

BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

ABRAHAM PHILIP, PHD

GALATIANS 6:2

A few days ago, I received reports about the Monsoon floods and the devastation they caused in Myanmar. Hundreds of homes have been submerged, and thousands of people have become homeless. Needless to say, many Christians (the household of God) are suffering from lack of food, shelter, clean water, and other essential provisions. Our ministry partner in Mandalay, Myanmar, wrote: "Chin State in western Myanmar is experiencing the worst natural calamity ever in its history! The three-day Monsoon storms, followed by cyclone Gomen, have been pouring torrential rain for 10 days, making widespread landslides across the land.

"In the capital, Hakha, hundreds of houses have collapsed and thousands of people have been displaced. Because all the roads are cut off, there is a severe food shortage. No one is able to go in or out. I was told that a bag of rice (50 kg) costs 110,000 (Myanmar Kyats), jumping five times the cost from last week! Water and power supplies have been cut off due to landslides. Only A few landline phones are working!"

Our partner in Yangon, Myanmar, wrote that most of Yangon has been under water, and many people have been getting sick with water-borne diseases. He reports that he and several students in their Bible school have become ill as a result. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Myanmar who are affected by these floods that the Lord will heal, restore, and provide for their needs.

"Life is largely a matter of luggage," said Frank Boreham. Sometimes, however, the luggage of life comes to us in the form of natural disasters. But in every life situation, irrespective of its scope and magnitude, God alone is our refuge. Our deliverance from nature's destructive forces comes not from man-made or man-oriented innovations, but from God, who is the creator and sovereign king of the universe. He is faithful toward His covenant children and is mindful of their plight. The Bible says, "But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, O Lord, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress. You are a refuge from the storm and shelter from the heat" (Isa. 25:4a, NLT).

While God is "a very present help in trouble," He is also the God of means, who uses our weak and broken faculties to do what He wills. For example, He wills us to perform acts of compassion so that we bear one another's burdens. The apostle Paul exhorts: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). The Greek word *baros*, translated as "burdens," means to be weighed down or "pressed down by a crushing weight." When a person is under a crushing weight due to an unforeseen life situation, we should be willing and prepared to come to his or her aid and lift that pressing weight, lest it crush that person to the ground. Paul uses this word in 2 Cor. 1:8 to describe his own crushing burden: "We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life."

In bearing one another's burdens, says Paul, we fulfill the law of Christ—the law of love. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37–40). Jesus said that there is no "other commandment greater than these" (Mar. 12:31). Indeed, the essence of Christianity and our faith rests on these two immutable pillars.

The law of Christ is the antidote to the Darwinian “survival of the fittest” concept, and it compels us to distribute the luggage of life by bearing one another’s burdens. One day, the revered Indian missionary Sadhu Sunder Singh, who is believed to have died in the foothills of the Himalayas, was traveling with a companion through the Himalayan Mountains. As they made their way through a treacherous passage, they came across a person lying unconscious in the snow. Sunder Singh wanted to help this person, but his companion refused, saying, “We shall lose our lives if we burden ourselves with him.” But Sunder Singh would not think of leaving the man to die in the snow. Disregarding the safety of his own life, Sunder Singh chose to lift the dying man and carry him on his back. But his traveling companion bid him farewell and moved on to save himself.

As Sunder Singh carried the man on his back, the heat from Sunder Singh’s body began to warm the dying man, and he revived. Soon, both were able to walk together. As they went along, they caught up with Sunder Singh’s former companion who lay dead, frozen in the snow. Jesus said, “If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it” (Matt. 10:39, NLT).

I encourage you to ask God what He would have you do to help the flood victims in Myanmar. If the Lord leads you to make a contribution and thus “bear” their burden, you may send your tax-deductible gift to Proclamation Ministries, earmarked “Myanmar Flood Victims.”

Once, the convener of a missionary meeting in England, having heard of the spiritual needs of India, remarked: “There is a gold mine in India, but it seems almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it?” William Carey (1761–1834), the great missionary to India, responded: “I will venture to go down, but remember you must hold the ropes.”

Will you remember to hold the ropes for our brothers and sisters who are venturing for Christ in Myanmar?