**Series: #Life Together**

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

Hebrews Galations 6:1-5

February 2-3, 2013

**“The Burden We Should All Carry”**

In the forward of Gordon MacDonald’s *Rebuilding Your Broken People*, Vernon Grounds asks this question—one worth repeating from time to time—

*“If the whole of your existence is shattered, like a precious vase dropped on a hardwood floor, can those shards be gathered up and by some recreative miracle be put together again into an object of beauty and usefulness? Once Humpty Dumpty has had his ‘great fall’ are ‘all the king’s horses and all the king’s men’ incapable of doing anything except lamenting as they consign his fragments into rubble?”*

Is there hope for us when we fall? What do we do when someone else does?

-these are the questions Paul answers in *Galatians 6:1-5*

-God gives us—the church—another “mutuality demand”

-it’s one of a number of “one anothers” given to emerging churches scattered through Asia—*see map*

*-love one another, encourage one another, welcome one another, provoke one another—and here—bear one’s burdens*

-commands that signal that the body of Christ is called to community—where those in Christ are called to a certain devotion to one another—a commitment that transcends every other society

-like the others—this “one another” is not an option

-addressed to all

-ongoing—bearing the loads of others is not a one time act

BUT WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? What is the weight God is calling us to bear?

1. it can be any and everything that becomes too heavy to carry on our own

-a discouraging word, an accumulating debt, added demands our schedule can no longer bear, the hurt of rejection, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, physical illness, emotional pain, family issues, the weight of loneliness

-lots of us carry these—and sometimes it is hard to continue on our own

-the text underscores that we’re not supposed to—God is not impressed with self-reliance

-a number of us shoulder these weights already

-we bring an encouraging word, a centering word of counsel, share resources, show acceptance, bring comfort, bring presence, bring meals, put on roofs, drive people to the doctor, listen, empathize, pray

*-Village is actually quite amazing at this*

1. but the context applies this mutuality demand to something that can be far heavier

-something a number of us may be less inclined to shoulder, take on

-the weight we are to mutually carry here is the weight of another’s spiritual *failures*

-someone’s foolish choice, addictive behavior, inattentiveness to spiritual disciplines

-the pain when another’s world is *shattered—read 6:1*

-those who are spiritual, in step with the Spirit, are called to this work of rehabilitation

-katartizo—a word used lit of mending nets (Matthew 4:21), resetting a break—restoring to one’s original condition

-here—it describes the work of refitting, restoring those despoiled, corrupted, broken by sin

-specifically—those lit “caught”, overtaken, entrapped, entangled in a misstep

-“overtaken” does not imply that some sins are not our fault

-this would go against Scripture-

-there is no sin that has overtaken—that God does not provide a way of escape—I Corinthians 10:13

-we are enabled to resist the devil, flee temptation—James 4:7

-we have, in Christ, died to sin—Romans 6:11

-we are no longer under its authorization—no one has to sin—Colossians 1:13

*point—Satan can tempt—but he cannot coerce*

*-he seduces only those in the market for seduction*

-but sin can suddenly or subtly come in unplanned and unexpected ways—leading to moral lapses for those who are not so attentive to their souls

-a sudden impulse of anger that gets a hold of us, an improper relationship that begins to gain a stronghold on our heart, a deep indebtedness due to greed that has gotten a grip

-sometimes it is the “respectable sins” (Bridges) that entrap

-anxiety, discontentment, ungratefulness, selfishness, irritability, impatience, judgmentalism, jealousy, gluttony

-when any of these have overtaken a brother or sister—those walking with God, filled in the Spirit, have a responsibility to correct, refit, re-center, restore

-which will often be inconvenient and disruptive

-helping the unmarried through an unwanted pregnancy

-helping one survive the consequences of a failed marriage—illustration—Brian

-helping one recover from a foolish investment

-walk with one through repentance—with one as they bear the consequences—for sin always has a price

-you may have to be a friend when others have walked away

-get more involved—for people rarely commit single sins

-the glue that helps repair—bring people back together

-the sustaining voice that helps them bear the huge weight of guilt and condemnation

-we’re to do it “with a gentle spirit”—verse 1

-not to be confused with leniency that overlooks sin

-restoration can be painful work—it may require tough words, accountability—*pull back from someone refusing healing*

-it requires the skills of a doctor called to reset a broken bone

BUT—a lot of us are not there—and maybe this is why Paul spends most of this text addressing the “spiritual”—and not the erring person

-for we tend to distance ourselves instead of engage—talk to others or condemn their failure—add to the weight and wear separation as a badge of honor

A few weeks ago, I came across an article entitled—“Going to Hell with Ted Haggard”

-you may remember him—once pastor of a 14000 member church in Colorado Springs, President of the National Association of Evangelicals

-who had an affair with a young man

-and as ugly as all of this was—the author notes something far uglier—our tendency to do the very opposite of Galatians 6:2

-he did not see this until he had lunch with his atheist friend who knew the story and said—this is why I will not become a Christian

-and when this pastor said—“Hey, we’re not all like this”, his friend replied—

*“You just proved my point. See, that guy said sorry a long time ago. Even his wife and kids stayed and forgave him, but all you Christians still seem to hate him. You guys can’t forgive him and let him back into your good graces. Every time you talk to me about God, you explain that he will take me as I am. You say he forgives all my failures and will restore my hope, and as long as I stay outside the church, you say God wants to forgive me. But that guy failed while he was one of you, and most of you are still vicious to him. You Christians eat your own. Always have, Always will”*

-it took an atheist to provoke him to love and good works

-so this author, a Colorado pastor, decided to reach out to Haggard, finding a broken man—a man needing restoration

-but he found something more deeply troubling—that Christians he knew began to distance themselves if he continued to reach out to Ted

THE SETTING suggests Paul was dealing with a fair amount of this attitude in the church

-this was a new and emerging congregation in Galatia, a region in present day Turkey

-a church that had been infiltrated by legalists—who insisted upon supplementing the new faith of these Jesus believers with total commitment to Mosaic Law

*-who saw the Christian plate as insufficient without these daily supplements of circumcision, dietary restrictions, etc—if one was to be truly spiritual*

-like some today who turn Christianity into a “performance religion” that adds a list of do’s and don’ts, that establishes boundaries, creates a totem pole with the spiritual elite at the top

-and distances themselves from those who do not measure up—those who are spiritual failures

*Paul exhorts the church to be a community where failure finds grace—restorative grace*

-and here’s why—

-while not stated here in the text—we’ll begin with what Paul states elsewhere—

*1) WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST*

-a body supernaturally knit together by the Spirit

-and by implication—when one part hurts, we *all* hurt—I Corinthians 12:26

-when we help get someone back on their feet—we are all the stronger

-bearing burdens is in our self-interests!

*2) WE ARE ALL SUSCEPTIBLE TO SIN*

-spiritual failure can happen to any of us—6:1b

-there are two myths that we can embrace—

a. *Broken worlds are the exception, not the rule*

b. *A broken world can never happen to me*

-the reality—we are all fallen—deeply flawed and prone to sin

-almost every person in the Bible had a broken world experience—fell off the wall

-if we are honest with ourselves—any “weight bearing” of broken people reminds us that this could easily happen to me

-unless we maintain a certain self-abhorrence and self-distrust—we will capitulate to sin’s presence and power

-for sin is tenacious—it crouches at all of our doors—the flesh tirelessly disputes the supremacy of the spirit

*“So often when we think sin has been destroyed, it is merely out of sight. It has coverts and retreats into which we cannot pursue”—John Owen*

-sin’s strategy is to induce a false sense of security—lure us into thinking we have it altogether—as a prelude to a surprise act

-we bear the weight of another’s failure—for the next one may be ours!

-the words of I Cor 10:12 fit—“Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall”

*3) IT IS THE LAW*

-restoring the fallen fulfills the higher law— “the law of Christ”—vs 2

-if you must hang on to legalism—be known for keeping the law

-then uphold this law—the highest law next to loving God!

-the law of loving one another—which fulfills the law—Romans 13:8

*4) ANYTHING LESS IS SPIRITUAL PRIDE*

-this is the point of *verse 3—read*

-if you refuse to help towards restoration—if you will not carry the weight of one’s failure

-if you will not get down into the mess—believing you are “something”

-better than or above another—I don’t have time to deal with spiritual failures

-then you have overestimated your own importance—become deluded, deceived

-forgotten you are nothing without the grace of God

If you have not been moved to pray—Lord—show me where to bear someone’s load—then these final two admonitions apply—*read verses 4-5*

a. Examine yourselves—to gain a sense of your importance

b. Live responsibly—carry the load God is calling you to bear

*5) ANYTHING LESS WILL LEAVE THE PERSON BROKEN*

-if you treat persons for what they deserve rather than for what they need

-restoration may never occur

Gordon MacDonald, who will speak in two weeks, had his own moral failure years ago

-and felt like a vase shattered—but thanks to a community that carried out Galatians 6:2—he was wonderfully restored

-and so he wrote *Rebuilding Your Broken World*—closing with this warning for the unwilling restorers—

*“Without restorative grace, broken worlds cannot be rebuilt according to God’s standards. Unfortunately, there are many stories of men and women who in their distress felt so abandoned and so ostracized that they put their own worlds back together in whatever fashion was possible. But this kind of rebuilding process was fueled perhaps by anger or by the need to survive or by the energy that comes from wanting to stubbornly prove oneself. The results of such rebuilding are usually something like my attempts to rebuild an appliance. Several pieces are left over, and the thing doesn’t work very well”—Rebuilding Your Broken World*

Who is carrying the weight of failure—who needs your lifting hands today?