



**Burden Bearer**

**Isaiah 53: 4-5**

**Surely he took up our pain**

**And bore our suffering,**

**Yet we considered him punished by God,**

**Stricken by him, and afflicted.**

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,**

**He was crushed for our iniquities;**

**The punishment that brought us peace was on him,**

**And by his wounds we are healed.**



**Dear Opal,**

**My aunt, a person that always wore a happy smile that reached all the way to her ears, once told me with great confidence that “home is truly where the heart is found”. Given the fact that there was so much joy that appeared to drip like honey from every precious moment while having the pleasure of being in her company, it emitted the illusion that darkness could never possibly penetrate the walls of her spirit.**

**Yet, when I think back to that special time that created such warm remembrances, given our current climate where people are facing a savage hungry virus that knows no boundary lines and the angry voices of evildoers filling the air waves throughout the world, would this land abundant with such wonder that resides in a faraway place in my mind still be filled with such magic? After all, the treasured recollection of this fantastic spot was formed through the eyes and ears of a little girl that led a very sheltered life while roaming the picturesque Ozark hills replete with lush forests and babbling brooks.**

**Thus, given this rich environment, there was not a thought that such a peaceful and serene existence occurring within the light of love could ever be invaded by dark shadows where hungry dark monsters lurked.**

**Yet, here we are today facing such ghastly blackness that the entire world is suffering combat fatigue from a battle that rages on. All of us are ravenous for just a sample or morsel called normalcy; circumstances that make me wonder how that beloved aunt would have responded if she were alive today.**

**Opal, although I was always labeled as a very positive person that was born laughing rather than crying, this type of climate so filled with uncertainty and challenges got to me the other day. Having a compassionate heart that strongly beats on behalf of the downtrodden in this world, sheltering at home certainly places restrictions on volunteering with the sweet old folks that are now in such dire circumstances; conditions that brought on a deep level of grief within my heart.**

**Thus, feeling caste down one morning before arising, the need to cry out to God in despair prompted me to pick up my prayer journal and fill the pages with such mournful words that the Almighty had to recognize them as a full blown pity**

party; especially given the fact that I droned on and on without a thought to the gift of grace he had bestowed on one so undeserving of such indescribable generosity ; a premium offering at such cost to himself.

However, as per usual, he called me to attention in very short order with only the turning of a page in my daily devotional material as it related to the true definition of the weight of burdens in this life.

First, the mention of the load a burden bearer carried during Bible times started me on a journey of research to gather the initial bricks in building the definition that clearly spelled out the word burden.

Traveling all the way back in time to the bazaars that served as the shopping center of a village, unlike today, I discovered that their composition was that of a tangle of alleys filled with colorful wares, accompanied by noise and bustle by day and nothingness at night; activity that occurred due to bartering that transpired among those purchasing goods displayed on an assigned street devoted to that particular product category.

Then, when focusing on the bartering process itself, the realization that comprehending Middle Eastern customs of the time was paramount in assuring the survival of self and family; especially given the fact that it was understood when asking the price of an item, the initial response would be, “For you, nothing! It’s a gift”, an opening dialogue that meant zilch in the whole scheme of things.

Opal, one reference to this custom occurred when Abraham, out of grief, had no heart to haggle when he bought Sara’s burial plot but instead paid top asking price.

Additionally, given the rugged hilly terrain and narrow alleyways limiting the means of transport for heavier items to be sold or bought, a fascinating solution that created a career as a burden bearer came into being.

Thus, a dangerous occupation materialized where a single man, using only a five-yard rope, would carry such heavy weight on his back that if he were to fall, it would be fatal. After twisting the rope around the object, he would simply crouch, exhale and balance it across his shoulders while yelling loudly to clear his path of anyone that might impede his journey. It was reported from a startled

bystander later on in history that a burden bearer was witnessed carrying a piano on his back, an unimaginable weight, indeed.

Scripture refers to this occupation when Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem by using burden bearers to remove all the heavy rubble when the remnants from the old structure were torn down.

Another example can be found in Psalm when the psalmist was overwhelmed with guilt and described it as a huge burden pressing over his head; a statement that takes on additional meaning when understanding the custom to which he referred.

Opal, one last instance when Scripture used this occupation as an example of what we all should do in serving others can be found in Galatians 6: 2 that reads, ***“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ,”*** a command that was based on times when the load a burden bearer transported became too heavy and he would ask an individual close by to receive the object so that a moment of rest could occur before taking it back. How would most of us react to that type of request?

After soaking in all the fascinating information regarding those that carried heavy objects at the risk of losing their lives at any given moment in time, it served as a perfect segue into a deeper meaning of sacrifice regarding the burden Christ carried for each of us when he came to dwell among his children, a happening we celebrate every Christmas; a load that was so heavy that he willingly sacrificed his own life on the cross in our place.

Just think about the all-consuming love the Creator has for his children to lower himself and purposely die in our place. Since he is God Almighty, our Creator that needs nothing, the act of choosing to become human on our account and endure the punishment, agony, and humiliation of being crucified on the cross took the definition of burden bearer to a whole new level.

Certainly, Luke 22: 41-44 acutely describes the weight of the burden he carried on his shoulders for the sins of all mankind with the words, ***He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*** An angel from heaven

appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Opal, a commentary written by Timothy Keller summarizes the burden the Lord bore for us with, *“Jesus’s grief and suffering produced joy for both him and us, and now, when we trust in him during dark times, our sorrow can also produce the joy of increased faith and spiritual reality.”*

So, exactly how heavy was the burden Jesus carried in our place? Scripture from Isaiah 53: 4-5 answers this question as a prediction well in front of the actual happening with, *“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our iniquities; the punishment that brought him peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*

Again, Timothy Keller sums it up beautifully by stating, *“Here is God we long to hear more about; who ‘daily bears our burdens’ and provides a way to escape death. To bear someone else’s burdens is to sympathize, identify with, and become involved in the person’s life so they do not have to face it alone.”*

In conclusion, when times are darker than ebony, does this mean we should just be quiet and suck it all up? No! Absolutely not! However, it does mean that we should never forget that not only did Jesus die in our place that we might have eternal life, but also daily bears our burdens.

Actually, Matthew 11: 28-30 serves as an invitation from Jesus to always come to him in times of trouble by stating, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Opal, the lesson that was received on this bleak morning in the corner of my office was to balance my thinking regarding my relationship with Christ. Selfishly, I thought only of myself and disregarded the One that formed me with his own hands, and by carelessly wallowing in a full-blown pity party due to the things over which I had no control, my thoughts and actions tried to place limitations on what the Almighty could do.

Therefore, first acknowledging my actions followed by a plea for forgiveness, the whining and complaining ceased followed by the words, "Come Holy Spirit! I understand! Thank you for the knuckle burner! Amen!

As our prayer, enjoy the lyrics written by Isaac Watts (1787) titled:

**At the Cross**

**Alas! and did my Savior bleed  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would He devote that sacred head  
For sinners such as I?**

**Refrain**

**At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the  
light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away,  
It was there by faith I received my sight,  
And now I am happy all the day!**

**Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, Thine—  
And bathed in its own blood—  
While the firm mark of wrath divine,  
His Soul in anguish stood.**

**Was it for crimes that I had done  
He groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity! grace unknown!  
And love beyond degree!**

**Well might the sun in darkness hide  
And shut his glories in,  
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,  
For man the creature's sin.**

**Thus might I hide my blushing face  
While His dear cross appears,  
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,  
And melt my eyes to tears.**

**But drops of grief can ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe:  
Here, Lord, I give myself away  
'Tis all that I can do.**



*Love,  
Colene*