

Unburdened (Part One)

When I was an engineering student, stress and strain were terms used to define the effects of forces on materials like metals and plastics. Today those terms apply more to people—the stress and strain the forces of life apply to us. They range from being a nuisance to completely debilitating. So many people today are just trying to get by—survival is their goal. They have learned to live not with their burdens—but under them.

How we accumulate our burdens – In the Parable of the Seeds, Jesus said,

“...the worries (anxieties) of the world, and the deceitfulness of wealth (money and possessions), and the desires (lusts for more) for other things enter and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (does not produce any good thing).” Matthew 13:22

This is not what God intended for the most beloved of all His creation.

Let's define *burdens* so we are on the same page.

Burdens are: (1) heavy or difficult loads that we are able to bear ourselves—whether we want to or not is another consideration or (2) heavy or difficult loads we cannot bear alone.

Three types of Burdens come to mind:

Material or Physical. Burdens that weigh us down. As you see from biblical examples, burdens came be our own fault or that of others.

- Sickness and disease
- Money or financial, especially how they affect home and family

- Work-related

Emotional – Burdens that hold us back—keep us from moving forward.

These are burdens we carry around in our minds that weigh down our hearts. A few examples include:

- Guilt and shame for things we have done or others have done against us.
- Prisoners of our pasts – not forgiving ourselves or seeking forgiveness.
- Burdens brought on by family – marriage, parenting, extended family
- Burdens placed upon you by other people—things for which you are not to blame or things like legalism as in Jesus' day. He said,

"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger." Matthew 23:4

Spiritual – Burdens the end result of which is either life or death.

- Questions about life and God – *Why am I here? Is there a God? Does my life matter?*

Burdens often do one of two things: **drive us to God or away from Him.**

Unburdened. How do we get there? Three ways people have tried throughout history:

We can try to **unburden ourselves**—solve our own problems.

- Cain killed Abel thinking would lift his burden of having his offering rejected by God. (Genesis 4:8)
- David's solution for adultery and a pregnant woman—killed her husband. (2 Samuel 11)

We can **ask someone else to help**—hoping s/he does not make it worse. Two examples:

Jonah – *“Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.*
Jonah 1: 5

After they prayed to their gods, we read: *“...the sea was getting worse and worse.”*

Israel or Judah – Both often made similar mistakes. In this example, Judah went to her arch enemy (Egypt) for help with their burden from their fierce enemy (Assyria).

(God speaking) *Ah, stubborn children,’ declares the LORD, ‘who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction’”* Isaiah 30:1-2a

Turning to Egypt for deliverance was great sin and a slap in the face of God because it demonstrated their failure to seek Him first and only. This denied His power and promise.

We ask God.

Finally people get around to asking the only one Who can lift or carry our burdens and wants to do so. This is the one common denominator between people in the Bible who successfully dealt with their burdens: ***They turned to God (Father and Son)***

Here the words of His promise through Isaiah,

*“Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will **bear** you! I have done it, and I will **carry** you; And I will **bear** you and I will **deliver** you.”* Isaiah 46:4

I wondered why God used two different words – *bear* and *carry* because they are similar. My study of the Hebrew words led to this conclusion: *bear* (*nasa*) has more of the meaning *to lift up*. *Sabal* means *carry*. Thus, we have a picture of God promising to both lift and carry our burdens throughout our lives even when we are old and graying!

We will continue to God's solutions for becoming "unburdened" next week...

For Christ's sake,

Walter