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Bearing the Unbearable

Each of us has experienced unbearable things—things we cannot successfully go through on our own. The unexpected, shocking diagnosis. The traumatic end of a relationship. The cruel betrayal of one you trusted. The beyond painful death of one we deeply loved.

C.S. Lewis, in *A Grief Observed*, wrote about grieving his wife's death, "Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything." He came to realize that "there is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it." And so, as another writer penned, "The art we need is the art of bearing the unbearable." Yes, indeed.



But there are some things we cannot bear on our own. God placed us in relationships with others in part to both receive and give help to bear the unbearable burdens. As the apostle Paul instructs in Galatians chapter 6, "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (3).

Even so there are times when the care of others is not enough. God Himself steps in, is with us to carry our burdens. King David wrote, in Psalm 55, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken" (22). And we recall Jesus' gracious, merciful invitation, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

God does not always instantly remove our unbearable burdens. Some burdens He makes bearable for our good and His glory. This was the case with Paul's "thorn in the flesh", which was with him for the rest of his life as part of God keeping him humble and bringing glory to God. God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Then there are times when God knows we are not able to bear the weight of some things, even good things, but will be able to in the future. Just before Jesus was arrested and crucified He told His disciples, "all the things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). But just a bit later He said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time" (John 16:12). What's going on here? First, the setting is Jesus' instruction about His leaving and the Holy Spirit's coming to be with believers. He told the disciples the Holy Spirit

“will guide [them] into all the truth” (16:13). We learn here that God the Holy Spirit guides, leads His people, you and me, to understand the truth — God’s certain, unchanging truth, the truth we need at any and every given point in our lives.

This fits in with the Scripture clearly telling us that growing in the truth and in being like Jesus is a process — not a one point in time experience. The process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face.

Focus on two main points here. First, there are things we were not ready to bear and understand in the past, and others we are now not ready to bear and understand. God walks with us, guides us, teaches us in line with what we are ready to bear, to accept. It is important for us to be open to Him, to cooperate with Him.

Then too, there is the wonderful truth that the Holy Spirit will teach us all the truth we need to know and live. This is true for each, for every believer — not just a select few. It is true for you!

Now we come back to our unbearable burdens. God uses others as He Himself walks with us, holds our hand, carries us through the journey of carrying burdens we cannot carry on our own. This is true for each one of us, and for each and every one of our unbearable burdens.

Thankfully, mercifully, God leads us on a journey where we can come to terms with the burdens, those that He will lighten and even remove and also those, as with Paul’s, which we will continue to carry for our good of becoming more like Christ, and for serving Him and for His glory.

Do not be frustrated or discouraged. Invite others to help you carry your burdens. Spend time with God in His Word and prayer. Jesus’ promise is for you and is certain.

There is a good old hymn we don’t sing much, or at all, today,

Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish; come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;
here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish, earth has no sorrow that
heaven cannot heal.

Yes, earth, *you*, have no sorrow, no burden that God cannot heal. There is no unbearable burden which God cannot, will not enable you to bear.

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