

Lay Aside Your Burdens

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Today people put such tremendous emphasis on the physical body. The appearance of the physical body is largely determined by genetics; the appearance of the soul body, on the other hand, is determined by doctrine—how to think properly with God. The more we build up our souls with doctrine, the more magnificent our soul bodies will be in eternity. The physical body is so vulnerable: it is dying and we never know what will happen to it next. We should do what we can to keep our bodies healthy, but our real emphasis should be to keep our souls healthy.

The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, lists heroes of faith. These men and women were far from perfect, and several of them committed horrible sins, but those sins are not listed. They are called heroes because they had a deep overcoming faith in God during many situations in their lives.

Today there are heroes of faith in America

that hold back judgment from the nation. A group of believers who are Spirit-filled, dedicated to prayer, and filled with the Word of God can hold back God's judgment upon nations.

God is saying to each of us today, "Lay aside every weight and every sin that does so easily beset you. Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith, who endured the Cross and despised the shame for the joy that was set before Him. He is seated at My right hand" (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

A lot of people want to love but they have no capacity because of the weights that they carry. This booklet will examine the weights that many of us carry and how we can lay them aside by the mercy and grace of God.

Chapter One

BURDENS OF GUILT AND SHAME

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

The following illustrations explain what the Bible means by “weight.”

A thirteen-year-old girl was crying because she missed her daddy who had died one week

before. Her mother screamed at her and said, "You are one of the reasons he died of that heart attack! It was you!"

From that moment until she finally decided to go for counseling at the age of thirty-one, this woman carried a weight of unearned guilt and unearned shame. Problems came into her marriage after she had a child—all because of what her mother said to her one week after her father's death.

"You are not guilty of anything," I told her. "You did not cause your father's death. The issues of death belong to God, according to Psalm 68:20." The weight that was over this woman's soul for more than seventeen years, was now finally able to be laid aside.

Demonic Projections

Another mother did a good job raising her children. When her husband left them, she started going to church, but one of her daughters was hanging around with the wrong crowd. The mother was not legalistic or overbearing; she invested in her daughter and did everything she could for her. She went to all of her games in high school, went shopping with her, bought her good clothes, but the girl started taking

drugs and would not obey her mother. At the age of sixteen, she took an overdose and died. After that, Satan kept projecting to the mother that she was responsible for her daughter's death.

In counseling, I told this woman, "You were not responsible for her death. People are responsible for their own decisions. Deuteronomy 24:16 tells us that parents are not responsible for the sins of the children, and according to Ezekiel 18:20, children are not responsible for the sins of their parents. You are a godly woman. Please lay aside this weight."

"Lay aside," in the Greek in Hebrews 12:1, is an aorist middle participle of *apotithemi*, which means "just lay it aside, throw it away in a garbage heap, and don't pick it up again." Describing the weight as having "so easily beset" us (*euperistatos* in the Greek) means that the weight is all around, trying to take advantage of us, and it will not leave us alone. Therefore, we have to make a conscious effort to deal with the weights that would overtake us.

Unreasonable Standards

A young man had a mother and father who always screamed at him to do better. He cried and cried. "I will never make it," he said. He

was a good child; he did the best he could, but the parents' standard was way beyond reality. He carried around tremendous guilt, thinking that he was not honoring his mother and father.

"Your problem should not be guilt," I told this boy. "It should be disappointment. You are disappointed because you cannot please your parents. They are being unreasonable." I began to tell him that God is pleased with his life. Not only was he was doing the best he could, but in fact, for a young man, he was far above average.

It took time. He listened to many doctrine tapes, and I sent him several letters. The parents' standards were too high for him, and they were not being fair. They had put a great weight on him, which affected his social life and his capacity to receive from God. But, finally, this young man did accept himself.

There are other people who set unreasonable standards for themselves. When they cannot meet their own standards, they start to feel guilty and ashamed. This becomes a tremendous weight upon them.

Longtime baseball fans will remember Jim Piersall, a fine center fielder for the Boston Red Sox who was later a radio announcer for the White Sox. The story of how he overcame a ter-

rible psychosis was made into a movie. Right in the prime of his career, Jim Piersall became psychotic. He came out on a sunny day with an umbrella and wearing a raincoat, and he stood at home plate ready to bat. He ran the opposite way around the bases. Eventually, he had to receive psychological help in a hospital ward. The reason for it all was traced to the way his father screamed at him, day in and day out, at the ballfield. The father continually demanded that his son play better baseball. The result was that baseball became a tremendous weight in Jim Piersall's life. He thought that he could never satisfy his father.

Lay aside your weights. Even if the weights are because of sin, lay them aside. Your Father in heaven knows how to take care of you.

Chapter Two

OPPORTUNITY TO OVERCOME

Peter sinned and he could not forgive himself for his sin. But watch how Jesus Christ approached Peter's weight of sin in John 21:15-19:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou

wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

“This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

Instead of condemning Peter for denying Him three times, Jesus Christ approached him only with an opportunity of success. He never said a word about failure. He did not bring it up, because it was in the past.

Living in the Finished Work

I will not continue to counsel a person who constantly relates to his past. If he has to go through it one time in order to develop a capacity for God, I will let him, but that is where it stops. The past is gone forever! We are living in a finished work.

Some counselors believe we ought to let people talk about their past all the time. What? Talk about Adam? Talking about Adam never got anyone anywhere. Instead, we need to talk about God, Jesus Christ, the Blood, the cleansing, and the purging, and the facts that we are

clean, that we are new creatures, and that we are seated above with God in Christ (Colossians 3:3).

We are seated above in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We have been joined to Him as one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). God does not see a single thing but us being hid with Christ in God, and He doesn't impute a single sin to us (Romans 4:7, 8).

Let's not fulfill the psyche of Adam and relate to ourselves Adam's way. God refuses to counsel us in Adam, and His counsel stands forever (Psalm 33:11).

The woman taken in adultery carried a heavy weight. But in John 8:10-11, Jesus said, "Who is he that condemns you?" She said, "No man, Lord." And He said, "Neither do I condemn you: Go and sin no more."

"Neither do I condemn you." What an evidence of God's provision and God's love for a person who has been carrying a tremendous weight! To those going through problems because of failure, God says, "I do not condemn you. In fact, I paid for what you are doing. Receive My love, receive My grace, and go forward through My forgiveness."

Chapter Threë

FINDING REST FOR YOUR SOUL

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

Psalm 16:6 speaks of having our lines fall in pleasant places and having a goodly heritage. Studies of the central nervous system show that lines of communication and patterns of motor responses are established in the brain, connecting specialized nerve cells to every part of the body through synapses (gaps between nerve fibers where chemical neurotransmitters send electrical impulses from cell to cell). To put it simply, if we hear or do the wrong things repeatedly, cells connect in lines to the old sin nature. These lines will not let us free because of

the weights of adamic history attached to them.*

After we are saved, however, these cells can be connected through Jesus Christ and the Word of God, establishing brand-new lines and connecting us to a brand-new gene pool (1 Peter 1:23) with brand-new incorruptible seeds. Therefore, if you will accept it, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God can make you become a brand-new person, mentally and emotionally. You will be the happiest person in all the world.

Lay aside those weights and run the race by going forward and forgetting what is behind you. If you have sinned, just confess it and lay aside the sin. Do not live in its consequences; do not live in what it has done to you or others. Just do the very best thing you can by trusting God with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will direct your paths.

Refuse to Internalize Lies

A woman carried a great weight of not being able to enjoy sex with her husband. She would not defraud him, but she did not feel comfortable, and she ran herself down about it, even though she is a very wonderful wife.

In counseling, I found out that her husband

was constantly telling her she was not a good lover. He wanted sex every night, and secretly he read pornography and was filthy-minded. She received what he said, internalized it, and thought that she had failed as a wife.

I said to her, "What you are feeling is not sin. The sin is on his part. His standard for a sexual relationship is not God's standard. He has a problem and he needs help, but don't carry that weight any longer. Lay aside the weight and be free."

By God's grace, she went home and asserted herself. "I am not the guilty party here," she told her husband. "You have been laying a guilt trip on me but you can stop it right now, because I am standing in the grace of God (Romans 5:2). I have no condemnation. And furthermore, the problem is with you, and I am an amazing woman." She is still open and available to be a good partner, but she is no longer carrying the weight of his expectations. At times it is necessary to be self-assertive and tell it as it is.

Sometimes guilt motivates people for shame and more failure. But Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. I will give you an opportunity right now to get up and go on. Let's not discuss what you did. Will you take

this opportunity?"

"Looking unto Jesus," in Hebrews 12:2, is *aphorao*, a word that means to take your eyes off self, circumstances, people, and your past completely, and to fix your gaze on something else. If you have been hurt or if something is not right, look away from it and look to Jesus Christ. With a steady gaze, keep looking and keep gazing at Him, because in that way you become just like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). As you look at Him, you are transformed to become like Him.

Come unto Jesus

Many of you never even realized that you have been under a weight. You have had a weight and you have not defined it. It does not matter if you caused it or if someone else did; lay it aside and look unto Jesus.

One of the greatest revelations I have ever had in my life relates to Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Labour" speaks of the times when we have failed; "heavy laden" refers to times when someone else is causing us heartache.

Jesus said, "If you did the failing, come anyway. It's okay. And if someone else has hurt you,

come anyway. Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you will find rest for your soul. I am not a respecter of persons. Come right now. It is all the same to Me. Just come and you will get rest. You will learn of Me and see that My yoke is easy, My burden is light, so just come."

"That is too simple," some of you may be thinking. You mean, you would rather live in self-punishment? Stop punishing yourself! There is not one time that self-punishment will help bring you peace and victory—even when you are guilty.

Lay aside your weights and sins and realize that Jesus accepts you as you are.

*Read *The War Against the Mind*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

CONCLUSION

Look to Jesus Christ. Follow Him, respect Him, respond to Jesus Christ and receive His love just as you are. Go forward in the grace of God, through the love of God, in the joy of God, by the forgiveness of God, in the power of God, in the patience of God.

Rebound and go forward so that you can be transformed. This is His work, not yours (Romans 12:2). You do the believing, He does the changing. You do the following, He does the transforming. You do the asking, He does the answering.

Many people overcome many obstacles. They are Christians who are proud to say they love the Word and that they are following God. They have a desire to care for others. These are people who used to carry such heavy burdens, but now they continue to look unto Jesus, having laid aside their weights.