**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**PSALMS-048**. **THE BURDEN-BEARING GOD by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits."*

*Psalm 68:19 (A.V.)*

*"Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden."*

*Psalm 68:19 (R.V.)*

The difference between these two renderings seems to be remarkable, and a person ignorant of any language but our own might find it hard to understand how any one sentence was susceptible of both. But the explanation is extremely simple. The important words in the Authorised Version, with benefits, are a supplement, having nothing to represent them in the original. The word translated loadeth in the one rendering and beareth in the other admits of both these meanings with equal ease, and is, in fact, employed in both of them in other places in Scripture. It is clear, I think, that, in this case, at all events, the Revision is an improvement. For the great objection to the rendering which has become familiar to us all, Who daily loadeth us with benefits, is that these essential words are not in the original, and need to be supplied in order to make out the sense. Whereas, on the other hand, if we adopt the suggested emendation, Who daily beareth our burdens, we get a still more beautiful meaning, which requires no forced addition in order to bring it out. So, then, I accept that varied form of our text as the one on which I desire to say a few words now.

**I. The first thing that strikes me in looking at it is the remarkable and eloquent blending of majesty and condescension.**

It is not without significance that the Psalmist employs that name for God in this clause, which most strongly expresses the idea of supremacy and dominion. Rule and dignity are the predominant ideas in the word Lord, as, indeed, the English reader feels in hearing it; and then, side by side with that, there lies this thought, that the Highest, the Ruler of all, whose absolute authority stretches over all mankind, stoops to this low and servile office, and becomes the burden-bearer for all the pilgrims who will put their trust in Him. This blending together of the two ideas of dignity and condescension to lowly offices of help and furtherance is made even more emphatic if we glance back at the context of the psalm. For there is no place in Scripture in which there is flashed before the mind of the singer a grander picture of the magnificence and the glory of God, than that which glitters and flames in the previous verses. We read in them of God riding through the heavens by His name Jehovah; of Him as marching at the head of the people, through the wilderness, and of the earth quivering at His tread, and the heavens dropping at His presence. We read of Zion itself being moved at the presence of the Lord. We read of His word going forth so mightily as to scatter armies and their kings. We read of the chariots of God as twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. All is gathered together in the great verse, Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive. And then, before he has taken breath almost, the Psalmist turns, with most striking and dramatic abruptness, from the contemplation, awe-struck and yet jubilant, of all that tremendous, magnificent, and earth-shaking power to this wonderful thought, Blessed be the Lord! who daily beareth our burdens. Not only does He march at the head of the congregation through the wilderness, but He comes, if I might so say, behind the caravan, amongst the carriers and the porters, and will bear anything that any of the weary pilgrims intrusts to His care.

Oh, dear brethren! if familiarity did not dull the glory of it, what a thought that is--a God that carries men's loads! People talk much rubbish about the stern Old Testament Deity; is there anything sweeter, greater, more heart-compelling and heart-softening, than such a thought as this? How all the majesty bows itself, and declares itself to be enlisted on our side, when we think that He that sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers is the God that daily beareth our burdens!

And that is the tone of the Old Testament throughout, for you will always find braided together in the closest vital unity the representation of these two aspects of the divine nature; and if ever we hear set forth a more than ordinarily magnificent conception of His power and majesty be sure that, if you look, you will find side by side with it a more than ordinarily tender representation of His gentleness and His grace. And if we look deeper, this is not a case of contrast, it is not that there are sharply opposed to each other these two things, the gentleness and the greatness, the condescension and the magnificence, but that the former is the direct result of the latter; and it is just because He is Lord, and has dominion over all, that, therefore, He bears the burdens of all. For the responsibilities of the Creator are in proportion to His greatness, and He that has made man has thereby made it necessary that He should, if they will let Him, be their Burden-bearer and their Servant. The highest must be the lowest, and just because God is high over all, blessed for ever, therefore is He the Supporter and Sustainer of all. So we may learn the true meaning of elevation of all sorts, and from the example of loftiest, may draw the lesson for our more insignificant varieties of height, that the higher we are, the more we are bound to stoop, and that men are then likest God, when their elevation suggests to them responsibility, and when he that is chiefest becomes the servant.

**II. So, then, notice next the deep insight into the heart and ways of God here.**

He daily beareth our burdens. If there is any meaning in this word at all, it means that He so knits Himself with us as that all which touches us touches Him, that He takes a share in all our pressing duties, and feels the reflection from all our sorrows and pains. We have no impassive God in the heavens, careless of mankind, nor is His settled and changeless and unshaded blessedness of such a sort as that there cannot pass across it--if I may not say a shadow, I may at least say--a ripple from men's pangs and troubles and cares. Love is the identification of oneself with the beloved object. We call it sympathy, when we are speaking about the fellow feeling between man and man that is kindled of love. But there is something deeper than sympathy in that great Heart, which gathers into itself all hearts, and in that great Being, whose being underlies all our beings, and is the root from which we all live and grow. God, in all our afflictions, is afflicted; and in simple though profound verity, has that which is most truly represented to men, by calling it a fellow feeling with our infirmities and our sorrows.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,

And thy Maker is not nigh;

Think not thou canst weep a tear,

And thy Maker is not near.

For want of a better word, we speak of the sympathy of God: but we need something far more intimate and unwearied than we understand by that word, to express the community of feeling between all who trust Him and His own infinite heart. If this bearing of our burden means anything, it gives us a deep insight, too, into His workings, as well as into His heart. For it covers over this great truth that He Himself comes to us, and by the communication of His own power to us, makes us able to bear the burdens which we roll upon Him. The meaning of His lifting our load, in so far as that expression refers to the divine act rather than the divine heart, is that He breathes into us the strength by which we can carry the heavy task of duties, and can endure the crushing pressure of our sorrows. All the endurance of the saints is God in them bearing their burdens.

Notice, too, daily beareth, or, as the Hebrew has it yet more emphatically because more simply, day by day beareth. He travels with us, in the greatness of His might and the long-suffering of His unwearied patience, through all our tribulation, and as He has borne and carried His people all the days of old, so, at each new recurrence of new weights, He is with us still. Like some river that runs by the wayside and ever cheers the traveller on the dusty path with its music, and offers its waters to cool his thirsty lips, so, day by day, in the slow iteration of our lingering sorrows, and in the monotonous recurrence of our habitual duties, there is with us the ever-present help of the Ancient of Days, who measures out daily strength for the daily load, and never sends the one without proffering the other.

**III. So, again, notice here the remarkable anticipation of the very heart of the Gospel.**

The God who daily beareth our burdens, says the Psalmist. He spoke deeper things than he knew, and was wiser than he understood. For the hope that gleams in these words comes to fulfilment, in Him of whom it was written in prophetic anticipation, so clear and definite that it reads like historical narrative--He bare our grief and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Ah! it were of small avail to know a God that bore the burden of our sorrows and the load of our duties, if we did not know a God who bore the weight of our sins. For that is the real crushing weight that breaks men's hearts and bows them to the earth. So the New Testament, with its message of a Christ on whom is laid the whole pressure of the world's sin, is the deepest fulfilment of the great words of my text.

**IV. Note, lastly, what we should therefore do with our burdens.**

First, we should cast them on God, and let Him carry them. He cannot unless we do. One sometimes sees a petulant and self-confident little child staggering along with some heavy burden by the parent's side, but pushing away the hand that is put out to help it to carry its load. And that is what too many of us do when God says to us, Here, My child! let Me help you, I will take the heavy end of it, and do you take the light one. Cast thy burden upon the Lord--and do it by faith, by simple trust in Him, by making real to yourselves the fact of His divine sympathy, and His sure presence, to aid and to sustain.

Having thus let Him carry the weight, do not you try to carry it too. As our good old hymn has it-- Why should I the burden bear? It is a great deal more God's affair than yours. We have, indeed, in a sense, to carry it. Every man shall bear his own burden. The weight of duty is not to be indolently shoved off our shoulders on to His, saying, Let Him do the work. We have indeed to carry the weight of sorrow. There is no use in trying to deny its bitterness and its burden, and it would not be well for us that it should be less bitter and less heavy. In many lands the habit prevails, especially amongst the women, of carrying heavy loads on their heads; and all travellers tell us that the practice gives a dignity and a grace to the carriage, and a freedom and a swing to the gait, which nothing else will do. Depend upon it, that so much of our burdens of work and weariness as is left to us, after we have cast them upon Him, is intended to strengthen and ennoble us. But do not let there be the gnawings of anxiety. Do not let there be the self-torment of aimless prognostications of evil. Do not let there be the chewing of the bitter morsel of irrevocable sorrows; but fling all upon God. And remember what the Master has said, and His servant has repeated: Take no anxious care ... for your heavenly Father knoweth; Cast your anxiety upon Him, for He careth for you.

And the last advice that comes from my text is, to see that your tongues are not silent in that great hymn of praise which ought to go up to the Lord that daily beareth our burdens. He wants only our trust and our thanks, and is best paid by the praise of our love, and of our heaping still more upon His ever strong and ready arm. Bless the Lord! who beareth our burdens, and see that you give Him yours to bear. Listen to Him who hath said, Come unto Me all ye that ... are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.