

Burden


A burden is a heavy load someone places upon another for the purpose of carrying, often with painful and wearisome toil, to some destination. Only then can the burden be unloaded and the strain of bearing it relieved. Men have built ships to carry their burdens over seas (Acts 21:3), or trained mules and camels as terrestrial beasts of burden (II Kings 5:17; 8:9). But every child of God is also given burdens to carry, burdens placed upon him by the sovereign hand of our Lord. The question never is will we have a burden to carry, or how does my burden compare to someone else's, but what will I do with my burden, where and how shall I carry it? Or more importantly, what does the Lord want me to do with my burden?

Israel in Egypt was afflicted with burdens and taskmasters to see that they carried them (Ex. 1:11). After God delivered them from that burden by the hand of Moses (Ex. 2:11; 6:6), Moses himself had to be relieved of the burden of the people by appointing judges to share in judgment (Ex. 18:22). Priests had their burden, which was the ordinances of God they discharged by serving God honorably in their office and representing His people faithfully in worship (Num. 4:17). The prophets were given the burden of God's word, which was relieved of only by speaking that word to its intended audience (Hab. 1:1; Zech. 12:1), whether they be princes and kings (Ezek. 12:10), ungodly cities (Nah. 1:1), Gentile nations (Is. 15:1), or God's church (Mal. 1:1). Furthermore, the hearer could only unload that burden from the prophet by obeying God's word, or face an even greater burden of God's heavy judgments (Jer. 23:33-34; Is. 30:27).

We also have our burdens. As members of Christ by faith, we are partakers in His anointing, prophets, priests, and kings of Christ, upon whom He lays the burden of confessing His name, presenting ourselves a living sacrifice of thankfulness, and fighting against sin and Satan in this life (L.D. 12). There are the burdens of life—labor,

sorrows, sickness, aging, and death (Eccl. 2:22-23). And the greatest burden of all, which we lay upon ourselves, is sin (Is. 46:1-2). Our iniquities go over our head; as burdens they are too heavy for us to bear (Ps. 38:4). They are a weight that easily besets us (Heb. 12:1).

So what is a child of God to do? Like the beast, our inclination is often to balk and kick against our burden, or to grit our teeth and carry it ourselves. Other times we groan, wishing our burden went away, or, like the psalmist, we wish we had wings and could fly away from the burden (Ps. 55:6). But bear them we must. The Lord so commands. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me" (Matt. 11:29). And: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

There is only one appropriate destination and possible way to carry any of our burdens. Cast them upon the Lord and He shall sustain us (Ps. 55:22). We cast them upon the Lord in prayer by asking for His strength. We cast them upon the Lord when we, who are in Christ, bear one another's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). As for the burdens of life, Christ reminds us that in bearing them we shall find rest for our souls, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt. 11:3). Our burdens are light because they are temporary, and they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17). And as for the burdens of sin, we cast them upon the Lord when we repent (Jer. 17:21), thus laying aside every weight of them (Heb. 12:1). Besides, His commandments are not the heavy burdens, grievous to be born, that the Pharisees bound upon the people and would not carry themselves (Matt. 23:4). For He has delivered us from the burden of God's wrath and the enslaving power of sin by a stretched-out arm and great judgments (Ex. 6:6). By redemption and through prayer, as He promised, He will undo every heavy burden, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke from off our shoulder (Is. 10:27; 14:25; 58:6). And to His church He gives no other burden except, "Hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25). 

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