

It was the straw, the proverbial straw, that broke the camel’s back. The movie John Q. was about a man with nowhere to go. John Quincy Archibald was watching his son, Michael, play baseball. As Michael rounded first, heading for second, he grabbed his chest and collapsed. Michael was raced to the hospital and, after tests, his parents learned their son needed a heart transplant. John’s company provided benefits, but to save money, they downgraded the coverage to a cheaper option. This option did not cover the \$250,000 surgery Michael needed to save his life. They tried yard sales and overtime and everything else they could think of, yet they did not have enough money for the surgery. The hospital was going to send Michael home with a bad heart, and that was it; that was the straw that broke his father’s back. John Q walked into the emergency room and took the medical staff and patients hostage.

I’m guessing you haven’t gone that far. But you have felt that straw. You’ve been in that place where bad news keeps coming in and you have nowhere else to turn. You cannot carry all the burdens that drag you down. Why do you try?

You may fall under the burden of looking for approval from others. Comments chip away at how good you feel. Criticism tears you apart, especially if it comes from someone you respect. You try hard to win the admiration of the people around you. There may be the burden of bringing home a big enough paycheck to live a lifestyle that signals you made it. You’re worthy. You may be struggling under the burden of trying to do whatever it takes to keep the peace in your family. You may be just trying to survive to the next day. You may struggle with medical problems, or how to go on after a loved one has died. All areas of life have their pressures, and like straws on the back of a camel, those burdens will eventually break you if you try to carry them all.

That’s the thing with burdens; they don’t help you carry them. What’s even worse is when things that are supposed to be good become obligations and start to feel like burdens. No matter how strong of a camel you are, eventually you will meet a straw you cannot carry.

Jesus knows what a burden is like. He came into this world full of people with burdens. Everywhere he went, people flocked to see him. Some came to hear the message he spoke. However, many came simply to have him fix their problems. He had the burden of always being on call to help whoever ran up to him, whenever they ran up to him. On top of that, he had the burden of being hated for the work he was doing and the agonizing death that was waiting for him. He knows what a burden is like. He can relate to suffering. Which means he can relate to you and me and all humanity.

In the last hours of his life, before they put nails through Jesus’ hands and feet, they whipped his back with a scourge. A scourge is a whip full of sharp tips and points that cause terrible wounds. For those nailed to a cross, well, your back was against rough wood, and if your back had been scourged...its fearsome to even imagine. On the tips of the scourge and in the dead weight of the cross, Jesus felt every burden. He suffered for every burden that you should

drop—for dropping the burdens you should have carried—for every burden we would rather drop, but can't. There, on the cross, see Jesus, bearing our burdens, all of our burdens, on his back.

Jesus died on that cross. They put his corpse in a tomb and rolled a stone over the entrance. Jesus died under our burdens, but they could not pin him down. On the third day, the earth shook, an angel rolled the stone to the side, and Jesus left the tomb empty, because he was alive. And not only alive but restored, alive in a resurrected body; perfect, yet scarred. His back is no longer torn. There was an end to Jesus' burden-bearing. Jesus is the end of ours.

After Jesus died, rose, and ascended into heaven, he appeared in a vision to his disciple John. In this vision, recorded in the book of Revelation, we hear of Jesus clothed in a white robe that goes all the way down to his feet. It's a robe of absolute holiness, purity and beauty. A robe of light. Having borne every burden, it is now his to wear. And why not; he earned it. But here's the good news: He didn't earn it for himself. He earned it for you. He wants to share that robe of holiness and light with you, he purchased this robe of purity and beauty specifically to wrap to you in it. And this he did when you were baptized. Scripture says that all those who have been baptized in Christ are clothed with Christ. The practical impact of that could be described this way: what is true of Jesus is now true of you. It's the most fundamental thing about you. The robe of Jesus covers you now, which means that layer of Jesus goodness is between you and whatever burden you're carrying. That's how close Jesus is to you in your unique situation. Not only can Jesus sympathize with you in your burden bearing, but he will not let you do it alone.