

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 4 NOVEMBER 2018



## There Are Burdens We Can't Bear

*Erik Raymond*

If you are like me, you often overestimate your ability and underestimate your tasks. Giving ourselves too much credit, we bite off more than we can reasonably chew. In time this pattern can not only hurt our productivity and efficiency, but it begins to weigh us down.

If this is true with projects, it's also true with the burdens that make up our day-to-day life. And if we're honest, we encounter many weights that prove too heavy. It's like we walk through life with a magnet in our pocket and every burden is coated with metal.

Difficulty is nearly synonymous with life. In general categories, we face physical, economic, professional, personal, and spiritual challenges. And let's remember that not only do we have this magnet in our pockets, but so does every other

person around us. We are carrying a myriad of problems amid a world of kindred strugglers.

Too often we overestimate our ability to bear our burdens even as we underestimate their weight. Like an overstuffed grocery bag, the bottom eventually gives out – regardless of our well-meant intentions or resolve. We simply can't bear the freight required to carry our myriad of burdens.

One day this struck me as I was feeling weak and discouraged. I was doubled-over with exhaustion from trying to climb a hill of difficulty through stiff headwinds of adversity. Here, I was reminded

again of my foolish overestimation of myself and my underestimation of my circumstances, but also my forgetfulness of my great resource.

It came by reading a familiar passage of Scripture: Luke 22:41-46. In the hours leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, our Lord is praying to His Father, and He

begins sweating drops of blood. This is a unique and shocking detail, but it's included with other descriptions that heighten it even further. He was praying to His Father about removing the impending cup that has been served to Him as He was strengthened by an angel. He then fell to the

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ground and continued praying fervently to His Father.

We know that it was the cup that stood before Him that was the source of His burden. The cup in Scripture is symbolic of one's divinely determined destiny, whether blessing (Psalm 16:5) or disaster (Jeremiah 25:15), salvation (Psalm 116:13) or wrath (Isaiah 51:17, Psalm 75:8). Here it refers to Jesus' forthcoming suffering (Matthew 26:39). Jesus sees the enormous burden placed before Him, and it is the fully fermented, undiluted cup of divine wrath.

It is a staggering cup.

But why is Jesus even beholding such a cup? After all, He is perfectly good, loving, and honourable. He deserves a cup of blessing not a cup of wrath.

It is our cup.

We deserve this cup. On account of our sin and rebellion against God (Romans 3:23), we earned judgment (Romans 6:23). But instead of us bearing what our sin justly deserves, Jesus takes our place (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18).

It is our burden.

If you are like me, you might be tempted to compartmentalise this. You might restrict Christ's burden bearing directly to those matters related to separation from or acceptance with God. But it seems that the biblical design includes far more than this. We are bidden to come to God in prayer

to find mercy and grace in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We are to bring all things to God (Philippians 4:6-7). He takes care of us, not only to provide for our physical needs (Matthews 7:7-11) but also our spiritual needs (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). He means for us to understand that He cares for us in every way (Luke 12:27-31).

Arguing from the greater to the lesser, we see that Christ bore our greatest burden and most pressing priority (our sin and its due penalty). Therefore, He is uniquely and gloriously suited to bear every other burden we have. He is like Atlas holding the weight of our

world upon His shoulders. He alone can bear the freight of all our troubles.

It is to our shame that we so often attempt to carry this weight. We overestimate our ability while underestimating the weight of our struggles. And to add insult to injury, we forget our dear Saviour's willing and capable hands.

There are many burdens given to us that we are not meant to bear. We can't. The drops of blood in Gethsemane remind us of this.

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