



## Burdens!

by Mark Brunner

### *Letting Go!* (1 Peter 5:7)

I have calendar software on my laptop that allows me to pretty much schedule my day from morning to evening. I have the ability to schedule appointments and tasks on a daily basis or on a repeating basis. As the week progresses, however, the jobs always seem to pile up. That's when I employ a device I call "selective exclusion." I go through my calendar when I arrive at the office in the morning. As I gauge the amount of time I feel that I will have that day, I begin to select less critical tasks and move them into tomorrow or, perhaps, the next day. Each day I do the same. Eventually everything gets done but not always on the original schedule that I had set up when I first scheduled the week. Some jobs just keep sliding for a while until I have the time to get them done.

Here's a story: Early one fall, while the leaves were still on the trees, there was an exceptionally heavy snowstorm. Sally's grandfather took her for a drive and said, "Notice those elms, the branches are so badly broken that the trees may die. But just look at those pines and evergreens. They are completely undamaged by the storm. My child, there are two kinds of trees in the world, the foolish and the wise. An elm holds its branches rigid. As it becomes weighted down, eventually its limbs break. But when an evergreen

is loaded, it simply relaxes, lowers its branches, and lets the burden slip away. And so it remains unharmed. Be a pine tree, granddaughter.” (Source Unknown.)

Christians who give up all their cares to the Lord can face life’s burdens much better than those who try to bear the weight themselves. Trying to bear sin’s heavy load all by ourselves is not only foolhardy; it’s impossible. The Bible tells us that we should “Cast all our anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). That doesn’t mean that when the load becomes too heavy we need to turn in panic to God and cry out for help. No. It means that we need to lead a life of “casting away” and “relaxing” our pride and our “I can do it myself” attitude. Trying to bear life’s burdens on our own only leads to a broken life, damaged by the heavy weight of sin. We just need to let things slide into tomorrow or even beyond that knowing that everything will get done and done right; on God’s timetable and in “His” way.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*

*Overcomer!* (Exodus 1:12)

Are your burdens pushing you down? Or, are your burdens lifting you up? Seems like a funny question to ask, doesn’t it? But, when you think about it, it really isn’t. I have bad knees; both filled with arthritis and neither showing any signs of improvement. When I walk they hurt. When I lay down they hurt. It really doesn’t matter whether I’m active or at rest. My knees hurt all the time. There are only two ways to go when you have bad knees. You either have them replaced or you live with the pain, keeping it under as much control as possible. I have chosen to live with it. Someday I will probably have to replace both of them. But, for now, I will live with the pain. And, in a sense, I owe a debt of gratitude to my “bum” joints. In order to keep the knees in as best a shape as possible, my chiropractor has told me to do leg lifts on my weight bench. I had taken a bit of vacation from the bench but was now forced to go back to it. Had it not been for my knees, I wouldn’t be keeping my body in as good a shape as I now am. A burden has become my pathway to fitness.

Here's a story: I know of a guy who saw an ant carrying a piece of straw much larger than he was. The man thought, "How interesting that the little ant can carry something so much larger than himself." So he watched the ant in fascination. As he watched the ant, the ant came to a crevice in the ground. The crevice was too big for him to go down into and it was too wide to cross. The ant took the straw. Laid the straw down over the crevice. Walked across the straw and then picked up the straw and went on his way. The man thought to himself, "The ant turned his burden into a bridge." (Mike Minix)

That's what God wants us to do with our burdens! When we are burdened and, perhaps, mistreated, we may feel defeated. But it's often our burdens that make us stronger, giving us opportunity to grow and become more active in our faith. God knows what is ahead of us down the road of life; and you can be sure that some of those things will test us to the limit. That's why He sends burdens for us to carry from time to time. Like my "bum" knees or that long piece of straw carried by that little ant, coping often leads us to where we need to be in God's timetable for our spiritual growth. Facing our burdens as opportunities to grow makes us an overcomer and that's what being a Christian soldier is all about.

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## *Learning and Leaning!* (Matthew 11:28-30)

I lost a muffler on my car the other day. I backed over a curb and the whole assembly, including the hanger, snapped off the car. What had been a muffled purr only moments before had now become a deafening roar. Replacing a muffler on a Corvair, while not the worst of jobs, can be tedious. The hanger mechanism is complicated and because of the car's low profile, working under it can be a challenge. I wasn't looking forward to crawling under there amid the rust specks and oil drips and doing the work. That is until my son Dan volunteered to help me. Dan is good at fixing things, especially cars. If it's covered in grease and smells like fuel, that's a gourmet menu to Dan. Dan also has every possible wrench know to man as well as the patience to be

meticulous and get the job done right. Ultimately, we both crawled under that car and got the job done. What had been a heavy burden for me, something putting pressure on my time and patience, had become bearable because Dan was there to learn from and lean on.

Carrying our burdens is a matter of perspective. The burdens often become heavier when we bear them alone.

Here's a thought: Sir Robert Ball, the great English astronomer, said that a man who carries a 60 pound sack of corn on earth could as easily carry six such sacks of corn, or 360 pounds, on a globe the size of the moon. But in a world as large and vast as the sun, even to pull out a watch from one's pocket would be to tug at a weight of five or six pounds. It would literally be impossible to lift an arm, and if once a man were to lie down he might not get up again. (Sunday At Home)

So also, in the spiritual realm: The weight of our burdens depends on the pull of the earth and its earthly pleasures on our hearts and minds. If the world is everything to us, its burdens would eventually crush and overwhelm us. The Bible tells us, however, that we are to "learn from (Jesus)" . . . and we will "find rest for (our) souls" (Matthew 11:29). Just as Dan's tools made a difficult job bearable, so too our earthly life when we join with Christ in our burdens. Trying to do it alone, the trials of this life would only crush us. Our labor may never be over as long as we walk this earth. But, the promise is that what we do carry will be lighter with the Son of God walking at our side. What better partner to learn from and lean on?

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*Keep 'Em Flying!* (Matthew 9:35-38)

We run a sort of bird rescue mission here at Beech Springs. Because of the surrounding woods and fields, we get a lot of birds visiting our little valley—especially in the spring and the fall. With all that traffic, there is bound to be a

few collisions with our Great Room windows from time to time. Thankfully, most end up in only a few seconds or minutes of shock as the little bundles rest for a moment on our deck, trying to clear the cobwebs out of their heads. However, on occasion there is that rare bird who, flying with great energy, barrels into the windows and literally knocks himself out. That's when the bird rescue team goes into high gear. We gently pick the little bird up, examine it for any injuries and then find a perch for it in one of the nearby spruce trees. We stop by from time to time, cover it if it's stay is overnight, and make sure that if it's going to get back to flying, we're going to do everything possible to get it there.

Here's a story: Naturalists say that the stork, having most tenderly fed its young, will sail under them when they first attempt to fly, and, if they begin to fall, will bear them up and support them. It is amazing to watch the parent bird brush the underside of its fledgling and then slowly drift to a safe distance behind and underneath. In similar fashion, when one stork is hurt, others gather about it, put their wings under it, and as a team try to lift up and carry it away. (By J. Wilbur Chapman)

These instincts in the stork teach us the lesson of helpfulness. We should come up close to those who are in any way overburdened or weak or faint, and putting our own strength underneath them, help them along; and when another fellow being is wounded or crushed, whether by sorrow or by sin, it's our duty to gather about him, and try to lift him up, and save him. Words of encouragement help when someone is down. But, a physical act of "lifting up" goes a long way to making those words have meaning. When others are down, it's our job to make sure that, like those fledgling storks or those little songbird, someone is always there to help them carry their burdens and keep them from crashing. Jesus did miracles as He healed the sick and made the lame walk. As Christians, we need to keep others flying. When we lift someone up who is pressed down by life's burdens, our acts of kindness are, in this world of sin, no less a miracle.

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## *Sweating The Burden!* (Genesis 35:10)

When things finally come down to the final try, that last effort, it's usually pretty serious, isn't it? This happened to me yesterday as I was trying to finish a home remodeling project that involved plumbing. I was grafting in plastic supply lines in a tight place behind a shower. There were three pieces to be grafted in and only enough 1/2" line left to get the job one. I needed three perfect measurements and three perfect cuts to ensure the fit overall. If I made even one mistake, it would be back in the truck and to the hardware store for more supply line. As I looked at that last length of plastic pipe and found myself thinking: "It all comes down to this; one last 10" piece of pipe and one last 8" cut." I made the cut and the pipe barely snapped into place. Later I found myself thinking that if I had laid in a better stock of pipe in the first place, sweating the burden of that last cut wouldn't have been an issue.

Sad to say, we often lead our lives that way as well. Instead of measuring our burdens and then figuring how we can cut them down to size by bringing God into the equation, we often make prayer our last resort.

Here's a story from Vance Havner: He told about an elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles—both real and imaginary. Finally, someone in her family tactfully told her, "Grandma, we've done all we can for you. You'll just have to trust God for the rest." A look of absolute despair spread over her face as she replied, "Oh dear, has it come to that?" Havner commented, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that!" (Vance Havner)

Many people believe that Christianity should offer a problem-free life. When life gets tough, they beat a retreat and wonder where God is when they need him. A better approach would be one that combines perseverance with focused and determined prayer. We need as Christians to have an attitude of prevailing with Christ as opposed to prevailing on demand. When we start out each day with a commitment to fight on, to carry the burden diligently, and see each day as an opportunity for growth through our burdens. Think about it. You can't prevail with God unless you have burdens in the first

place. Never make God your last resort. Sweating the burden along seldom gets the job done well.

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