

The Blessing of the Burden

Every time I see my grandson, Henry he is carrying something. Usually it is one of his toy cars. Miles, his older brother often would not go to sleep unless he had something in his hand, again usually one of his toy cars. When we were walking through the streets of Manhattan, my grandson, Aidan wanted to take his bike with him and if he could not ride it, he was content to push it without complaint. His mom had to tell him on several instances, "No son, you cannot take your bike this time." As I recall, I had two little girls who would tote their dolls and doll strollers everywhere we would let them. Our sons carried around their scooters. The size of the toys would not matter; if my two boys liked them, they would try to take them everywhere. Here's the added mystery - no matter how heavy, I never remember the kids complaining about the weight. As long ago as 1912, F. W. Boreham was commenting about this phenomenon of children with insatiable desires to carry items, even heavy ones by saying, "You can no more deny him his load than you can deny him his lunch."

In 1924, the first editor of Kiwanis Magazine, Roe Fulkerson, published a column entitled, "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother." Dated September 1924, the article speaks of Fulkerson's inspiring encounter with "a spindly and physically weak lad" carrying a baby and "staggering towards a neighboring park. *'Pretty big load for such a small kid,' I said as I met him. 'Why, mister,' he smiled, 'He ain't heavy; he's my brother.'*" It has been reported that a drawing of this was shown to the founder of Boy's Town and Flanagan asked to incorporate this as the motto. Many years ago I was pastor to a man who, as a boy, was a residence at this orphanage and we often talked about the memorable statue that was erected of the little brother slung over the older brother's shoulders, with the caption beneath reading "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." In 1974, while preaching on the campus of Boy's Town, after seeing many come to Christ, I was touched personally seeing the statue reminding us of the resiliency of kids to carry a load that matters. Let us therefore consider:

1. The Burden of Maturity

Part of growing up is taking the responsibility of our required burdens. As parents, isn't it important to install within our youth the requirements of maturity? God's Word says, "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*" (Ephesians 4:15). In the Old Testament, Jeremiah reminded us, "*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*" (Lamentations 3:27). My wife and I were taught from the greatest generation. We were taught to keep our word, work hard, stay clean (inside and out), be kind to people and animals, and above all, believe in and love the Lord Jesus Christ, keep the ten commandments and spirit of that law, not just the letter of the law. We were taught to marry in the will of God, stay married and honor our parents and teach our kids to do so. We were taught this is a great country; be patriots. We are not perfect, but with God's help, we have obeyed our parents, kept the faith and tried with all our prayerful might to do so with our kids. Now we find this great desire to encourage our children to carry the torch.

The burden brings the blessing. To deny our kids their load is to deny them a happy and fulfilled life. This is all part and parcel of growing up. "*For every man shall bear his own burden*" (Galatians 6:5).

2. The Burden of Marriage

Marriage is perhaps life's greatest lesson on unselfishness. "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2). In life we can tolerate even the most intolerable personalities, if we know our interaction with them is temporary. In other words, be nice for awhile, we will go home soon and be away from any and every annoyance and inconvenience they may give us. Ah, "there's the rub," as Shakespeare would say! For we must eventually go home. And home is

where we live. It is where we live with people, most particularly with our spouse. Even the kids will grow up; our interaction on a daily basis with the kids will usually last from 18 to 25 years, then we are back to daily interaction with our spouse. We are commanded to be one flesh and love each other for the whole of our life. The dogmatic command of Scriptures applies regularly at home.

Listen to the words of inspiration: *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you”* (John 15:12). *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Romans 12:10). To deny ourselves this load is to deny ourselves love. It is a load that lifts. If you gladly take this burden it will lift your mate; it will lift you. And you fulfill the law of Christ.

3. The Burden of Ministry

Jesus said, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11: 29,30). In Thomas Guthrie’s autobiography, he tells how the echoes of the victory of Waterloo reached their remote Scottish hamlet. In his own words he tells: *“Many a time did we boys tramp a mile or two out of town to meet troops marching to the war, and proud we were to be allowed to carry a soldier’s musket, which the poor fellows, burdened with all the heavy accoutrements of those days, and wearied with a twelve-hour march on a hot summer’s day, were glad enough to resign.”* What was this insatiable desire about? It was the blessing of bearing the burden of a cause greater than yourself. It was this desire to live a life beyond your years and shallow meaning. What greater cause can you imagine than serving Christ? To deny yourself this load is deny yourself fulfillment in God’s plan and others their very eternity!

So as my mind goes back to Henry constantly carrying something in his hand, I am seeing God gives us, even in our youth a desire to carry a burden. Let us embrace this desire *“...and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2).

- Pastor Pope -

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