

Unburdened

“For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened – not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”

2 Corinthians 5:4-5.

If one lives long enough, it is inevitable that one comes to learn to carry heavier and heavier loads. There are times when our weights roll alongside us and resemble annoying companions more than burdens. And there are times when we're bent under weights so heavy it seems that one drop of water will irreparably crush us. Whether we're at a place in our lives of briefcase-in-our-hand burdens or elephant-on-our-back burdens, the goal is often the same: Find a way to get rid of them.

Paul paints a picture of being being burdened in this life to the point of groaning. Paul's burden, which he describes earlier in the epistle, is one made up of such things as persecution, affliction, and even perplexity. But then Paul writes something counter-intuitive: The way to be rid of the burden is not to throw them off one-by-one, but to *add* to them – not to be unclothed, but to be further clothed. This should sound strange to us and to our way of thinking and it's hard to tell if we really believe this or not. What makes it even stranger is that Paul writes that this is something for which we've been prepared. The way to be prepared for something is to have done it in one way or another. So we're being/have been prepared to be unburdened by being further clothed so that death is swallowed up in life.

While Paul's words are significant and encouraging in speaking of our deaths, this is also an important principle for us while we're still in this life. When we have burdens – especially elephant-on-our-back burdens – our instinct is often to focus on being rid of our burdens before we do anything else. The urge is to put the things which add to our burdens on the back-burner, and Christianity often falls within the category of something which adds to our burdens. Yet Paul here writes to do the opposite. If anything, the greater the burden, the more we should be swallowed by Christianity – swallowed by Life – in order to deal with the burden. The way to be unburdened isn't to be free of attachments. The way to be unburdened is to be further attached and immersed in God.

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