

Why Does God Give Some People More to Bear than Others?

Texts: Romans 5:1-5, 1 Cor. 10:12-13

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Have you ever been like me, at the airport waiting for my bag to come down the conveyor and wondering if I am going to fall over when I try to pick it up because it is loaded to the max? We even have a luggage scale to be sure we get every ounce in our bags without going over the limit and have to pay extra. Our precious treasures have gotten so heavy now that we have to have wheels on them to get around. But, we wouldn't think of them as a burden, or are they?

Among the responses people turned in to my question, "If you could ask God..." I received this one, "**Why does God give some people more to carry than others?"** I believe that person is carrying a burden of some kind that is **heavy** and **hard!** I don't know what it is; is it some great responsibility they carry, like caring for a loved one who is disabled or dying? Or, is it a huge responsibility in their job or managing a great stock portfolio? Not much fun this past week. Is it something painful that someone had done to them or something they have done they feel guilty about that weighs them down? Maybe it is the burden of failed relationships or lost opportunities. There are different kinds of burdens we carry around and they get very heavy some times, and they get very heavy sometimes.

I have a long-time friend, **Sara Andrews** in Fort Worth, who gave me permission to tell about her. She was born with serious birth defects we call cerebral palsy, making even the simplest movements difficult. Her parents were very determined that she have the best opportunity for a full life without considering her condition a limitation. They helped her learn to do most things that fully-abled persons can do including graduating from college. She even opened and operated her own day care center for children for several years. Her disability makes it difficult for her to speak clearly, even for me sometimes, so she was not able to take a normal ministry position in a church.

But, she didn't let that stop her; she has given seminars and classes in many churches, offered support groups for persons with disabling conditions, has helped clergy and churches become more sensitive and accommodating for "differently-abled" persons. She also has a ministry with children and their families in her apartment complex. All the while she has maintained an e-mail ministry to people all over the country sending inspiring stories and encouragement to others with disabling conditions as well as many ministers and others. She inspired and helped form a Disabilities Concerns Committee in the Central Texas Annual Conference which for over twenty years has lifted awareness for the need in our churches to fully embrace persons with special needs. They also offer grants including churches to improve accessibility of their buildings.

I am grateful I had the opportunity to help Sara in her journey, but at times I saw it as a burden. However, afterward I am always amazed at what God has helped her accomplish in spite of her disability, never demonstrating the least bit of self-pity or the feeling that the world or God owed her pity.

Jesus said in Mark 8:34, ***“If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me.”*** She has born her burden, her cross with joy and hope to the glory of our Lord.

The Apostle Paul came to realize that following Jesus was an extremely heavy burden. He suffered amazing hardships and terrible physical persecution from his fellow Jewish people as well as the Greeks and Romans. But, he shares a secret he learned with the Christians in Rome that suffering can have a purpose in God’s plan for our lives. In Romans 5:3-5 (NIV) we read:

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Paul sees suffering and hardships, not as burdens, but opportunities to grow as disciples of our Lord developing qualities of maturity. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul prayed for three periods for God to deliver him from what he called a “thorn in the flesh” without an answer. Finally God told him, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** (2 Cor. 12:9)

THAT IS PERSERVERANCE!

He goes on to say in v. 10, **“Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.”**

THAT IS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

The result of this process is grace pouring into our hearts producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, **Love** working through our **faith** in an atmosphere of **hope**. Of these, **LOVE** is the greatest of all attitudes we may express. (1 Cor. 13)

What is your burden, or should I say “cross” you bear? We each have things we carry around.

We may be burdened down by a boat-load of regret and guilt over sins and failures.

We may be hauling around with a “white-knuckle-grip” our resentments over others’ mistreatment.

We may feel like the burden of the whole world is on our shoulders.

We have a way of mustering up the necessary energy to lug around the things we want to, whether we admit it or not. We think they make us important in the grand scheme of things. Or, we may think they give us power over another by refusing to forgive and let go of something that happened in the past. Who's the one who is tired and miserable, the other person? **I don't think so!** Sometimes we believe we can't let it go, like a barbell that has fallen on top of the weightlifter. Only Jesus can lift it off our hearts. Let him be your weight-spotter. We were not made to bear them; they make us sick. Jesus said, **"My yoke is easy (comfortable) and my burden is light,"** Matt. 11:30.

There is an old legend about three men and their sacks. Each man had two sacks, one tied in front of his neck and the other tied on his back. When the first man was asked what was in his sacks, he said, "In the sack on my back are all the good things friends and family have done, but I can't see them. In the front sack are all the bad things that have happened to me. Every now and then I stop, open the front sack, take the things out, examine them, and think about them." Because he spent so much time concentrating on all the bad stuff, he really didn't make much progress in life.

The second man was asked about his sacks. He replied, "In the front sack are all the good things I've done. I like to see them, so quite often I take them out to show them off to people. The sack in the back I keep all my mistakes in there and carry them all the time. Sure they're heavy. They slow me down, but you know, for some reason I can't put them down."

When the third man was asked about his sacks, he answered, "The sack in front is great. There I keep all the positive thoughts I have about people, all the blessings I've experienced, all the great things other people have done for me. The weight isn't a problem. The sack is like sails of a ship. It keeps me going forward.

"The sack on my back is empty. There's nothing in it. I cut a big hole in its bottom. In there I put all the bad things that I can think about myself or hear about others. They go in one end and out the other, so I'm not carrying around any extra weight at all."

What are you carrying in your sacks? H. Norman Wright, *The Perfect Catch* (Bethany House, 2000), pp.28-29

What's all that stuff in that overweight bag of yours? Your treasures? or your troubles? Wouldn't you feel better if you could let go of it? **Give it to Jesus; let him carry it. He is better than wheels.**