

'The Real Human Burden'

by A.W. Tozer

The human burden is a spiritual burden that is internal and a result of sin, and can only be lifted by Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Rest in Christ", "Spiritual Burden"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the true nature of the human burden, arguing that it is not merely physical or social issues like poverty, war, or sickness, but a deeper spiritual burden that weighs on every individual. He explains that while society often seeks solutions through economic or political means, these cannot address the spiritual needs of humanity. Tozer highlights Jesus' invitation to come to Him for rest, asserting that true freedom and relief from burdens come from a relationship with Christ, not from external circumstances. He calls for listeners to recognize their spiritual condition and the need for divine intervention in their lives. Ultimately, Tozer encourages all to seek Jesus, who offers a light yoke and rest for the weary soul.

Transcript

The Real Human Burden

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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In the book of Matthew, the eleventh chapter, beginning with verse 25. At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hath revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of my Father and no man knoweth the Son but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart. And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Now, those three verses beginning, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, will be the text for this morning's message and for tonight's. The sermons will be complete in themselves, but they will both be on this text. So, I want you to hear, and we'll hear together today and tonight, the Savior, calling men to

Himself. If you only hear a sermon, then you've wasted your time. If you only hear a man's voice, then you have fallen short of the possibilities here. And let us together hear the Savior calling men to Himself. Calling them from a burden that is too great for them to bear and calling them to rest. Calling them from a galling and exhausting yoke to a light, golden freedom and calling them to the ease-ful yoke and the burden that is light.

Now to hear our Lord profitably it is necessary to know what is the lost man's burden? And of course, what it is not. It is necessary for us to know what is the human yoke that we bear. This morning, I'm going to talk chiefly about the burden, the human burden and what it is thought to be by many, but what it actually is not. And then I'll talk a little about the verses themselves to close and then we'll sing, his yoke is easy and His burden is light.

We all know that we are under a load. The human race is under a load, that it's bearing a burden, a galling corrosive, wearing burden. But there is no unanimity of agreement about what the burden is. And the scientists and the social philosophers have, I think, quite agreed that there are five burdens which man bears from which if he could be delivered, he would be free. They are poverty, war, sickness, toil and intolerance. And if we could get free from these; if by some shift in the social scheme, if by the introduction of something. Communism, of course claims that they will free us from these and therefore will have a social order and the burden will be gone.

That is why so many people have taken up with new schemes, because they feel a load on their hearts and their backs are sore from generations of carrying it and they want to be free from their burden. Only they don't know what their burdens are. Particularly, they do not know what the burden is. For our Lord, while He didn't name it, He talked about it here. Come unto me all ye that labor, labor and are heavy-laden. That was the laboring under a yoke or the bearing of a burden on the back that was too heavy and the yoke that was too hard.

Now let's look at what the philosophers say. First, there is poverty. And they say that human poverty is a burden. And so, plenty will relieve that burden. And if we could get free from physical needs and everybody had enough, we could introduce a social order or economic order and social order which would guarantee that everyone should have at least enough of all the world's goods, we would then be free from the greatest burden in all the world. Of course, as you know, communism is built upon this. It is built upon the idea that economic determinism decides all man's acts. That is, it determines economy, the economy, and the need for money and food and goods. It determines all of man's acts. It brings them all wars, all divisions, all troubles, all burdens, all heartaches to the world. And if we could only free man from this burden, he would be free.

Now, let me say to you, my friends, that I grieve for those who suffer wants. And all my life long I think I have grieved for those who don't have enough. For the little child that knows not where his breakfast is coming from or the little blue-eyed girl that must go to bed without sufficient to eat. And I agree when I hear them say that there are millions in Asiatic countries that never know from one year to another, perhaps from birth to death what it is to have a real, full stomach, and to have enough. And I could wish and God knows that I could wish that it were possible that it could be that the wealth that is ours, so richly here in our land, could be distributed all around the world so everybody would have enough and nobody would have too much. I know of no scheme, Democratic, Republican, socialistic, communistic, that could ever do this. Some of them claim they can, but they're lying in their own teeth and they know it can't be done while the hearts of men carry this other burden.

For I have noticed this that while poverty is a burden, increase of goods never makes people happy. If you have ever taken a little look around, you will know that increase of goods only shifts the burden to the other shoulder. And it's a common testimony for older men and women to say after they have risen to all the ranks and now are making their 20-30-40-\$50,000 a year; and after they own their estates and can afford to go to Florida for the winter and Canada in the summer and all the rest, they sit and in their weak moment when they are not trying to hide, they say to their friends, we have everything now. But Mum and I were happiest when we lived in two rooms and had to budget carefully our expenses.

You will find it often is the case that people are happy when they have least, and increase of goods never makes them happy, but only shifts the galling burden from one shoulder to another and creates desire for more, so that the man who has more wants more and when he gets that more he wants more. Like Lincoln told sarcastically of the man who said he was not covetous at all; it wasn't true that he was a covetous man. He didn't want anything. He only wanted the land adjoining his. And so that desire for more and still more, always wanting the land adjoining mine.

Wealth, I suppose, and the distribution of it, the proper distribution of it would cure certain physical ones, but it introduces a new set of anxieties and burdens still. If so, if there could come to the world an economic utopia, men would still carry their galling burden. They would get up with it in the morning and carry it around all day, even though they work to five-hour day and had plenty. They would still carry around their galling burden and would lie down with it at night. And when that summons came to take them to that dark, born from which no man returns, they would carry their burden down to the grave with them.

So, when our Lord said, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, He was not talking about the burden that poverty brings, though He promised in the Scripture that we read, that our Father would supply our needs. So, He doesn't want us to be poverty-ridden, but He was not talking about it. He who spoke was a man who knew not where to lay His head. And the very Man who offered rest from toil and burden, was a man who knew not where His next meal would come from. And He said, foxes have holes and the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.

Then the second burden the world tells us is the burden of war. And if we could have a war-less society, man's burden would roll away down over the cliff into the gully below and break up on the rocks and man would walk free and upright and happy for the rest of the millenniums to come. Now, no one could have bore the insane business of war more than I. No man could possibly hate it more than I could hate it. And I grieve for every drop of young blood that ever was shed. And if they have their way over there in that little ugly ditch in Egypt, they will plunge us into a war that will cost us the blood of millions of young fellows and some of them who've never yet put a razor to their cheeks. I hate this vast, insane, devil-inspired, heinous thing we call war.

But I asked you to note, my listening friends, that a world at peace would not be a race at peace. A world at peace would never mean a race at peace, because man's troubles churn up from inside of him and they do not come from war. Neither do they come from poverty. Man's burden churns up from within him and it is not laid on from the outside.

And though we were to achieve a society where no soldier ever stood at attention and where no gun was ever oiled and where no war ship ever lay ominously at anchor and where no bomb was ever made, still, if

we had such a society and it were ours today, still, many wives would pack and leave home tonight and go away from a home where hate dwells. And though we had a war-less society, still, many children would sob themselves to sleep tonight and cry their little eyes out because of the fight they'd heard in their home between father and mother at bedtime. And many men would walk the streets alone and grind their teeth and curse the day they were born and the day they'd met the woman they felt had brought nothing but grief to their lives.

And how many, even though there were no war around the whole world, still how many would seek oblivion in liquor and would try to hide their griefs and lift their burden by liquor. And how many would seek amusement and how many would seek the draught that the old Greeks called linky, the drink that made them forget in wild music? And how many of them would tonight blow their own brains out because they couldn't stand the burden?

Though not a warship floated at anchor and though not a bomb was made in the world and not a man was threatening another man or a nation, another nation, still, a man would carry his burden because it's not the burden of war. It's a burden that comes from within him. It's a burden he was born with and a burden he carries and a burden he'll die with. Some say it's the burden of sickness and when we have licked polio and cancer and heart disease, and when we have fixed it so all over the world there is not a sick man.

And when we have learned the human mind and psychiatrists have worked out a way to rest everybody mentally and we've had peace with our nerves, then the world will not have a burden anymore. Again, I say I rejoice in every anidyn of grief and pity every sufferer that lies today in any hospital in the world. But we must be realistic and face up to this that man's heartbreaking burden is not a disease. Burden is a disease. It's a burden, but it's not the burden. And when Jesus said, come unto me all ye that labor, He didn't mean all you that labor under sickness. He was healing sicknesses right and left. He recognized sickness as being a burden. He recognized it as being a hateful thing and a painful thing, but he's not talking about it here.

Millions of healthy persons are completely miserable. You know that. Millions of people are going to psychiatrists or doctors, and they're examined and sent to clinics and turned loose with a clean bill of health. And yet they go out in gloom and despondency completely miserable because sickness is a burden, but it is not the burden. It is a yoke but it is not the yoke. It is a labor but it's not the labor. It's not that crook that Christ would free us from only. I think he will free us. I think if we had more faith and trusted God more, we'd have less sickness in our own bodies. But that's another matter for the morning. But this is not what our Lord was talking about.

And then there is toil. The labor philosophies have told us about the same thing no matter where they came from. And they have said that misery is in proportion to our toil. And I know excessive toil is a burden. And I have read with great grief the stories of the child laborers, child labor of early times. And I thank God that Charles Dickens wrote his terrible revolutionizing books that helped stir the English Parliament to abolish child labor. And I'm glad for every man whether he was a Christian or not who has helped lift the burden of excessive toil from the shoulders of mankind.

And I cannot get over Hood's poem written about the woman who sewed to keep her family together. Work, stitch, stitch, stitch, I think it is in poverty, hunger and dirt, sewing at once with a double thread, shroud as well as a shirt. And I remember the artist, French artists Malay who went out into the wheat fields of France. And there he saw the peasants at work and saw the light had gone out of their eyes and

the vivacity out of their faces. And saw them with great heavy hoes working from one end of the field to the other, waiting for the call when the bell would call them in at even and at night darkness to their meal. And out of it he painted his now famous piece called, The Man with a Hoe. And our own American, Markham, saw that and wrote about it. And said, bowed by the weight of centuries he leans upon his hoe and gazes on the ground, the emptiness of ages in his face and on his back, the burden of the world.

And I know how much toil lays upon us. But brethren, idleness would not lift man's killing burden. Who are the miserable ones today? Who are they who are the most miserable of all? Who are going from divorce court to divorce court? Who are going from psychiatrists to psychiatrists? Who are they that are running from doctors to doctors-Idle wives and rich play boys. The idle wives and the boys that play, they're the most miserable of all. They're the ones that are fighting in the nightclubs and trying to drown their burdens in liquor. They are the ones. No, no.

Scofield has a note in his Bible, when God said, let men work the garden and keep it. He says it's better for a man to struggle to make his living than to be idle in a world like ours, and he's perfectly right. So, though they are to shorten our hours some three hours a day and a four- or five-hour week will be enough, it will never take the burden from the hearts of men. The man who works eight hours now wants to work five and the man who works five wants to work three. But when he's working three, he has 21 hours to carry a load that work helps him to forget. For it's the toil, it's the burden of a sinful man and not toil. So, the labor philosophers have nothing to offer us except rest from excessive toil and I'm glad for them. And I'm glad for anything they've done. And I'm sorry that unions have in a measure have gotten into the hands of the wrong leaders in the last few decades. But still, if we didn't have to work at all, we would be as miserable as a race as we are now.

And then there are those who say political misrule, that it's political miserable and it's the State. The anarchist and the socialists and the communists and various others have said, it's the State that's the trouble. And if we can get a right rule politically, we will be a free race. I want to ask you, where is there a freer land than America? Where is it freer than it is in this country? In spite of all they've tried to do with it in the last years. Still, it's a free, free, wonderful land. Where is there more prosperity than there is in America? I doubt not, but that there are little nations in Europe that could live on what we throw out and is hauled away on Wednesday or Thursday or Tuesday morning by the garbage man? I doubt not. I doubt not that there are families that could subsist on what you throw away. Where is there a freer nation than America? Where is there a more prosperous land than America? Where is there a land in all the wide world where politics talks louder and does less, and we're freer, freer to stand up and make a speech against the President? Free to stand up and condemn the Supreme Court. Free to call a mayor a name your conscience will allow you. We're still free in this land in spite of all they tell us.

But in this free land of America, where, where, what land in the world has more crime than we have? What land has more divorces than we have per capita? Where is there more child desertion and need for more children homes? Where are there more insane asylums, and where are they building them bigger than they are here? Where is there more sheer boredom than here in the land of the free and the home of the brave? Where is there more excess in irrational drinking than in this land of America? Where are there more psychiatrists in this land? And where are there more sleeping pills taken than are taken here? And where is there more violence than here? And where is there more robbery and murder in general unhappiness than in this very land of the free, this very land of prosperity and political freedom?

Where the worst party, the worst party that could get in office, still rules with a hand so light. You can live 10 years and apart from your attacks and never feel them at all. And yet we're one of the most miserable nations in the world. Indicating that when Jesus said, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, He had not political rule at all in mind. Christ never entered politics. Christ never said a word. He even said pay your taxes to Caesar. That was about it. He knew that politics could never cure what was wrong with the human race.

Well, one more thing they tell us. They tell us the trouble with the world is intolerance and race-hatred and lack of integration. And that if the doctrine of brotherhood could come and every man would be every other man's brother or for all that, that would cure everything. Now I don't deny that race hate has caused much misery in the world.

I don't want to deny that many a little Jewish boy has sculpt off to school in the morning looking down at the sidewalk because he knew when he reached the playground at school, they would yell, here comes that Jewish boy. I know that many in Italian boy has gone off sick at heart to the school knowing that when he got there, they'd yell, look at that Italian boy. I know that. I know that many a black man has lived his intelligent, but grief-stricken life filled with burdens from his birth to his death because the white-skinned people felt he was beneath them. I know it. And I would look forward to the hour when we all like brothers be and loving harmony could be enjoyed round the whole earth. Not integration as they're trying to press upon us now but loving fellowship.

I came back from Canada Friday morning. And up there we had delegates from 14 or 15 countries of the world, Japanese, Chinese, Jamaicans, Mexicans, French, Swiss, German, Australian, Canadian, United States, and I think there were some others. And we worshipped God together. And nobody even thought to inquire except out of good-natured curiosity where anybody was from. And in the church of Christ, there's no color line. But brethren, let me put you straight on something. If by some miracle of God or man this morning, all race-hatred and nationalistic hostilities could be destroyed around the world, and Jordan didn't hate Israel and Israel didn't hate Jordan and Egypt didn't hate America and Russia didn't hate England. If all of that could be swept away by a gracious wave of an angel's hand, man would still carry to the grave his galling, withering, damning, soul-destroying burden.

For it is not human hostility that breaks the human heart. It is not man's inhumanity to man on the playground or in the shop that breaks the human heart. It's something worse than that. Man's wearing, corrosive burden is within him. He's born with it. Whether he's born black or yellow or white, he's born with it in his heart. Man's corrosive burden is primarily a spiritual thing because man is primarily a spiritual being. You cannot cure spiritual troubles with economic panaceas. You cannot cure spiritual troubles with social panaceas. You cannot cure spiritual diseases with political panaceas. And that's why Christianity stands boldly to denounce all that as being, peace, peace where there is no peace. Peace, peace when there is no peace.

And not all of these philosophers, good as they may be, and as much God blessing as we may wish upon them in the natural world, man's problems don't come from the natural world. They don't come from how much he has to eat or where. They don't come from war, ghastly and horrible as it is. They don't come from sickness nor from toil or from intolerance nor from politics. They churn up from within him, for man is a spiritual being and the burden is a spiritual burden. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. But if somebody wants to challenge me here and say, Mr. Tozer, He didn't mean economics. He did mean freedom from political misrule. He did mean it.

And I say to you, how is it that for the first 200 years, when the church was the happiest and the freest and the most powerful, when her songs were the most radiant and her testimony the brightest, and her joy, the flowing up like a fountain, why was she always poor and stripped and ragged? Why did her people have to go to the caves and mountains? Why were they slain and thrown into prison? And why were they standing for 200 years under the black shadow of the Roman law? And why were there ten emperors who rose in the period of 200 years to try to stamp Christianity out with the sword and with fire? And yet all of these knew what it was to have their burden lifted. They had their burden lifted, and because their burden was lifted, they'd go out singing to die. It wasn't a political misrule. It wasn't economic pressure.

It wasn't they didn't have two chickens in the pot. It was a spiritual burden, a load from within, a sinful thing. And Jesus delivered them from it. And that's why the architect could build a great colosseum, or at least, we would call it a coliseum, an arena. He built a great building there as a Roman. And then one day after years had gone by and Christianity had come. This celebrated architect, the Frank Lloyd Wright, maybe of his day, celebrated, and the emperor let him in and said, this is a monument to your genius. And I want you to come as my guest and we're going to have something today you I'm sure you will enjoy. He said we're going to kill Christians today. We've starved lions and tigers until they're ravenous. And these Christian stubborn fellows following some criminal named Jesus. Stubborn fellow as they are. And we're going to turn them loose and let the lions have them.

The architect sat beside the emperor. And finally, that movement came on the schedule, the program. When they raised the gates and let the lions through. And there stood the Christians were their faces raised to God, and was only a matter of moments until long, powerful claws and grinding teeth had taken the life from these Christians. And the architect leaped to his feet and turn to the emperor and said, Sire, I don't belong here. I am a Christian too! Goodbye and leaped into the arena.

And they tried to stop him but there was no stopping him. Assume the greatest of the Roman architects was lying, torn and shredded. His burden had been lifted and he could die because he died without a load, without a yoke that was killing him.

Now, my brethren, they're fooling us. They're fooling us. Your newspapers are fooling you. Time Magazine is fooling you. Life magazine is fooling you. The politicians are fooling you. The big speech orators are fooling you. They're all fooling you. They're telling you that America is a great land for political, economic or some other reasons. America is great because she has a lot of Christians in her and she's great for no other reason. And they haven't got a cure for any disease, except, as I've said, these shallow, lesser diseases, such as overwork, and illness, and so on.

We can help cure up them some, but it's like scrubbing the deck of a sinking vessel. It's like giving a man dying of cancer a careful shave and haircut. It helps a little bit it doesn't cure the cancer. And so, all the help we get from philosophers and sociologists and scientists and politicians, it's good and we're not going to be so ungrateful as to be thankless. We're only going to say, thank you for the haircut. But you haven't cured my disease. I know where there's Somebody that can. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart. Ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

There He tells us and I've hinted that a real burden, and I'm going to preach about it tonight and tell you how to get free from it. I trust you'll come back. In the meantime, I just want you to hear Him say, come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And whether you understand it or not, if you got a sick

heart, you've got an invitation, not to come to this church. Come unto me, not to this church, to me. Come to this church if you want. We welcome you, but not to this church. We can't cure it. Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. God bless you

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