

Messages from the Wilderness 7

- Sharing the Burden

1. Sharing the burden.

After the burning at Taberah, Moses was highly distressed when he heard the crying of the people.

Num 11:14-15 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me.

15And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

Moses did not speak with the voice of one complaining and provoking the Lord. This is the kind of case I described last week...it is okay to say ouch when you are in pain. It is the same kind of anguish that Job expressed. It is the voice of surrender to the will of God. And then, God responded to him. He instructed Moses to find 70 men who would be able to share the burden of the people with him.

Num 11:16-17 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

17And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

Num 11:24-25 And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

25And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

Notice that these men shared the same spirit that Moses had upon *him*. This is critical for our understanding. They were not merely charged with technical management assignments, like how to make sure the people were fed, or how they were to set up camp efficiently. They shared the same *spiritual* burden that Moses had to bear.

In an earlier part of this series we covered the fact that there is a place of service for everyone in God's work. However, it is possible to share in the work of the church without actually sharing in the burden of the church. To demonstrate what I mean, let me start with the nature of

a corporation vs. a partnership.

The creation of corporations from the 17th to the 19th century created a great incentive for the advancement of economies. Corporations were created to stand in the place of individual investors. If 300 people wanted to join together to own a business as a partnership, all 300 could open a bank account together. When it came time to set up other business accounts or to write a contract, all 300 would have to be on the accounts and all 300 would have to sign the contracts. They would pool their money together and jointly own any equipment or buildings. For example, if the partnership bought a car for the business, there would be 300 people listed on the *title* to the car. You can see how this could be a problem in business management. This is where a corporation comes in.

A corporation stands in *place* of the 300 as if it, the corporation, was a real person. The officers of the corporation are the ones who are the *hands* of this fictitious person who actually pick up a pen and sign the contracts. Instead of customers dealing with 300 entities, they deal with *one* entity, the corporation. The same 300 people now give money to the corporation to buy equipment, property, and supplies. In exchange, they are given a right to have the *profits* that the corporation makes. They may *sell* their rights to someone else or simply *give them away*. If the corporation dissolves, any equipment or buildings is sold off and the proceeds are distributed amongst whoever owns the rights to share the profits of the business.

Now here is where it gets interesting. If something were to go wrong and the business should go into financial debt, someone could sue the business to sell off the assets of the business to pay the debts. If the business is made up of a partnership of 300 *individuals*, then the *individuals* could be sued to pay any remaining debts. However, a corporation is *not* made up of individuals. It *is* an individual and *as* an individual, even though it is an *imaginary* individual, it would owe money to creditors as well as the 300 individuals who owned the rights to its profits. When a *corporation* goes bankrupt, the first ones who get paid off from the sale of the assets of the business are the *creditors*. If there is anything left *over*, *then* the original investors get paid off. And then, this is where it would end. The individuals who *create* a corporation are not held liable and are not able to be sued. You can see how removing this risk to investors helped grow businesses and the economy. On the one hand, investors don't have to be burdened with cumbersome management and they stand to make a profit. Customers are freed up by this also. Corporations and customers share the responsibility for wise dealings and the liabilities are limited. This is great for business, but there is *another* effect that this creates. It creates a lack of the sense of responsibility for the investors of the corporation.

Here is where we apply this to the work of the Lord. Jesus captured this

attitude when He spoke of the good shepherd vs. the hireling.

John 10:11-13 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

Someone who has the heart of a shepherd will care for the sheep differently than a hireling, or an employee, will. A hireling doesn't have a stake in the care of the sheep. He can go home at the end of the day, but the sheep are not ultimately his responsibility. If a sheep gets sick, a true shepherd will care for the sheep and even mourn over the sheep if it dies. A mere hireling gets paid, goes home, and forgets about the sheep.

Now you should be wondering exactly how does this fit in with the nature of a corporation. It is easy to see how this could apply to someone who is only serving for pay, but a corporation is not made up of employees, it is made up of investors. As investors, it is common to not feel the burden of the business. What I want you to see is that it is possible to find yourself in the corporate structure of the work of the Lord and have just as little care about the burden of a business as a mere hireling employee.

1Cor 12:23-26 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

24For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

For the purpose of conducting *physical* business in the world we might be a *corporation*. However, for the purpose of conducting the spiritual business *of the Lord*, we are a *partnership*. This is why it is important to recognize what is so special about the 70 men who served with Moses. They shared the same *spiritual* burden. They were not just some cogs in the machinery of an organization getting the work done...not that there is actually anything wrong with that, all work that is moral is honorable. At the end of the day, an employee goes home and doesn't worry about whether a customer has enough to

eat or is suffering depression. For example, I suppose there are nurses who go home and not care about a patient, but I suspect that a nurse is someone who is more like a partner who feels the pains and sorrows of their "customers."

In this wilderness world we stand together, we fall together, we rejoice together we cry together.

Rom 12:10-15 *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

We bear the burdens of each other.

Gal 6:1-3 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Later on in the chapter, there is a reference to each one bearing the load of their responsibilities, but that is a different Greek word. Here, bearing each other's burden refers to the spiritual burdens we bear.

We are supposed to comfort each other.

2Cor 1:4 [It is God] Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

We exhort each other to godliness.

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

In this Hebrews passage, there are two issues being blended. Not only are we to exhort each other, but it is to be done *as a body* of believers. If you are sick at home and if we didn't have the technology, you could look for a preacher on TV or the radio...and even then these programs can be seen on demand on the internet. But *don't* forsake the significance of the body joined together.

I have seen numerous times when people were deeply encouraging someone

and they didn't even know it. Counseling with people, I become aware more often than others of the dilemmas and struggles people face, and then later I hear someone offer a bit of conversation without even knowing how much of a blessing they have been. This can't be done without congregating together. Under the pressure of our current conditions, it is even more vital that we press to be together.

2. Feeling the burden.

We need to feel the burden.

Heb 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The first problem is for those who have been deceived by sin. You might be one who is resisting God, not willing to yield your heart to Him. You want to do something good, but you don't want to give in to God, confess to Him that you are a sinner and not part of His righteousness. You need to get saved.

There are others who have a different problem. They are saved, but they are spiritually immature. They are working against God with their sin. They are clutching onto their sin, hardening themselves, because they won't fully surrender to God. Are you resisting His calling?

Before we can feel the burden for others, we have to cast off our burden of sin and yield ourselves to God.

Rom 6:12-13 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.
13Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

If you are not saved, you can take care of that right now even before we even finish this sermon. Pray this prayer from your heart:

Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and deserve to go to hell because of that. Please take my sin as I call upon you to let the blood of your sacrifice be the only payment for my sin. Apply the suffering of the cross as the payment for me and make me your child forever. Forgive me, now, of my past, present, and future sin and give a home in heaven which you promised to all who ask.

It's in Jesus name that I pray,
Amen.

If that prayer expressed the desire of your heart and if you prayed it with me and meant it, then God said in the Bible that you are saved. If you need more understanding to pray that prayer, please

call me and I will explain it to you so you can call on God in faith for salvation.

3. Pull your weight.

But, let's move on. Anyone who is a child of God should pull their weight, their share of the load.

It is not just up to the pastor. Going back to Numbers 11, there was something very special that happened. Moses had called out 70 men, but there were two who looked like they weren't doing things the official way. They had the audacity to hang back in the camp instead of joining the others in the Tabernacle.

Num 11:26-29 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

27And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

28And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

29And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

There was a young man who came running to Moses. The fact that he was young actually makes him a little bit more forgivable to me since his youth speaks of a lack of maturity. But, there he was, "Moses! Moses! Lookit Eldad and Medad, Lookit Eldad and Medad! They're being bad! They're prophesying in the camp!" And then Joshua got caught up in the situation, "Moses, forbid them!"

Moses' response was revealing. He basically told them to not be jealous for him. He certainly wasn't. He wished that *all* the LORD's people were prophets. It doesn't bother me if someone comes in and preaches better than me. Why did you think I invited them in? To preach bad so I could look better? No, it was so you could have the benefit. I love it when people share things in some of our other study times. Most of the time they have valuable insights or help people understand coming from a different angle.

In other times or perhaps just in other places, if you weren't recognized by some regional church authority, you weren't allowed to preach. The genius of Baptist churches was that every plowman, or in other words, every common laborer, should be a preacher of the Gospel. Baptist preachers were not allowed in the politically approved churches to preach and then when they drew crowds out in the fields they were arrested and thrown in jail. In Eph 4:11 we see that, yes, there are those who are called to office in a church, but what for? The answer starts in vs. 12.

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

You don't have to be a highly trained and experienced theological specialist to serve God. Jesus used a child to provide a meal for thousands. Jesus used unlearned and ignorant Galileans. God sent David against the giant Goliath. God put words in the mouth of a mule. God can use you, too.

1Cor 1:26-29 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Share the burden.

There are some people I wouldn't ride with on a bicycle built for two. Not only might I do all the pedaling, they might be squeezing the brakes when we'd be going up hill.

There are those who are bearing the financial load for the rest of the church. In the presence of a financial crisis, each of us need to be more sensitive to sharing in the burden of supporting the church. Perhaps there are those who struggle with how much they would be giving if they tried tithing. I am willing to pray for God to adjust your income to match what you *are* giving...or, you could pull your weight.

There are those who are faithful with their church preparation responsibilities. I am sensitive to the possibility that some people might not be aware that they are actually are doing their part, but there are others who need to pull their weight.

We distinctly need to be evangelizing more. If you are one who is doubtful that you can do this, you can still pull your weight with other forms of evangelism. Share the burden.

Are you young? Don't be like some of your friends who are spiritual duds...you are welcome to get involved. Don't wait for to be pushed. Call and ask, is there something I can do? Share the burden.

Care about people who need to get saved.

All the teachers in the church are working hard to fill people with the Word of God. What will the church do when the teachers are gone home to the Lord? Please, share the burden, soak up as much

as you can.

Are you a partner, or a customer? Are you a partner, or an absentee investor? Are you a partner?