

“For My Yoke is Easy” By Paul R Blake

“Come unto me, all ye that labour 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” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Oh the comfort bestowed by these words of the Savior on the seeker for truth! In the context of Matthew eleven, Jesus rebuked the cities that arrogantly rejected His teaching and casually dismissed the mighty works He used to prove His authority. In a brief prayer to the Father, Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). It is reassuring to know that even though worldly intellectuals will fail to grasp the message of hope in the gospel, it is no indicator that the “babes” won’t comprehend it. In fact, the ones who come to the Lord for ease from their burdens are unlikely to be numbered among the secular elite, but rather are the “weary and heavy laden”... those who desire the burden of sin lifted, of which sins they are painfully aware and contritely ashamed.

Only one who has consciously and conscientiously experienced the guilt of his sins can understand the deep need of the soul to be forgiven, to be unburdened by his sins. Jesus’ promise of relief to the penitent sinner comes as a refreshing breeze in a desert or as a bright ray of light in a dark room. One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness and obediently embraces the gospel finds satisfaction for his soul in this morally empty world.

“For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” means that the obedient believer has exchanged his load of sin to bear a cross, and that the cross is much easier to live with than the sin. Indeed this is true. Un-repentant sins affect one’s thinking, feelings, habits, conversation, relationships, et cetera. It diminishes his quality of life. Furthermore, it destines him for perdition when his life on earth ends. Conversely, cross-bearing increases one’s quality of life. He experiences the inexpressible joy of a sinless condition. One lives in security knowing that when he stumbles, the heavenly Father will hear his confession and plea for forgiveness. In addition, he does not have to live with the temporal, self-inflicted consequences of sin, because he chooses not to sin. Also, bearing the yoke of the Lord puts one on the path to heaven. Therefore, regardless of how difficult the circumstances of his present life, one is sustained by his hope in the life to come.

However, let us not take lightly the conditions of the Lord’s promise. While the promises of the Savior are precious and wonderful, He did place three conditions on those who would enjoy His blessings. He said, 1) “come unto me,” 2) “take my yoke upon you,” and 3) “learn of me.”

First, one who would obtain the promises must come to the Lord. By coming to Christ, he is acknowledging that by himself he is insufficient to the task of dealing with his own sin; in fact, he must be willing to admit that he has sins needing remitted. In addition, by coming to the Lord one demonstrates that he recognizes Jesus as the only source of relief from that burden of sin. No one else can keep the promises made by Jesus. He alone is qualified, for He alone is “meek and lowly in heart,” indicating that He understands the human condition, and that He is the only one with the power to do something about it. Also, by coming to the Lord one shows that he is the supplicant appealing to the Benefactor. Jesus did not say to the weary and heavy laden, “wait, and I’ll bring it to you.” He said, “Come unto me.”

Second, one who would obtain the promise must take up the Lord’s yoke. Freedom from sin is just that, being sin-free... no more or less. It does not mean that one is free from responsibility, obligation, or accountability. The owner of the oxen places them in harness under a yoke that both facilitates load bearing and puts the oxen in subjection to the one handling the reins of the harness. So it is with the sinner who takes up the Lord’s yoke. He is suitably

enabled to bear the burdens of the life of a Christian, and at the same time he places himself under the guidance of the Master who holds the reins.

As the yoke makes plowing easier for an ox, so cross-bearing makes living faithful to the Lord much easier. The yoke makes it possible for the ox to lean into his work while making forward progress. This is much better than trying to pull the load while facing backward, clearly an unnatural strain on the beast. So it is with the Christian who carries a cross on his shoulders. In this position, he can lean forward into the load and make steps forward toward his goal. It would be awkward to try to twist around to look back in regret while yoked to the cross. True cross-bearing expedites faithfulness. However, once the yoke goes over the ox's shoulders and the harness is fastened, he is bound to work for the farmer until the farmer lifts the yoke from his back at the end of the day. So it is with the Christian who takes up the yoke of the Lord. He is bound by his commitment to live as a Christian until the end of his life, when the Lord lifts his load and he enters into eternal rest. The ox patiently carries his load all day without kicking over the traces or thrashing in rebellion. Nor can one who takes up the yoke proffered by the Savior take the burden off and on at a whim. It is a lifelong covenant; one that must be made solemnly from the heart with all of one's will.

Third, the one who would gain the "rest" promised by the Lord must learn from Him. Jesus must be viewed as the one true teacher, the only source of authority in religion. He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18); He has all authority in the church (Col. 1:18); and, He has all authority in our lives (Col. 3:17). Jesus Christ is God's spokesman for this dispensation (Heb. 1:1-2). One who would maintain the condition of being under the restful, easy yoke of the Lord must yield to his authority, practicing and preaching His doctrine only. When one meets these three conditions outlined by Jesus, he can expect with Divine assurance to have an easy yoke and a light burden.

Does this mean that the one who comes to the Lord will never suffer again. Certainly not. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Tim. 3:12). Jesus told the suffering church at Smyrna that they could expect to suffer even more at the hands of the wicked. Paul labored more than the other apostles, and yet he suffered still. No, the devout will not be free from the suffering imposed on them by the wickedness of others. But, they are happily free from the burden of their own sins, and can rejoice in anticipation of heaven, an eternal, sin-free place. Given the choice between bearing the shameful, spiritually nauseating burden of sin verses taking up one's cross and following the Lord, the rational, honest, humble man will choose the cross. Good choice... it leads to a crown!

A Moments Wisdom

--A judicious, diligent, and pious wife is the soul of a great household; she introduces order there for temporal welfare and future salvation. (Francois Fenelon, 1688)

--It is always easier to understand what the Bible says than to understand what somebody else thinks it meant to say.

--It will remain as long as the sun – as long as the sun rises and sets: that is, as long as the ages of time shall roll, the church of God – the true body of Christ on earth – will not disappear. (Augustine, 415 AD)

--An expert seaman is tried in a tempest, a runner in a race, a captain in a battle, a valiant man in adversity, a Christian in temptation and misery. (Basil, 379 AD)