack stopped suddenly. "What's wrong, Jack?" his Mom asked. "The box is gone," he said "What box?" Mom asked.

"There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he'd ever tell me was 'the thing I value most,'" Jack said.

It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it. "Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said. "I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom."

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day, Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. "Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days," the note read.

Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention. "Mr. Harold Belser" it read.

Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside. "Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life."

A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filling his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch.

Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words

engraved: "Jack, Thanks for your time! --Harold Belser."

"The thing he valued most was...my time" Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. "Why?" Janet, his assistant asked. "I need some time to spend with my son," he said. "Oh, by the way, Janet, thanks for your time!"

"Keep lifting up, keep lightening one another's hardships and difficulties and thereby be continually fulfilling the Law of Christ, God's very heart."

These words by Edgar A. Guest tell us what lightening another's burden is all about.

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day; I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way. The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear, Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear; And the best of all preachers are the men who live their creeds, For to see good put in action is what everybody needs. I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done; I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run. And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true, But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do; For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give, But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

Take the time to lighten another's burden. You will be a blessing and be blessed in the process. I know, and I'm sure you know too.

A LIGHT NAMED AL On the morning of September 11, Jeannie Braca switched on the television to check the weather report, only to hear that a plane had just hit the World Trade Center. Jeannie's husband, Al, worked as a corporate bond trader for Cantor Fitzgerald. His office was on the 105th floor of Tower One. Al had survived the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and had even helped a woman with asthma escape from the building. Jeannie knew that Al would do the same thing this time, "I knew he would stop to help and minister to people," she said, "but I never thought for a minute that he wouldn't be coming home!" A week later, like so many others who were in that building, Al's body was found in the rubble. Al's wife, Jeannie, and his son Christopher were devastated! Then the reports began to trickle in from friends and acquaintances. Some people on the 105th floor had made a last call or sent a final e-mail to loved ones saying that a man was leading people in prayer. A few referred to Al by name. Al's family learned that Al had indeed been ministering to people during the attack! When Al realized that they were all trapped in the building and would not be able to escape, Al shared the gospel with a group of 50 co-workers and led them in prayer. This news came as no surprise to Al's wife, Jeannie. For years, she and Al had been praying for the salvation of these

men and women. According to Jeannie, Al hated his job and couldn't stand the environment. It was a world so out of touch with his Christian values, but he wouldn't quit. Al was convinced that God wanted him to stay there, to be a light in the darkness, and although Al would not have put it this way, to be a hero! Al was not ashamed of Christ and Christ's words...and he paid the price of taking up his cross daily. Al shared his faith with his co-workers...many of whom sarcastically nicknamed him "The Rev." And on that fateful day...on September 11, in the midst of the chaos, Al's co-workers looked to him--...

"No man cared for my soul."

Blind, Lord, so blind! I wander far From Thee among the haunts of men, Most like some lone, faint, flickering star Gone from its place, nor knoweth when The sun shall give it shining dole Lord! no man careth for my soul.

Blind, Lord, so blind! In loneliness By crowded mart or busy street, I fold my hands and feel how less Am I to any one I meet, Than to Thee one lost billow's roll: Lord! no man careth for my soul.

Blind, Lord, so blind! And I have knelt 'Mong myriads in Thy house of prayer; And still sad desolation felt, Though heavy freighted was the air With litanies of love: one ghoul Cried, "No man careth for thy soul!"

Blind, Lord, so blind! The world is blind; It feeds me, fainting, with a stone: I cry for bread. Before, behind, Are hurrying feet; yet all alone I walk, and no one points the goal Lord! no man careth for my soul.

Blind, Lord, Oh very blind am I! If sin of mine sets up the wall Between my poor sight and Thy sky, O Friend of man, Who cares for all, Send sweet peace ere the last bell toll-- Yea, Lord, Thou carest for my soul!