

Burden Bearing

• Lesson Six •

Christ Is the Ultimate Burden Bearer

1. Christ bore the world's burden
2. Christ bears my individual burdens

Worship

Read responsively selected verses from Psalm 103.

A: Praise the LORD, O my soul;

B: All my inmost being, praise his holy name.

A: Praise the LORD, O my soul,

B: And forget not all his benefits—

A: [He] forgives all your sins

B: And heals all your diseases.

A: [He] redeems your life from the pit

B: And crowns you with love and compassion,

A: [He] satisfies your desires with good things

B: So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

A: The LORD works righteousness

B: And justice for all the oppressed. Praise the LORD, O my soul. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you have given us this invitation: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Today we bring all our burdens—the heavy ones and the nagging ones—and lay them at your feet. Your son, Jesus, is the ultimate burden bearer, who brings us relief. Give us your Holy Spirit today as we study your Word. Amen.

Introduction

We sing it with gusto: “A mighty fortress is our God!” We feel God’s security when sitting within the stone walls of the church, surrounded by other worshipers. But when we’re out in the world, we don’t always have the same sense of inner strength. We anguish over past errors. We fret about the future. We hustle and bustle, trying to make ends meet. We sigh and moan at life’s hardships and heartaches.

God calls us to come to him. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Life’s little worries need not bog us down. Neither should sins sink us into despair. “When our hearts make us feel guilty, we can still have peace before God. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:19,20 New Century Version).

Our peace with God comes through our Lord, Jesus (see Romans 5:1). We can unload every sin onto him; he carries them away.

We have help from God in every trouble (see Psalm 46:1). We can go to him with all our concerns and fears.

Before we begin, make a short list: What sins are on your conscience today? What worries or troubles are on your mind? If you wish to share any of your burdens with the group, please do.

Studying God's Word

Christ bore the world's burden

If you could quantify sin, how much would each sin weigh? A naughty thought—maybe an ounce? Thoughtless words—a pound or two? Malicious, evil acts—one hundred pounds each?

We know God doesn't measure sins in that way. Even the smallest of sins carries the full weight of condemnation with it. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). The weight of every sin is immeasurable.

God shifted the weight of all those sins from our shoulders onto another's. Jesus carried the collective burden of sin to the cross.

Read Isaiah 53:3-6.

1. Jesus was "a man of sorrows . . . familiar with suffering . . . one from whom men hide their faces." We don't like to look at pictures of people in pain. Yet we have come to esteem the portrait of Jesus' crucifixion. Why?
2. Christ "took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows." Be specific: What was he carrying?
3. Read verse 5 aloud, emphasizing the pronouns. How could one man do so much for so many?
4. What was the biggest burden laid on Jesus?

His Word in My Life

Mike was the wrong guy for Lisa . . . but she had a low image of herself and was lonely, so she stayed with him. She got pregnant. He arranged for an abortion. She was feeling confused, isolated, scared. She went through with the abortion and then lived in guilt. She stayed with Mike, feeling she didn't deserve anyone better.

A few years later, when she was joyfully married to a Christian man, Lisa wanted children. But she wasn't able to conceive. She and her husband went through years of fertility counseling and treatment. Lisa was convinced God was punishing her for what she had done.

As Lisa's friend, how would you respond to her feelings of guilt?

Refocus on the key point

Do you feel burdened in your soul; does your conscience scream out about your sins? Martin Luther felt that way. He beat himself bloody at times, trying to find peace with God. Then the Spirit showed him the truth and beauty of the gospel. He wrote:

Look at the words . . . 'God so loved the world.' . . . Now, the 'world' does not mean SS. [Saints] Peter and Paul alone but the entire human race, all together. And no one is here excluded. God's Son was given for *all*. *All* should believe, and *all* who do believe shall not perish, etc. Take hold of your own nose, I beseech you, to determine whether you are not a human being (that is, part of the world) and, like any other man, belong to the number of those comprised by the word 'all.' . . .

If [God] had intended to give (salvation) only to the worthy, then He would have been obliged to have it preached only to the angels; they are pure and without sin. Indeed, then He should not have given it to St. Peter, David, and Paul either; for they were sinners just as much as I am. But no matter what I am like, I know that God's Word is true (Plass, *What Luther Says*, Vol. 2, pp. 608,609).

Christ bears my individual burdens

The answer to burdens lies in knowing where to turn. After describing to his disciples some of the troubles they would face, Jesus finished by saying: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

1. What was the role of a high priest?
2. Would you feel differently about Jesus if his life on this earth had not included any suffering or temptation?
3. What needs may we bring before the throne of grace?
4. What if you've approached God many times with the same prayer and haven't received an answer? Should you keep praying or change your request?

His Word in My Life

Read Matthew 11:2-6 or Luke 7:18-23. When John the Baptist was in prison, he and his disciples expressed doubts about Jesus' messiahship and mission.

What sorts of things cause you to have doubts about Jesus' lordship? How would Jesus answer you?

Refocus on the key point

Go back to the list of sins, troubles, and concerns that you made at the beginning of this lesson. Has today's discussion of Christ's grace helped? We need to keep our focus on Christ to keep guilt away and fears at bay.

Summary

Some have found comfort in the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (CW 411). Share your thoughts about this song and when it has brought you comfort. Then sing it together as a closing hymn.

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness—Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?—Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In his arms he'll take and shield you; You will find a solace there.

Life with God

- Days 1 and 2: Read through some additional hymns that speak of the forgiveness and comfort that Christ brings.
 - “Jesus Sinners Does Receive” (CW 304)
 - “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” (CW 349)
 - “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” (CW 357)
 - “I Lay My Sins on Jesus” (CW 372)
 - “Come, My Soul, With Every Care” (CW 409)
 - “I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus” (CW 446)
- Day 3: Read the great Old Testament prophecy about Jesus suffering for our sin: Isaiah 52:13–53:12.
- Day 4: Pick your favorite Bible version of Psalm 23. Read it, pray it, memorize it.
- Day 5: Read Job chapter 32. When is older not wiser?
- Day 6: Read Job chapter 33. Why does Elihu say God allows us to suffer? (verses 29,30)
- Day 7: Read Job chapter 34. According to Elihu, did Job deserve to suffer?