

# 'The Real Burden of the Lost Man'

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the burden of alienation, sin, fear, pride, self, and mortality, and how Jesus Christ offers rest and forgiveness from these burdens.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28

**Topics:** "Rest in Christ", "Spiritual Burdens"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the profound spiritual burdens that weigh heavily on the lost man, including alienation from God, the burden of sin, fear, pride, and self. He explains that these burdens cannot be alleviated through worldly means but can only be lifted by coming to Jesus, who offers rest and reconciliation. Tozer illustrates the struggle of humanity against these burdens and the need for divine intervention, highlighting that true peace comes from surrendering to Christ and allowing Him to take the rightful place on the throne of our hearts. He calls for a deep longing for God, urging listeners to lay down their burdens and embrace the light yoke of Christ.

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## Transcript

The Real Burden of the Lost Man

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

September 16, 1956

Matthew 11:28-30. 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, I had this text for this morning and for tonight. And this morning, I tried to show what our human burden is not. And I said then that our human burden is not the one that the scientists and the philosophers and the sociologists imagine it to be. The burden man carries is not a political burden. It's a burden, but it's not the burden. It is not toil that can become a burden, but it's not the burden. It is not illness. That is a burden, but not the burden. It's not intolerance, that can be a burden, but it's not the burden. And then I showed that, in essence, the burden man carries is a spiritual burden. And because it is a spiritual burden, there is no possibility of its being relieved by social methods nor political methods nor scientific methods.

Now, I said that tonight I would break this down and try to show what the human burden is in particular. What is that galling, corrosive burden that eats, that abrasive burden that wears away, that destroying burden that is carried by the human race?

Well, it is first of all the burden of alienation. In Ephesians 2, we learn that mankind, all of us together, every human being except those who have heard the call and come, that we are alienated from the life of God; that we are without hope and without God in the world; that we're under the wrath of God controlled by the evil spirits of the world and are by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. And there is the burden of alienation.

Now, the human heart knows more than the learned man would do know. It knows that there is a Friend; that there is a Friend spelled with a capital letter or capital letters. There is a Friend. And he knows also that he has fallen out with that Friend. And he knows that the Friend is right and he is wrong. He knows it and in spite of all his brave talk, it's a secret burden that he carries. And he carries it through time he's old enough to know right and wrong until the time he lies down to die. It is the burden of alienation from God. It is the burden that the bough carries when it has been wrenched loose from the tree and broken off from its native trunk. It is the burden the star carries when it whirls away from its central sun and is lost in the far darkness, as Jude tells us.

And this is the burden. This is the burden. It is one burden and all of the burdens of which I shall speak tonight on one burden. It is the burden of alienation and it is the burden of sin, Romans 7:14-18. Maybe we'd better read that because it is very important. It says, for we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

And that is said by some people to be the normal place for a Christian to live, and I don't believe it for a minute. That is the burden of sin. And when our Lord says, come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, He means that I will give you rest from this very abomination that we have had described in Romans 7. Sin came as a serpent to the Garden of Eden, a heinous, hated, and offensive thing. And man has never quite learned to live with the serpent.

Not even the boy in the far country sleeping among the hogs ever quite got used to the smell of the swine. He said, I'll arise and go unto my father and I will say: father, I have sinned. And he carried with him there the burden of sin and had it with him even when he was sold out to the far country. He still carried with him the burden of sin. And man has never quite learned to live with a serpent. His many religions prove that.

The fact that all over the world there are religions, and they all prove that there is an inner revulsion, an inner repulsion and you can't cure it by educating the man and you can't take the burden of sin off by any kind of culture. He can study art in all of the great galleries of the world. He can listen to the opera until he can hum all the arias. He can gain wealth and live in the Gold Coast and now have servants. But still, it cannot be taken away from him because it's the inner burden that boils up from within. Its silt lies like a great load upon his spirit.

And thirdly, it is the burden of fear. I John 4:18 says simply in three words, fear hath torment. Fear hath torment. And it is fear that is riding the heart of the world to death like some vicious man who takes a beast and rides it and lashes it and rolls it and sinks the spurs into it. And when it is ready to drop and it's tongue

is hanging out and besides bulging, still sinks in the spurs and lays on the whip and rides it till it falls exhausted and can't get up. So, fear is riding the human race.

Fear is riding it not only in the jungle, not only in the valley where Ed Maxey is tonight, but in Chicago and out on the Gold Coast and up toward Evanston and down in Beverly Hills. Fear is riding the human race like a man rides a beast. And the human race is staggering and its nostrils are distended and its tongue is swollen and its eyes are bulging out. And fear lies upon the heart of the world as a great burden. Fear of the unknown, fear of the known, yes, fear of war, yes. The speech will cause the stock market to go tumbling down the stairs. Sickness and fear of bereavement, all these are fears, but they're not the fear.

The fear is fear of the unknown. Fear that constitutes the burden of the world. Fear that's where we must go and don't know how we're going to make it when we get there. It is the fear of the unknown that brings the man and woman to the nervous collapse.

And then fear, an end the burden of pride also. It's one burden, but these are the ingredients of the burden. And the text tells us that it is the burden of pride. For the text tells us to come unto me ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest and how? I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your soul. The burden of pride is the burden that the Lord would deliver us from.

Now, what is pride after all? Pride is misplaced honor; that is all. We are created to honor Almighty God and we turn that honor around upon ourselves. We are created to place our crowns at His holy feet but we put them on our own empty heads in place of that. And that burden of the misplaced honor is a burden that rides this all the time. Because of the deep-seated accusation that lies unknown in our hearts. The psychologists tell us of the subconscious. I believe that it is at the subconscious level that all this burden lies. It's not conscious and it has to be called to our attention before we even know about it, but it lies there.

The great burden of human pride and human pride's burden is twofold. I say it's the deep-seated accusation that our conscience brings against us for robbing God of the crown that belongs on His own thrice Holy Head. But it is also the anxiety and distress less we who are kings, less we, you, are the crowned kings of our own lives, shall lose some of the glory. We shall lose face or shall be less than we want ourselves to be, until this burden rides us and rides us. We're ready to flare up in a moment if a word is spoken against us.

If a word uncomplimentary to our children is spoken in our hearing, men are ready to flash up and talk back. If a singer, someone says you are flat, instantly, the heart flies up and the face flushes and they're ready to defend it. If the organist, the pianist, the board member or the prayer band leader or the teacher or the pastor or the associate pastor or the assistant, unless the grace of God delivers us from it all. We shall put ourselves on the throne where only God belongs and wear a crown on our head that belongs on the head of God, and then defended it with anxiety and bitterness and tears and resentfulness. Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will deliver you from that burden of pride.

And then there's the burden of self; Roman 7:24. He cries out, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death, this burden? And that means the wrong one is on the throne. That's what self means. It means the wrong one is on the throne. Pride means the crown is on the wrong head. And self means that the wrong one is on the throne.

Now, in each heart there is a throne. And on that throne there sits God or the human ego, one or the other. In your heart, there is a throne, a golden throne, a throne that God gave you when He said, let us make man in our image and let him have dominion. There is the throne. And on that throne there sits God or there sits your human ego, one or the other; there is no third. It is either God or your ego, yourself, sitting on that throne, and the war and the tumult and the mutiny and the uneasiness and the troubles and the tumults of the world, all come because the usurper sits upon the throne.

You crawled up onto the throne that belongs to Jesus Christ, the Crucified One. And you sit on that throne. You say, but I have been born again. I don't doubt it. But if you're born again and you still sit on your throne, you're a carnal and unsanctified Christian and the curse and the woe of your life is that you insist upon crawling up and sitting on a throne where Jesus Christ belongs. And though He's so tender that He could weep over Jerusalem; though He's so gentle that He could take babies in His arms; though He is so kind that He could forgive the cringing harlot at His feet. Still, our Savior is so bold and so strong, that He will not sit on a throne with anybody else. It's either His throne or it's yours, one or the other.

And some of you wonder why you can never get victory in your lives. You'll wonder why you can never get delivered from yourself. You take a course from Moodys, and then you get a book in New York. And then you write to London for one. And then you follow an evangelist from one town to another and then you turn the radio on. And you rush about trying to find deliverance, and seeking to find the deliverance from the burden of self that rides you and wears you and eats at you and curses you.

I tell you, you'll never, never find peace and there isn't a book ever written that will give it to you. And there isn't a preacher that ever existed that will give it to you. You're a wrong man on a right throne when you sit on a throne that belongs to Jesus Christ alone. He's earned it by every right and virtue in high heaven above and deep hell below. He's earned the right to sit on the throne of your heart and boss your life and you won't let him do it. And that's what's the matter with you. And wherever I go, I find two classes of people. Thank God I find the one. I find the heart-hungry people. They may be Calvinists. They may be Arminians. They may be Methodists. They may be what have you, but they've broken through all that to a hunger after God.

One man told me up at the lakes in Canada last week, called me into his room and sat and said, Mr. Tozer, I was brought up among the Plymouth Brethren and I knew the Truth from the time I can remember. But he said in recent times, and he told me what it was, what kind of ministries they were that led him to this conclusion. He said, I want God so bad that I have nothing to live for unless God will come into my life and fill me and be filled with God.

You don't have to worry about a man like that. The man you have to worry about is the fellow that comes in self-assured, crosses his hands and sits through the sermon without a conscious twinge of longing after God. And he may be on your board and he may be high in official circles and he may have degrees, but he lacks one degree. He lacks the degree of longing after God. He sits on his own heart's throne and is proud of his orthodoxy and proud of his theology and proud of the fact that he's a spiritual man. But he's a selfish man and he's an unsanctified man and he carries the burden of self and it wears him out and wears him down and eats at him like acid, deep, deep within him.

And then there's the burden of mortality. Hebrews 2:15, who all our lifetimes. How does it word it? It's Hebrews 2:15. And it's a particular verse it's always difficult for me to remember verbatim. I delivered them who through fear of death, for all their lifetimes, subject to bondage. There's the bondage of mortality, the

bondage of mortality. God has created us for life, and death is an enemy. God has created us for life, and death has invaded our territory and taken over. And we have been invaded and we are an occupied country, the human race is, occupied by the foe.

And He has set eternity in our hearts, and time is dissolving our bodies away. Here we are living on two plains at once, the eternal and the temporal; the spiritual and the material. Here we are living on two plains at once, akin to the angels in our spirit and akin to the beasts in our bodies. And in the part of us that came from God, God has placed eternity and taken and thrown away all the clocks and all the whistles and placed eternity there. Time is wearing our bodies down and dissolving them and the burden of mortality that we carry it upon our hearts. We think it's only older people that carry upon them the burden of mortality.

On the my sons, Wendell, when he was a little lad, maybe he was 12. He was to write an essay for school. And he wrote it and showed it to me. And I had never dreamed this could be true of a boy of that age. And of course, it was only a sample of how youngsters think. But it was a self-revelation, a disclosure, a confession of fear. Fear, less Daddy died, fear less Mama die, fear lest his brothers should die, fear the future, fear of death. And a 12-year-old normal boy, for he is that. He's 30 now, but still a normal man. But the burden of mortality rested upon the heart of a 12-year-old boy. And that burden of mortality lies upon the human race and rests there, but not rest, no, not rest; eats, wears, destroys.

And now, my brethren, I want you to turn out all the lights of the world. And I want you to plunge all the world in darkness so you can focus your attention. And then I want you to spotlight and let just one little light flash down into a valley, the dark valley of sorrow. And there you will see a frustrated, frightened, hurting, scurrying, busy, weary, little man struggling on between the rocks and the crust, the thorny ways, bowed under a weight that is destroying him, falling under the load. Getting up again, struggling on, throwing his shoulders back and bowing them again. Always, always the load, always the burden. Always the galling yoke, always, always. And I want that spotlight to rest on that little man as he struggles on through the valley we call this world in mortality, struggling on.

And look closely now, look closely for all the lights of the world are out, and we're looking only at the one little man there. And do you recognize that man? Why, you say he looks like me. He's you. That's you struggling there. That's you there, out of Christ. That's you, sinner man. That's you staggering under the load, the burden. It's too great for you, the burden of nature, the burden of mortality, the burden of fear, the burden of alienation, the burden of sin and of pride and of self, cursing you and writing you and wearing you. That's you there in the dark valley of sorrow.

And now I want you to shift the spotlight while all the lights of the world are out. And I want you to turn it on another man. This other man, a great tall man on a winding hillside also bowed under a weight that was destroying Him. Look closely now and see who that was. That other Man was there on the hill because you're there in the valley. That other Man carried the load that destroyed Him because you're in the valley carrying a load that destroys you. And look closely now. Who is that man on the hill, that Man on the winding rocky way carrying a load that was destroying Him and did within six hours, crushed and squeezed the life out of His body? And that Man who was He? That man was Jesus. That man was Jesus because you were in the valley struggling there, scurrying, falling, stumbling, with the load on your heart. He was on the Hill stumbling, falling, being crushed under a load on His back.

And up in the darkness of that hill with all the spotlights off and all the stars dim and the sun refusing to shine. He died there for the man on valley. He died there, the Just for the unjust that He might say, 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. Come unto Me and what? Come unto Me and off goes the crushing burden of alienation and you know you belong to God.

Am I talking to some people tonight that are the children of God and know it? Am I talking to some people tonight that know you're children of the Father, that you belong to God? Are you here tonight? Say, amen. Am I talking to people that the burden of alienation is gone. Do you know that the Friend isn't angry anymore. And you know that the fallout you had with Him by sin is all over now. And you can say to God, I'm reconciled, His pardoning voice I hear. He owns me for His child I need no longer fear. With confidence I now draw nigh and Abba Father, Abba Father cry, the burden of alienation is gone. You can look up to the stars above and know nobody's angry up there. You can lay your head on your pillow at night and know that nobody in the darkness is angry. And you could get up in the morning and know that the God that brought up the sun isn't angry with you anymore. Nobody's mad at you in the heavenly home up yonder. The blood of the lamb has taken away the alienation. And you're no longer an alien and a pilgrim and a stranger, but you are now a member of the household of God. And you can say, Abba Father, Abba Father.

You know what Abba Father means? It's just, Abba is in Arabic, and I think maybe a Hebrew, but at least it's a Middle East word for father, Papa. It's the word they tell us you can say before you get your teeth. And I take it it's a word you can say after you lose them too, brother. Thank God. It's a word you can say because it doesn't take any teeth and it doesn't take very much to say, Abba Father.

It's all right now to walk out under the stars at night and know that there may be enemies lurking in the bushes, but there's no enemy beyond the stars. Come unto me and the burden of alienation will fall away. Come unto me and off rolls the burden of sin. God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And God doesn't lay on the same burden on two men. And the burden He laid on Jesus was the burden you were bearing, the burden of your sin. And because He bore it, you don't have to anymore. And because He climbed a steep hill amid the rocks and thorns to die in the darkness, you can now shake your shoulders and the burden will roll off by faith and the burden of sin will go.

Come unto me and off comes the terror and the nightmare. He who once died for us now lives for us. That's simple Christianity. What more could it be? That's Christianity. Christianity, He who once died for me, now lives for me. And the nightmare is gone. And there's no fear anymore and the terror. And off rolls the burden of pride; to God goes the glory. To God goes the glory, not I but Christ.

And you know, I think I'd better stop and talk a little more about that here. Because that's something that doesn't go off with first contact. That's something the new birth doesn't take always. That's something that it may take a second grace, a second touch, a second encounter with God Almighty to deliver you from. But it's the great curse my brethren. It's the curse of self. Not I but Christ, not Christ but I, we say. We sing our songs about Him. And in our testimonies, it's all about Jesus. But in our private lives, it's all about I and me and mine. And I told them up yonder last week in Canada that the unknown anonymous writer of the Theologia Germanica had said, all that burns in hell is I and me and mine.

If you want to know the fuel that keeps that gloomy furnace burning, I'll tell you what it is. It's I and me and mine. It's the stove wood, it's the kindling wood, it's the fuel of hell. I and me and mine. And it burns and

burns my brethren, and until you're free from I and me and mine, until you get to a place where you've got no ambitions anymore, no ambitions. I think I only have one. I think, thank God, I've only got one. I want to be a better man and glorify God more. And I think that's an ambition that's legitimate and right.

But do I want to be known no more? Do I want to be celebrated no more? I thank God I think it's over. You know, it's painful to give up self. It's painful. You've got to attend your own funeral and see yourself die. And it's not easy. It's easy if you do it technically. Somebody said to Moody, Mr. Moody, don't you know that judicially the old man is dead? Moody said judicially he is, but actually he ain't. And there's a problem with the world, my brother. Judicially, that fundamentalism is rotten with judicial Christianity. Judicially, we're crucified with Christ. Judicially, we've risen again, Judiciously, the old man was crucified. Judicially, we're seated with Christ at the right hand of God. Judicially, all that's true, but we carry around the cancer in our soul called self.

And then defend ourselves. I said a while ago that there were two kinds of people I meet wherever I go. And the one man I said was the man who said, if God doesn't meet me, I don't want to live. And the other man who will take you aside and talk to you for an hour defending his carnality. He said, what did you mean in that book when you said, thus and thus and thus? Defending his carnality. If the children of God were as concerned with being holy as they are concerned to prove you can't be holy, we'd have some saints instead of children in the kingdom of God.

But because we defend our sins and our self and our carnality, and will not be washed and cleansed and will not ask and trust and believe that the fire of God can make us clean, we'll always find a text to hide behind somewhere. If nothing else, it will be a marginal rendering. But we'll always find a text to hide behind. Paul said, they use the grace of God as a cloak to hide their sins. And we find it in this day in which we live my brethren, but not I but Christ.

The day you cease to have any worldly ambitions except to glorify God and enjoy Him forever will be the day the burden will roll from your heart. Come unto Me and what? Come unto me and we lay down the burden of self and off goes the weight of mortality. Eternal life is the word. In Christ is the word.

Oh, that noble, that golden, that beautiful phrase in the 15th of Corinthians, but now is Christ risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of them that slept, said the old, sanctified logician. If the dead rise not, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, you have believed in vain. And if you believed in vain, my gospel has been a lie. And if my gospel is a lie, I've convicted myself of being a sinner before my God. And if the dead rise not, and if not Christ is risen, you're still in your sin. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. Do you remember in the Messiah where they read that verse out as though it would fill the world with the glory of it, but now is Christ risen from the dead.

My brethren, whether I live 20 more years, and I may in spite of everything. And whether I die tonight at midnight, I want to leave this testimony with you. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was crucified and buried, and rose the third day according to the Scriptures. And I believe the burden of mortality has gone. The old carcass can wear away, and the winds of heaven can blow the shingles off the roof, and the birds can roost on the eaves, but that which is immortal within us which can't die is safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast.

And off goes the burden of fear of death and mortality. Off goes the abrasive, corrosive, eating, wearing, cursing, biting sense that I am made for eternity and must die like a man. Jesus said, ye are gods but you must die like men. Jesus said that, I didn't. Ye are gods, and he quoted the Old Testament. And He said, if

God called His people gods, that is, you're sons of God, you're sons of God. And being sons of God, how can you die like men.

And brethren, we lay down and sleep like men. Now I don't think it's a bad idea. I think old mother nature, I think God has worked it out all right. You get tired after a while. You get weary of it all. You get weary. You've seen everything or else your your imagination has pictured and you've heard everything. I've heard everything. And I have been everywhere I want to go. I get invited everywhere. I don't want to go. I've seen everything. I've seen a city. I don't want to see cities. I've seen a river I don't want to see a river. I've seen mountains. I don't want to see one mountain. I've heard people talk other languages. I have no desire to visit. They want me to go to Europe. They want me to go to Asia. But I don't want to go anyplace unless God sends me. All you have to do is use your little imagination and you've seen the world. People spend \$5,000 going around the world. A man with a good imagination can sit sit home and know everything he sees and know everything and describe it for him. But, oh, brethren, He lives, He lives and we have eternal life and the burden of the fear of mortality is gone. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden.

A good many years ago now a 17-year-old boy sat in a Methodist Church on Market Street in the city of Akron, Ohio. And here stood up a man, a Methodist preacher, of course. He took for his text, 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. And the Methodist preacher said, some people may wonder why He said, take my yoke upon you. And they may withdraw from the yoke and say I don't want a yoke. And said the preacher, but my friends you already bear one. The difference is the one you now bear is killing you. And the one He offers you is a light and easy yoke. Here I was, a 17-year-old boy and I heard that message by a Methodist preacher. I wasn't converted that night. But a few days later I heard another man, not such a good preacher on the street and that clenched it and I went home, and in light of this truth, come unto me and in the light of the one that tells us, God have mercy on me a sinner, I found the Savior. The way has been a little rugged and it's been a little crooked. And all my fault where it's been crooked and all His glory where it's been straight. But by the grace of God, I wear the yoke no more. Only the light, light yoke of His love.

And I invite you tonight. He invites you. I invite you. Come unto Him. Come unto Him all ye that labor and are heavy laden. You don't have to carry a burden out of this room. You don't have to carry a yoke out of this room except the gentle light yoke, with you on one end and Jesus on the other. And as the song says, He always takes the heavy end and gives the light to me. The Lord doesn't deal in single collars. He only deals in doubles. The Lord never lays a light single yoke on any man's neck. He lays a double yoke and He takes the other end.

So, if you are sick, now if you're not, if you still love yourself, I worked up a sweat for nothing. If you still love yourself and you still won't call sin sin, and you're still satisfied with your car and your television and your radio and your good clothes and your job and your future, I haven't said a word to you. You've been asleep. If you're still satisfied, I might as well have stayed home. But if the Holy Ghost has heard our prayers, and there's somebody whose heart He's uncovered, and you're sick of the burden and sick of the weariness and sick of it all, then I invite you to come unto Him and He will give you a rest.

Let us stand please. Thou in our midst, unseen, but present. We cannot touch Thee with our fingers, but we can touch Thee with our hearts. We cannot see Thee with our physical eyes, but the eyes of our faith look upon Thee. O Christ Jesus, Thou knowest. Thou knowest how we struggle, how the world is weary

and tired and sick; running to doctors and brain specialists and nerve specialists and psychiatrists, and buying tranquilizing drugs and seeking to get rid of a load. Still, the load is there, wearing and eating and killing? O Lord Jesus, we would think that Methodist preacher back there never knew that a boy present who heard the sermon went home to be converted. He never knew it. So maybe we will not know tonight. But O Christ hast Thou somewhere, here, one or two or three or four, who will quietly slip out under the hush of Thy presence. And before the lights are out tonight and before retiring, will settle it forever and no more carry the load of alienation, the load of sin, the load of fear, the load of mortality, but roll it over on the back of Him who carried it up to the hill. And go free and begin to praise and thank and testify and tell and witness to everyone who will listen, how good the Savior is and how wonderful Jesus is. Bless these friends here tonight. We pray that we may not follow the world. We pray we may hate it and turn from it. We may pray, we may separate from it with violence if we need to. It may bring the fury of the world down on us and may bring the scorn of the religious world down on us. We don't care. Only we want no more to carry the load. We want to go free in Christ Jesus the Lord and bear the sweet light yoke of Thy love. Bless us graciously while we wait. Amen

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