

OUR BURDENS

"Bear ye one another's burdens." Galatians 6:2.

"Every man shall bear his own burden." Galatians 6:5.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Psalm 55:22.

These three sentences say about all that is said in the Bible about our burdens. The Bible teaches us that we are to expect burdens, that we make and multiply them as we go through life, and that the last one we shall lay down is the burden of the flesh. It is the lot of men and women everywhere to have burdens. The Spanish proverb says, "No home is there anywhere that does not sooner or later have its hush." Sooner or later all have burdens. Many burdens may be seen, but the deepest ones are not seen. If we only knew what burdens some are carrying we would be more contented and more charitable toward them.

This is a world of burden-bearing. There are burdens on the land and on the sea and in the air. People differ from each other in many ways, but they are all alike in that they have burdens. Every life has its burden. Therefore, these texts are gloriously appropriate every day. They are blessedly applicable to every audience, because practically every individual is having a battle these days. Who is there among us that does not have some sort of burden to carry?

I. The Problem.

There is an endless variety of burdens.

1. Physical.

(1) Poverty.

Maybe there is scarcely enough to keep soul and body together.

(2) Sickness.

So many have physical ailments. Very few people are completely well. The world seems to be a great hospital. Sickness is a heavy burden. It takes the color out of the sky, and the sparkle out of the wave, and the sweetness out of the fruit, and the lustre out of the night. It is not easy to be patient and cheerful when ill.

2. Mental.

(1) Fearfulness.

What is this burden except the lack of assurance? The lack of assurance breeds the restless offspring of anxiety and fretfulness. Fearfulness is always the companion of little faith. Triumphant faith abolishes fearfulness.

(2) Anxiety.

People are anxious to succeed, make a good living, provide for the family, educate the children, and not have to be dependent on society.

(3) Perplexity.

When to buy, when to sell, when and whom to trust, and to what amount of credit, and a thousand other questions perplex business men, until the hair is silvered and deep wrinkles come in the cheeks. Do not think that God does not care anything about your earthly business. He knows more about it than you do. He knows all your perplexities and trials.

3. Social.

For example, bereavement is a social burden that wears many out. If we lose our property, by additional industry perhaps we may bring back the estranged possessions. If we lose our reputation, perhaps by reformation we may regain it. But none can bring back the dear departed. The bereaved soul can rest in the promise: --

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell shall endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

4. Spiritual.

The burden of sin and guilt is a burden that we all carry until that burden is lifted in the appointed way. Is there any way to have the mountain of sin removed from the soul? Yes, it is always safe to trust the Lord.

II. The Panacea.

Recognizing the fact of our burdens is not enough. Indeed, we can recognize them too much. We can concentrate our minds so severely on our tasks, our tests, and our trials that we miss the secret of overcoming them. Then we easily give way to a morbid mood, perhaps of self-pity, perhaps of despair. What we really want to know then is what to do with our burdens, how to manage them, where to turn for resources that will enable us to handle them worthily and victoriously.

1. Share Your Burdens.

Forget ourselves and look at our neighbors burdens. It is surely a good thing to forget yourself, for "a man wrapped up in himself makes a very small parcel." Consider our neighbors burden rather than our own.

Of all places where this feeling of mutual dependence and mutual need ought to be the strongest and the finest, surely the most likely place is where the love of Christ is in force.

There are many crushing loads that people are carrying and that cry to the rest of us for such understanding help as we can give. Some have been hit by misfortune, some nearly overwhelmed by sorrow, and some are fighting a terrific battle with discouragement. It is a priceless service we can render if somehow we can get into their hearts with wisdom's word of insight and love's balm of comfort. In so far as we carry through life a cheerful, responsive and unselfish spirit, we shall be doing something every day to make the burden of others easier to be borne. The most beautiful portrait of Jesus is "He went about doing good." How can we help others?

(1) By living the right sort of lives ourselves.

Offer your community the right sort of a life. Gladstone said, "One example is worth a thousand arguments."

(2) By believing in people.

Jesus came to Matthew and said, "Follow Me and I will make a good man out of you." He came to Zaccheus and said, "Come down. I will go home with you today."

(3) By encouraging people.

It is sinful to discourage others. Men and women are fighting a big battle and they do not need weights put on them by any miserable discourager. In Isaiah we read, "They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage."

Carrying certain loads gives us strength. Helping our fellowmen carry loads teaches us sympathy. The motive for this service is to "fulfil the law of Christ." That law is love. Christian sympathy helps our fellow-creatures to get rid of burdens or to carry their load more lightly. In one sense sorrow can be borne only by the sufferer -- in another it may be lightened by tender sympathy. A small lift, a kind word, a little sympathy, a message of condolence, a gift in need or an approving smile helps. Be load-lifters.

2. Bear Your Burdens.

To a remarkable degree every life is lived alone. You were born into the world alone, and you will likely leave it alone. Nobody can repent of your sin, believe on Christ, or answer at the bar of God for you. No one can perform your duty for you; you have your life to live, your place to fill, and your work to do. As no one can take your toothache into his face, so no one can take your heartache into his bosom. As no one can feel the twinge of my pain, so no one can do my work but myself.

No one can transfer the burden of responsibility. Modern man has made many a clever effort to read himself out of the realm of responsible living. To some extent he has eased his conscience, yet he has not thereby solved his problems. He is not what he ought to be, and knows it. But admit it he will not. So he seeks for an escape from responsibility.

Heredity says, "Blame your ancestors." He tries that. Environment says, "Blame your neighbors." He tries that. Physiology says, "Blame your glands." He tries that. Sociology says, "Blame society." He tries that. Atheism says, "Blame the priests." He tries that. Cowardice says, "Blame God." He tries that, too.

Yet every effort to shift the responsibility breaks down. It moves in a circle until at last it returns to the starting point. There is a life for me to live that no one can live for me. There is a service for me to render that no one can render for me. There are burdens that we must carry and from which there is no relief until the battle is ended and pilgrimage is finished and we are safe in the arms of Jesus and happy in our heavenly home.

3. Transfer Your Burdens.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Psalm 55:22. Roll your burden over on the Lord -- "He careth for you." He takes an interest in you, or has you on His heart. Yet some of us will not let Him carry our burdens. It is the upward look that makes the outward and inward looks bearable and desirable. The Psalmist wanted to flee away, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away and be at rest." He wanted to leave it all, give up, and get away. One can't get away from burdens thus.

Cast your burden upon the Lord. This one way obtains relief. How are we to cast them upon Him? By telling Him all about them, by asking His help in bearing them, and by submitting to His will with reference to them. This is just what we so often fail to do. We are like some Swiss peasants, who, on their way to market, set our heavy baskets down on the steps of a wayside chapel while they went in to pray. Then they came out and took up their burdens again. That is how many people do with their troubles and burdens -- they pray about them, and then pick them up again. It is folly to call that casting.

III. The Promise.

"He shall sustain thee." The Lord, who is both able and willing to sustain, will sustain us by removing the burden, by disclosing the design of it, by imparting increased strength, or by promising a brighter future--the toil and burden will not continue long, then, we shall have rest and joy.