

What's In A Pronoun?

One Another Duties

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As we entered the home stretch of the Galatian series, the matter of mutual burden-bearing was considered in chapter 6, verses 2 through 5. A command is found in Galatians 6:2 that reads, "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ." Now when we came to the text just read, some attention was given to that reciprocal pronoun translated "one another's." The reciprocal pronoun in the original pronounced *allelon*, literally "of one another." Now here's the question: what is a pronoun? Now I know you came here this morning just wanting to hear that question. What is a pronoun? Now the man who just sounded the amen answered out on the sidewalk, "A pronoun is somebody who likes nouns." Pro-noun. Well, that makes sense but it's not the answer that I was looking for.

I'll quote from maybe my favorite dictionary, Webster's 1828, favorite English, "A pronoun is a word used instead of a noun or name to prevent the repetition of it," or as perhaps my favorite Greek grammar describes a pronoun and I quote, "The pronoun is a device of language employed to prevent the monotony which would necessarily result from the multiplication of the noun." I'll dare to try to illustrate that. I could say, "Joe drove to church this morning." I could follow by saying and this is not the truth but it's illustration, "Joe will drive to Arbor Hill. Joe will help us feed the children. Joe will help us clean up." Or I could say with the pronoun "he" after saying, "Joe drove to church this morning. He's gonna drive to Arbor Hill, cook and help us clean up." The pronoun prevents the monotonous tedious repetition in this case of Joe's name. I just say "he." The word "pronoun" is derived from the Latin *pro* and *nomen*, simply meaning "for a noun." What is a pronoun? Here's a concise definition: a pronoun is a substitute for a noun.

Now further and surely this is really intriguing, there are nine classes of pronouns in New Testament Greek, probably about the same as I looked at an English grammar, in English. You want to hear what the nine are? Okay. Well, here they are: the personal; the relative; the demonstrative; the intensive; the possessive; the reflexive; the reciprocal, you'll hear that some more; the interrogative; and another one you'll hear, the indefinite pronoun. Nine classes of pronoun and if you're on a serious note, if you're going to handle exegetically and then expositively in the pulpit the word of God seriously, you've got to deal with that and you've got to understand the nuances of truth conveyed by those several classes of pronouns.

Now I want to assure you that all of this is not carried around regularly in my head. This past week, as recently as this morning before the Bible study hour, I'm going back again and again to the grammars, to the Greek grammars, to the lexicons, to the English grammar. Thank the Lord those tools are available to the end of understanding because the Lord inspired those very pronouns. They're not there by accident. We believe in verbal plenary inspiration right down to the pronoun and the kind of pronoun it is.

Now let's think about the reciprocal pronoun. That's one of the nine classes. The reciprocal pronoun, and you'll know it in the English translations by the words "one another" usually, usually a reciprocal pronoun in the original is gonna be translated in the English depending on its case, "of another, to or for another, or simply one another." The reciprocal pronoun functions to convey mutual action, the mutual action that is to go on between a plural subject.

Go back. Look at Galatians 6:2. The subject is "you." Now that's not literally printed for you, but because the verb "bear" is a second person plural, it's understood. The subject "you." You all, you plural. You. You who? You Galatians. You who are the readers of this letter at around 50 AD. You members of the church. Now think about our definition of a pronoun, the substitute for a noun. Paul could have named every one of them but the pronoun is very handy, "you, you all."

You bear one another's burdens. The reciprocal pronoun is conveying this command of an interchange, a mutuality of this burden-bearing among those represented by the plural pronoun "you," that is, the Galatians. Those signified by, those included in the "you." There is to be a mutuality of shouldering burdens. We could contemporize it for our own assembly in this way and limit the number of people, "You," plural, I could say Rob and Luke, "bear," and instead of saying "one another's" I could say Terry and Joe's "burdens." Terry and Joe, you bear Rob and Lou's burdens. John and Tony, you bear Brian and Art's. Again, Paul could have named every single Galatian but these pronouns are real handy words. He can say "you" and to convey the mutuality that he intends between everyone comprehended by "you," he can say "one another." The point is that it is at the end of the day, it's very helpful to understand the language.

Looking again at Galatians 6:2, one another's, literally of one another, there's something else to note. There is not only the reciprocal pronoun that is conveying that all of you are to do this mutually, reciprocally, interchangeably, that is, bear burdens, but you may recall that this reciprocal pronoun has as its root an indefinite pronoun also used as an adjective, allos which means this, it's not only "another," it means "another of the same kind." Its root, allos, signifies what is numerically quantitatively different among those who qualitatively are similar and I'm going to illustrate how it's used in a minute and it makes great sense. I mean, it gives real precision to the language.

There's another indefinite, heteros, that can be translated "other or another" but its nuance means this, it's qualitatively different, something of a different kind or a different nature. Now here are some texts where this comes to play. In Romans 7:23 using the Authorized

rendering, "I see," Paul says, "another law in the members of my body." It's heteros, and what Paul intended in the context was to convey not simply numerically something else but something else that's qualitatively quite different from what has just gone before, the law of God in the inner man, and he takes heteros translated by the King James "another," to communicate that. The New American Standard captures the sense of something different qualitatively when they render it, "I see a different law in the members of my body." Not simply something numerically different, but something different as to kind.

In Matthew 13:24, 31 and 33, the kingdom parables, "Ye presented another parable to them." Well, which "another" is he using? He's using allos. Why? Because they're all kingdom parables and the nuance there is that they are numerically different but qualitatively they're the same. It makes perfect sense. It conveys what's on the author's mind precisely.

Galatians 1:6-7 and I believed I used this back in the home stretch of Galatians, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for," how does the King James read? "Another gospel." Which he goes on to say, "which is really not another." Well, what does he mean by that, it's another and it's not another? Well, in the original it's very clear what he means. The first "another" is heteros. Again, the NAS translators render it "different." "I'm amazed you're so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel which is really not," allos, "not another," not of the same kind. That's a tremendous comparison between these two terms. Now here's the connection: "one another," the reciprocal pronoun, has as its root allos, the indefinite.

"One another," going back to Galatians 6:2, signifies not only mutuality but mutuality in a circle of people who are the same. It signifies those of the same kind, the same nature, who have reciprocal mutual duties, here the duty under consideration, the duty of burden-bearing. These "one another's" are the brethren of the previous verse, the brethren who constitute Paul's readers. Back in chapter 1, who are his readers? The churches of Galatia. They are people of the same kind. Here are some excerpts that demonstrate their nature. Galatians 3:26, "But you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Verse 27, "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Verse 28, "you are all one in Christ." Same character but amongst the people who are alike, they're reciprocal duties and here in Galatians 6:2 the reciprocal duty is, as it were, to put a shoulder under the oppressive wearisome trouble or difficulty that a brother in the church presently has. "One another," in summary, conveys a quantity of various people who fundamentally in character are alike and they have mutual duties one to another. That's where it comes to. That's what "one another" means.

Now you're probably wondering and with good reason, why all of that? Well, here's why: as of right now, we are beginning a series on the "one another" passages of the New Testament. That's why. Frequently and especially in the New Testament letters to the various local churches of the first century world, the writers command, exhort and at times prohibit in terms of "one another." Much of the life and relationships, the interactions and dispositions among members of local churches is revealed in these "one

another" passages. Much that will be considered has been considered before at some point or the other point but, brethren, the very volume of the "one another" passages conveys the critical importance of practiced, demonstrated, brotherly relations in Christ's church and thus prior to taking up an eventual consecutive exposition of Hebrews that I give notice now when we come to that, there are really only going to be two themes and you're going to hear them over and over again: theme 1, the supremacy of Jesus Christ; theme 2, thus persevere. That's the epistle to the Hebrews in summary. That's where we're headed but prior to taking up a consecutive exposition of Hebrews, our focus is going to be probably through the summer months upon these "one another" passages.

There are a couple of suggestions. 1. In Earl Blackburn's book that we are presently reviewing in our first hour, Jesus loves the church, pages 59-60, 20 of these passages are identified in the context of the necessity to join one's self to a visible church for this, as he rightly says, is where the "one another" passages find their application. You might check out if you haven't or check out again pages 59-60 of Earl Blackburn's book.

Second, if you go on SermonAudio whether you go through the Reformed Baptist Church of Louisville site or directly to SermonAudio, you can find 20 messages by Pastor Savastio on the "one another" passages of the New Testament. I highly recommend your listening. I have already begun to listen to the first one and I plan to be listening as I go along and you can thus expect evidences of Pastor Savastio's preaching to arise in my own.

And then thirdly, one of the helps in our own church's history regarding understanding what are the mutual duties that we sustain to one another in the church, one of the helps of years ago was John Owen, volume 13. You have John Owen or have access to John Owen, maybe it's on the internet, volume 13, pages 62-87, the section called "Mutual duties in church fellowship," that was a very important section in the history of our own church and of our understanding of duties to one another in the church.

Now with all of that, brethren, we're going to begin this morning by a public reading of most of the pertinent "one another" passages in the New Testament and we are now going to move canonically through the New Testament beginning in Mark 9 at verse 50. I would encourage you to open your Bibles and follow along as I read this rather extended litany common to which at each point is this reciprocal pronoun "one another" that is conveying mutual duties among a number of people of the same kind.

Mark 9:50, "be at peace with one another."

Now turn to the Gospel of John 13:14, a passage that we have briefly looked at in our men's class in the afternoon, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." Later in that same chapter, come to verse 34, "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." Chapter 15 at verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another,

just as I have loved you." And in the same chapter, verse 17, "This I command you, that you love one another."

And now turning to Romans 12 where this really gets cranked up. Having established at verse 5 a kind of baseline reality from which this arises, a baseline similarity or commonality, "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." We'll come to that. Bound up in those words is what makes us the same. We share a common life by union with Christ. Having said that, coming to verse 10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love," and then again in verse 10, "give preference to one another in honor," and in verse 16a, "Be of the same mind toward one another." And in chapter 13, verse 8, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another." And in chapter 14 at verse 13, and now we have a prohibition, there are going to be a few of these along the way, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore." And at verse 19 of that chapter, "So then," let us "pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." And in the next chapter at verse 5, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus." And at verse 7, "Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." In the same chapter, verse 14, "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another." And in the next chapter, chapter 16 at verse 16, "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

Turn to 1 Corinthians 11 and at verse 33, "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another." And that's more than good manners, it is that but it's more. Wait for one another. And in chapter 12 at verse 25, "have the same care for one another." And in chapter 16 at verse 20, "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

That is repeated in 2 Corinthians 13 at verse 12, a text that we have concluded, "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

On to Galatians 5, verse 13, "through love serve one another." And now verse 15, a warning, "But if you bite and devour one another," remember the cats of Kilkenny, "If you bit and devour one another take care lest you be consumed by one another." And in verse 26, "Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another." A prohibition.

We've already read Galatians 6 at verse 2, onward to Ephesians 4 at verse 2, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love." And in verse 32 of that chapter, and "Be kind to one another." In chapter 5 at verse 21, and "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

And onward to Philippians 2 at verse 3, let each of you "regard one another as more important than himself."

And onward to Colossians 3 and another prohibition at verse 9, "Do not lie to one another." And at verse 13a, "bearing with one another."

And then onward to 1 Thessalonians 3 at verse 12, "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you." And in chapter 4, verse 9, "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." And at the end of that chapter, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." And in the next chapter at verse 11, "Therefore encourage," or exhort, "one another." Then in the same chapter, verse 15, "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men."

And in 2 Thessalonians 1 at verse 3 at the end of the verse, "and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater."

And then onward to Hebrews 10 at verse 24, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."

And then on to James 4 at verse 11, a prohibition, "Do not speak against one another, brethren." And in the next chapter at verse 9, "Do not complain, brethren, against one another." And at verse 16 of the same chapter, "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another."

And then on into 1 Peter 1 at verse 22, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." And in chapter 4, verse 9 of 1 Peter, "be hospitable to one another without complaint." And in chapter 5 at verse 5, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another."

And finally to John's general epistles. 1 John 1 at verse 7, "we have fellowship with one another." And in chapter 3 at verse 11, "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." And at verse 23, "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us." And at chapter 4, verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another." And at verse 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us."

Then finally in 2 John verse 5, "Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another."

Some 50+ texts informing, revealing, describing church life and if you think upon those 50+ texts, it covers a vast amount of the territory, the landscape of what our personal relations one to the other in the church ought to be in heart and in practice. And brethren, the very fact that 50+ times this "one another" appears, that is highly significant in terms of the nature of our relationships, and thus we're off.

Now in conclusion this morning, I have three summary comments but in view of the time, I'm only going to give you the third. We'll start back with one and two next week

but the third of the three comments is this: the first, the immediate sphere of application for these "one another" passages is your local church, our assembly, the people with whom we are bound, voluntarily bound in accountable, committed, brotherly relations that we call conveniently membership, brethren with whom we gather for the worship of God, brethren with whom we strive together for the faith of the Gospel. This is evident by the elementary observation that the "one another" commands, exhortations and prohibitions are predominantly with but few occasions or exceptions, they are offered, they are revealed in the context of local churches.

The "one another" commands contextually are addressed to whom? Not to some vague, nebulous, Christian glob or mob out there, but they are addressed to local churches that had real names, had real leadership, met at a place spatially you could locate, addressed to visible organized churches wherein people had real relationships which if those relationships were to be sustained in sound and healthy condition, there would have to be the application of these "one another" directives. Do they apply to the universal church? To the whole number of the elect? Well, sure they do. As we have dealings with brethren beyond our own local assembly, these "one another" directives apply but that's not their primary application. Their primary application is to local churches. The real test, brethren, the pressing relevance of these directives concerns those whom we see and we meet with and we speak to and we pray with and we work with regularly. The urgency of consistent application is within, for us, this local household of God wherein we, like the original Galatian readers, Ephesian readers, Colossian readers, the churches in the Lycus Valley in those areas that Paul was addressing, had relationships like ours, close and regular relationships characterized by needs and trials and discouragements and disappointments and weaknesses, offenses, differences of various sorts, and that's where the test is. It's easy, very easy comparatively to maintain casual occasional relationships with other Christians in other places that we may only see a few times a year. There's nothing to that. There's really no test. It is much more challenging to do so with those with whom we rub shoulders regularly. The point is this: the primary, the urgency, the immediacy of application relative to the "one another" passages is right here, just look up and down the pews, just take a look. That's the primary sphere of your application, those folks that are sitting just a few feet in front of you, behind you, beside you right or left.

Brethren, the test of a church, one of the tests is whether a church can go the distance, sustaining brotherly relations. It's easy to do it for a few months, easy to do it at a distance, but you know it's not so easy when you're bound together. We've all got remaining sin within us. There is all a bit of kindling from which there can be incited the fires of division and resentment and grudge-bearing and all the rest. The "one another" passages are like an arrow pointed right at that kind of thing.

To the end that we might sustain the kind of relationships that adorn the Gospel, that we might sustain the kind of relationships that provide in this place a foundation for the truth to be broadcast, and evermore how many of those foundations do we need in a nation of lies, a nation now debating at the highest level what is marriage, what's the pillar and foundation of the truth? The local church of Jesus Christ. Not Nebuchadnezzar's schools. Not the government. It's the church. But if we're gonna be a foundation of truth, we've

got to have stones fitted together, we've got to cultivate and sustain and maintain healthy, sound, brotherly relations so that God willing into the next generation the truth can continue to be supported from this place, but not the bare truth, the adorned truth, the truth rendered winsome and attractive and compelling by the people who not only speak it but live it, and they live it in their shoulder-to-shoulder relations to one another in the local church.

That's our challenge and may our consideration of the "one another" passages be a prophet to help us rise to meet the challenge, the challenge now and the challenge in the next generation, that there will be a pillar and support of the truth in this place, however small we may be.

Well, we've begun and we're going to pursue this over the months ahead before we take up the epistle to the Hebrews.

Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for the word of God and for the pressingly relevant commands and exhortations and prohibitions that are tied together by this pronoun that signifies that we have mutual reciprocal duties among a company of people who share the great binding commonality of union with Christ. Father, may the Holy Spirit be pleased to take these "one another" passages and strengthen and enhance and sustain our relations one with another that Your truth in this place may be both supported and rendered winsome to a terribly dark culture. May our relations one with another serve and enable this household of God being what it is in its fundamental identity, the church of the Living God, the pillar and support of the truth. We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.