

A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers
Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings, Held
In Fort Worth, Texas, June 11-24, 1917

by George W. Truett, D. D.
Pastor First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas

Compiled and Edited by

J. B. Cranfill, LL. D.

Two

WHAT TO DO WITH LIFE'S BURDENS

NOON SERVICE, JUNE 12, 1917

Text: "**For every man shall bear his own burden.**" * * * "**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**" * * * "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**" (Galatians 6:5; 6:2; Psalm 55:22).

Distinct pleasure is in my heart that I am allowed to greet the busy men and women before me for this brief midday service. As has already been announced, these midday services are to be begun exactly at twelve o'clock, and are to be closed at ten minutes before one o'clock. The one design of these services is to help the busy men and women in the heart of the city at the noonday hour by calling their attention daily to those simple, vital things which make for our highest good.

In coming to speak at this first midday service, it has seemed to me that I could bring no more practical word than to talk to you about Life's Burdens. It is the lot of men and women everywhere to have burdens. There is an old Spanish proverb which points a familiar lesson: "No home is there anywhere that does not sooner or later have its hush!" The proverb points its own lesson. You cannot mistake it. Sooner or later all men and women have their burdens.

Many of the burdens of men and women may be seen. The deepest and most poignant burdens are not seen. If we knew what fierce battles some men and women were fighting, and what weighty burdens they were carrying, it would teach us lessons of restraint and charity and contentment beyond any that we have ever known. That very fact should give us pause and caution, even to a marked degree.

The Bible has three words to say about our burdens. Notice them: "**Every man shall bear his own burden.**" "**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**" "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**" That is all that the Bible says about our burdens, but those three sentences say all that is to be said.

Now, for a little while, let us glance at what the Bible says in its threefold message about our burdens. First, our burdens are non-transferable: "**Every man shall bear his own burden.**" Every life is isolated and separated and segregated from every other life. To a remarkable degree every life is lived alone. You were born into the world alone, and when you shall leave it, no matter where or how you shall go into the valley of the shadow alone, and between your birth and your death, the cradle and the grave, life is very largely lived alone. No man can perform your duty for you. "**To every man his work,**" the Master teaches us. Not "to every man a work," nor "to every man some work," but "**to every man his work.**" There is a program for you to carry out. There is a niche for you to fill. There is a task for you to face. There is a life for you to live, separated from every other in all the world.

Nobody can repent of sin for you, nor can anybody believe on CHRIST for you, nor can anyone make answer at the judgment bar of GOD for you. We must everyone give an account of himself to GOD.

And that means that nobody is to get lost in the crowd. There is to be no hiding behind others, or behind organizations. Is there any danger more outstanding, in these modern times, than the danger that the individual shall get lost in the crowd? GOD sees the individual, and the individual must never get lost in the crowd.

His eye is upon the one, and the one is to see to it, whatever others may or may not do, that he or she walks that path before the face of GOD that shall have the favor of GOD.

Whether anybody else does right or not, you must.
Whether any body else is true or not, you must be.

Did you ever read the diary of Jonathan Edwards? If so, you must have been greatly impressed with his words - I do not attempt to quote them verbally - where he penned these two resolutions: "Resolved, first, that every man should do right, whatever it costs. Resolved, secondly, whether any other man does right or not, I will, so help me GOD." That is the supreme business of every human being, for "**every man shall bear his own burden.**"

And then the Bible points a second great word for us concerning our burdens: "**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,**" which means that our burdens are oftentimes community burdens, social burdens, burdens to be shared with others. Others are to share their burdens with us. "**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**" It is always interesting and proper to note words of Scripture in their setting. *Many of the fads and fancies and hurtful heresies in the world have come because the Scriptures have been wrested from their proper setting*. We need always to look at the Scriptures in their setting, and let the Scriptures say what they meant to say, and mean what they are designed to mean.

Here in this Scripture, where we are told to bear one another's burdens, immediately preceding it, a great verse stands out for our best consideration. Note it: "**Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**" Bear ye, in this way, one another's burdens, the apostle is saying, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The primary reference there to this great matter of mutual burden bearing is to the fact that we should seek to help those about us who have gone astray. And just here is the most neglected task of all. Here are we plainly summoned to go out and give ourselves, without stint or reserve, to recover men and women who are going wrong. "**If a man be overtaken in a fault,**" help him. Criticise him? Denounce him? Throw stones at him? Talk about him? Nay, verily. "**If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**"

Even as I call your attention to this point of mutual burden bearing, especially with regard to those that have got out of the right path and are going the wrong path, your minds are now alertly busy, and you call to your remembrance certain men and women who once began well, but who have been bewitched away by some influence from the right path and are going the wrong path. Go after those, to help them. That is what our Scripture says.

Just there, my fellow-men, is the most neglected task of all. When men go astray and keep going astray, we are all too willing, too content, to allow them to go on, whereas we are summoned here, by this Scripture, and by the whole message of the gospel of grace, to go out and seek to reclaim, to recover, to restore, everybody that is going wrong.

I am thinking now of a young fellow gloriously converted in my city some time ago, who beforehand had had the miserable habit of swearing - an inexcusable habit, without any defense at all for any man - and yet that habit had such a hold upon him that it seemed second nature to him to swear.

By and by he was graciously converted under the call of CHRIST, and then he talked with the minister, and said: "I think I had better wait for six months or twelve, until I can prove to myself clearly whether I can keep from swearing, before I shall join the church." But the minister said to him:

"Not at all. The church is not an aggregation of perfect people, No one is perfect. We are all sinners, saved by grace. You come right on, if you have put your trust in CHRIST as your personal Saviour, and take your place in the army of God, with the rest of the soldiers, and help them, and let them help you."

And so he did, and for months there was a devotion about him to CHRIST's cause that, to the last degree, cheered all our hearts. But after some months the minister missed him from the midweek prayer-meeting, and even from the Sunday services, and he said to his men: "Where is Charles?" And they said: "Haven't you heard?" The minister said: "Not at all. What has happened?" And they said: "Charles was provoked a little while ago to anger in a controversy with one of our citizens, and the hot words came, and the blasphemous sentences fell from his lips, and he is all filled with shame and humiliation, and he has not come to church any more since."

"Now," said the minister to the men, "find him. He must be recovered, nor must you cease until he is recovered." But the weeks went by, and he was not recovered, and one day, as the minister went down a certain street, right there before him he saw Charles coming, and Charles saw the minister, and turned quickly down an alley, but the minister said: "Wait a minute, Charles; wait a minute!" And he waited, quite hesitatingly, and the minister said: "Why are you dodging me,

Charles?"

And with face averted, and by this time covered with tears, he said: "You know. They have told you. Nor is that all. I told you I had better wait a few months before I joined the church. I told you of my frailty, of my weakness.

But now I am in the church, and the other day the old anger came back, and I used hot, blasphemous words. I did not sleep at all that night. My pillow was wet with my tears. All through the night I talked with GOD, and GOD spoke forgiveness to me, and I went back the next morning and asked the man to forgive me, and he cried with me, though he is not a church man, and he forgave me."

"Now," I said, "Charles, would you come down to the prayer-meeting and say about that much to us?" And he said: "If you think I ought, I will." So he was at the prayer-meeting Wednesday night, and when the place was made for him, he was on his feet, and timidly told about what I have just described. You should have seen the men and women gather around him. You should have seen them as they greeted him, and as they sobbed with him, and as they said: "Charles, we will help you. We will forgive you, and you will help us." And he was on the right road again!

That is what this Scripture talks about. Whenever anybody goes astray, "**ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**" In this way "**bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**"

But this Scripture has a broader meaning than that. We are not only to make it a point to do our best to recover people who have gone wrong and are going wrong, but we are to share burdens with people all about us, whatever their burdens are. There are the burdens of the sorrowing even as I speak, your mind is busy, and you call up some family wrapped about this very midday with great sorrow, or you call up some man or woman about whom the shadows hang with fearful weight this very hour. Go and share such an one's sorrow, without delay.

Nor is that all. All about us are people with their weighty burdens, burdens terrific, heavy burdens. Go to them and share with them these weighty burdens. There is the teacher. There is the preacher. There is the ruler in the affairs of civil government. Weighty burdens are on their heads and hearts. Do not make it hard for those in places of public trust and responsibility to serve and to lead. Make it easy, with the right sort of cooperation and the right sort of burden bearing.

How may we all help people? "**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**" The most beautiful portrait we have of JESUS is given here in the gospels, in five little words: "**who went about doing good.**" There is the most beautiful portrait ever drawn of Jesus. How may we all help people all about us?

First of all, we may help them by living the right kind of lives ourselves. The highest contribution you will ever offer this community and this world is to offer it the right kind of a life. Gladstone never tired of saying: "*One example is worth a thousand arguments.*"

One Savonarola turned the tides of wicked Florence.

One Aristides, the just man, perceptibly lifted Athens higher.

Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom.

The people of Constantinople said about John Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed: "*It were better for the sun to cease his shining than for John Chrysostom to cease his preaching.*"

The best contribution that you can ever offer to this weary, needy world is to offer it the right kind of a life.

How may we all help people? We are to make it a point constantly - constantly - to believe in people. Every one of us needs the enthusiasm of JESUS, our great Master, for humanity.

He came to a man hated by his own race, Matthew, the tax-gatherer, sitting there at the poll tax booth, and He said to him: "Matthew, follow me, and I will make a good man out of you," and from that hour Matthew followed Him.

He came to another hated tax gatherer, Zaccheus, the little man who climbed up in the tree, and pausing under that tree, the Master said: "**Come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.**" And from that hour Zaccheus followed Jesus, a faithful friend of that great Master. Like JESUS, we are to believe in people.

I think nothing of that system of espionage which is forever spying out people, to catch up with their weaknesses and their faults. We are to have, like JESUS, great passion and compassion and brotherliness and sympathy for a needy world, and we are to believe in people.

A little girl who waited upon her semi-invalid mother, day by day going across the street to get a pail of milk, was crossing the street one day, and the passing car frightened her, and she tripped and fell, and the milk was gone, and a big man laughed cruelly - oh, how could he have done it! - and then he said to the little child, in her dismay: "What a great beating mother will give you when you get home!" And that brought the little girl to self-control, and she said: "Nothing of the sort, sir!. My mamma always believes in giving me another chance." So our Master believes in giving men another chance, and we are to have His temper and walk in His footsteps, always.

Nor is that all. We are to make it a point constantly to encourage people. Oh, my brother men, it is a sin for any man on the earth to be a miserable discourager! Discouragement is a sin. Men and women are fighting a big battle, and they do not need weights put on them by discouragement. They need wings put on them, that they may rise and fly, as they grapple with the big tasks that daily confront them.

Bobbie Burns, in the heyday of his great power as a writer, saw a little boy following him around in a certain community, and turning to the little boy, Bobbie Burns said to him: "Walter, what do you wish?" "And little Walter timidly said: "Oh, I wish that some day I might be a great writer like you, and have people talking about me like they talk about you." And Bobbie Burns, that great-hearted man, stopped and put his hand on the head of little Walter, and spoke words of inspiration and cheer, and said: "You can be a great writer some day, Walter, and you will be."

That little boy was Sir Walter Scott, and to the day of Sir Walter's death, he could never speak of Bobbie Burns except with a sob of gratitude, for Burns spoke the word in season to the weary heart of a little boy.

Yonder was a fire in the big city, and the firemen flung their ladders together, and went up in their brave fashion to the topmost story to rescue the people in such peril, and one after another was rescued by the brave fire laddies. All had been rescued, it seemed. No! Yonder is a white face at that upper window, and they wrapped something about one of the fire laddies, and breasting the fierce flames, he went again to that window, and put the robe around the little woman and started down.

But anon they saw him tremble as the fire raged around him, and it seemed that he would fall with his precious burden, but the fire chief cried to his men: "Cheer him, boys! Cheer him, boys!" And they cheered him, cheer after cheer, and heart came back, and he came down, with the precious life saved. Oh, you and I are to give our lives to cheering a needy world! Ponder this beautiful sentence from Isaiah: "**They helped I everyone his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.**"

Now there is one more word to say, and it is the best of all: "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**" If you will read this 55th Psalm, from which that great promise is taken, you will find that the utterer of such promise wanted to flee away. "**Oh, that I had wings like a dove,**" he cried, "**for then would I fly away, and be at rest.**"

The burdens were so weighty, the awful conflict was so fiery: "I will just leave it all. I will just throw this thing down, and I will get away. I will flee. I will run. I will give it up. I will not stay with it." Who has not felt that? Who has not felt - "I have had as much of this as I can bear. I will get out of it. I will run, I will fly. I will get away." But that would not win, for when you got away out there in the wilderness, you would have your burden yet, for you have your memory, you have your personality, you have yourself. You cannot thus get away from life's burdens.

There is the burden of perplexity for you, no matter where you go;
There is the burden of the consciousness of neglected duty, no matter where you go;
There is the burden of some sin athwart your conscience, like some ghastly cancer, no matter where you go.

What are you to do with these burdens of perplexity and neglected duty and sins? What are you to do? Where are you to go? There is only one place. "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**"

How will He sustain you? He will do it in one of two ways.

He may take the burden away. Sometimes He does, blessed be His name! You have come sometimes, as have I, into that deep garden of Gethsemane, when that black morning broke all our plans, and in our dire desperation we have prayed, with the Master: "**If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.**" "If it be possible, forbid that I should drink this bitter cup that is being put to my lips." And the cup was taken away, and we did not have to drink it at all.

Time and again you have prayed, as you faced a certain great burden, that GOD would remove it, and He heard, and the burden was taken away. But suppose it is not? And sometimes it is not. Ofttimes it is not. We pray, but there is the burden yet. Now, what if God shall not take the burden away?

Then He has promised to come in with divine reinforcement and help us to bear that burden and be a victor, no matter how weighty it is, nor how fiery in its biting power in our life.

Paul had re-enforcement. He had a thorn in the flesh. I do not know what it was, nor do you, but it was something very trying. If ever there was a genuine man in the world, it was the Apostle Paul. He was the highest product that Christianity has ever produced. This same man said: "**There was given to me a thorn in the flesh.**" He called it the "**messenger of Satan,**" sent to buffet him, and he said: "I went like the Master in the garden, and thrice did I beseech the Lord that He would take that thorn away, but He did not take it away at all. He left it, to goad me and harass me and burn me and pain me. But He said to me: 'Paul, Paul, **my grace is sufficient** for you'" - not "shall be," but "is" "**My grace is sufficient** for you," here and now, ever present and never-failing.

No matter where you go, nor what shall come, "**my grace is sufficient** for you." And from that time on you have no more record of Paul's praying that that thorn might be taken away. From that time Paul said: "**Most gladly, therefore, will I rather** (glory in my thorn,) **glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**" Said Paul: "I had rather have my thorn in the flesh, which is ever present with me, and have GOD's added grace, than to be without that thorn and miss that added grace and light and love from God." Now, doesn't that explain much? He will give you increased grace, grace upon grace, if He does not take the burden away when you call to Him to take such burden away.

Oh, my men and women, with your burdens, whatever they are, here is the way out: "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**"

Seek not to bear it alone.

Seek not to fight out your battle alone.

Seek not to solve that perplexity alone.

Seek not to stem that flood alone.

Seek not to go through that long and bitter night alone.

Take the Master into your counsels and into your plans, and turn yourself over to Him, with your burden, whatever it is, and He shall sustain you. One of the great words in the Bible is that fine word "sustain." He shall sustain you. No matter what your burden is - I dare to say it - no matter what your burden is, you shall get sustaining strength from GOD, and your heart shall surely know it, if you will only cast yourself honestly upon Him.

Have you learned the secret of peace? In a world of burden and battle and perplexity and clouds and shadows and night and death, have you learned the secret of peace? You will never know it until you learn how to cast your burden upon the Lord.

I am thinking now of a strong man yonder in the city, whose beautiful wife was taken from him

after an illness of just a few hours, and the man was left with a little flaxen-haired girl, of some four or five summers. The body was carried out to the cemetery, where was a simple service, and every heart was broken, the grief was so appalling. And then when the service was over, neighbors gathered around the big man and said to him: "You must come, with this little baby girl, and stay with us for several days. You must not go back to that home now."

And the broken-hearted man said: "Yes, I must go right back to the same place where she was, to the room from which she went away, and I must fight it out with this baby right there," and back they went.

He told about it all the next day.

The baby was late and long going to sleep. Oh, was there ever anything more pathetic than the cry of a bairn for the little mother that will never come back again? Long and late the little one, in the crib there by the bed, sobbed, because she could not go to sleep, and the big man reached his hand over to the crib and petted her and mothered her, as best he could, and after awhile the little girl, out of sorrow for her father, stopped her crying - just out of sorrow for him. And in the darkness of that quiet time the big man looked through the darkness to GOD, and said: "I trust you, but, oh, it is as dark as midnight." And then the little girl started up her sobbing again, and the father said: "Why, papa thought you were asleep, baby." And she said: "Papa, I did try. I was sorry for you. I did try, but I could not go to sleep, papa." And then she said:

"Papa, did you ever know it to be so dark? Why, papa, I cannot even see you, it is so dark." And then, sobbing, the little thing said: "But, papa, you love me, if it is dark, don't you? You love me, if I don't see you, don't you, papa?" You know what he did. He reached across with those big hands and took the little girl out of her crib, and brought her over on his big heart, and mothered her, until at last, sobbing, the little thing fell to sleep, and then when she was asleep, he took his baby's cry to him, and passed it up to GOD, and said: "Father, it is as dark as midnight."

"GOD, I cannot see at all. But You love me, if it is dark, don't You? I will trust You, though You slay me. With my baby, and my grief, and my utter desolation, I will turn my case over to GOD." And then the darkness was like unto the morning! GOD always comes to people who trust Him. Have you learned the secret of peace?

Henry Van Dyke points the secret in his poem on "Peace." Mark the words:

With eager heart, and will on fire,
I sought to win my great desire.
"Peace shall be mine," I said; but life
Grew bitter in the endless strife.

My soul was weary, and my pride
Was wounded deep. To Heaven I cried:
"God give me peace, or I must die."
The dumb stars glittered no reply.

Broken at last, I bowed my head,
Forgetting all myself, and said:

"Whatever comes, His will be done."
And in that moment, peace was won.

Whatever your burdens - of sin, or grief, or doubt, or disappointment, or regret, or remorse, or conscious fear and failure - dare to cast your burden, yourself, your all, to-day and forever upon the Lord. Do it now while we pray.

THE CLOSING PRAYER

O Thou Divine Saviour and Burden Bearer, speak the word in season to these busy, battling, sinning, burdened men and women, gathered for this brief midday service. Let every man and woman of us, personally and faithfully face our daily task just like it ought to be faced. And let us all consecrate ourselves today and in all coming days, to the last noble limit of ministry, as we seek to help other people to bear their burdens.

Forbid, O GOD, that we shall add to people's burdens.

And then let us all come with our burdens and they are many and let us cast them, with ourselves, utterly upon that great Saviour, who is pledged to turn the very distemperatures of life into triumphs for us, if we will only consent that His will may be done in our lives.

Give us grace and help that we may all yield ourselves to Thy will, now and forever.

And as you go now, may the blessing of the Triune GOD, even of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be granted you, all and each, to abide with you through today, and through tomorrow, and throughout GOD's vast beyond, forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 2 ~
