

Christ's Yoke and Burden

Matt 11:30

1

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

What is your religion? Try asking that question sometime to people you know. You will probably hear a lot of compromising, backpedaling, and even apology. It seems that today most people aren't ready to take a stand for their faith.

1 Peter 3:15

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15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

God tells us that if we are indeed committed in faith to doing His will and seeking after Christ in our faithful obedience that we will not shy away from telling others about our "Religion." The term religion is defined as...

re·li·gion; noun

3

1) The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.

"ideas about the relationship between science and religion"

synonyms: faith, belief, worship, creed; More

2) A particular system of faith and worship.

plural noun: religions: "the world's great religions"

3) A pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance.

"consumerism is the new religion"

It doesn't seem to be particularly difficult to tell someone else what you believe, does it? In a passage familiar to most, Heb. 11:6 the writer there says we can't please God unless we believe in Him. Philip told the Eunuch that that was the prerequisite to being baptized, believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Have you come to God through Christ? Did you meet the prerequisite? If so, why is it so difficult to tell someone else what we have done. I don't know what your passion is, sports, following professional sports, hobbies, reading, gardening, so many different things, but whatever yours might be, do you have a problem telling others about it? I would venture to say, not. People tend to find it easy to tell others about the things that are important in their lives, just try asking someone about their children or grandchildren. So why is it so hard for some to tell someone else about their system of faith and worship and who they place their trust in? I'm not sure I have a good answer for that. Is it their commitment, strength of faith, desire to please God, or the lack thereof. Maybe it has more to do with the fact that most people just don't know what they think they believe. I am not trying to be facetious here, I am not trying to make a joke. It is a sad fact that far, far too many people really don't know why they practice worship the way they do. How many times have you heard someone say that they don't really study the Bible where they go to worship? This is a common statement made by people in the Catholic, Mormon, Methodist, Presbyterian, and so many other religions. They don't want their worshippers to actually look into the scriptures, people might

actually discover the false shallowness of what they are being told to do and believe. Do you see how inconsistent that is with the passages we looked at from Matt. and 1 Peter? God wants us to be both able and ready to tell anyone who asks what we believe, why we believe, and why we do what we do.

Before we get the points of this lesson, let's take a look at what Christ says as a preface to His comment in verse 30. He has just pronounced a condemnation on Chorazin and Bethsaida because they chose to ignore the evidence of the miracles and signs that He had done in them and rejected Him.

Matt 11:25-27

4

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. **26** Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. **27** All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

He then goes into an explanation of how God chose to send His message to man. Think about that for just a moment. God could have chosen to send that message in any way He wanted, but He chose to send it by His Son. He could have chosen to make it so that only those with the highest IQ's and understanding would hear it, but He chose to send it in a manner such that anyone would be able to understand it. Why? Why not make it harder so that man might have a greater desire to heed it? Kind of like making it worth millions so that everyone would seek after it. God wants all men to have a relationship with Him through Christ, Acts 17:30. Now think about the connection between the condemnation pronounced on Corazin and Bethsaida and the discussion of verses 25-27 in connection with the passage from...

Matt 11:30

5

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

It starts to come together within the context of what He is saying. There were those who ignored the Word, ignored the power of the signs and they were condemned. The Word was sent to all men who could in their innocence and humility of spirit accept it and the truth contained in it. That is the impact of what Christ says here...

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“My yoke is easy, My burden light”

This is an invitation to come to Christ and join ourselves with Him. Seen in that invitation is the contrast between the discussion of the condemned cities and attitude of those that accept the truth and the power, the condemned ignore the truth, the righteous accept it in its simplicity with humility and faith. Christ says that while acceptance does indeed have a burden that comes with it, yoking ourselves with Him presents a much lighter burden than the alternative of not doing so. Believing in Christ, believing in God, accepting their truth, these are all part of the burden that we accept when we agree to take on the yoke of Christ.

There are some points that we want to look at in this lesson...

7

1) The nature of the yoke

2) The nature of the burden

3) The nature of the reward

The idea of yoke in this context is sometimes misunderstood. The yoke was, typically, a wooden apparatus used to tie two animals together, oxen, for example, so that they could pull and exert their efforts as one. Now, here is where the misunderstanding comes in. Most people don't think of working together with Christ, but rather with Him doing all the work and we just kind of follow along. Yes, we are to follow Him, but He Himself says that we are to be joined with Him working together. Here, then, is the first of our points...

8 1) The nature of the yoke

What is the task that Jesus is doing that He is telling us to join with Him in. We can't give our lives to save all mankind, but we must give our lives to save ourselves. That's what Paul commends the Macedonians for doing. We can't perform wondrous signs and miracles to convince the world that the message we bring is truly God's Word, but we must live our lives in this world, free and spotless from it, that may very well be a miracle of the highest order. Look around us at what is going on. Satan seems to be winning at every turn and in every battle arena, but we can defeat him, in the battle field of our hearts, if we will remain yoked with Christ. Look at the prayer Christ used to teach the disciples how to pray...

Matt 6:9-10

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9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. **10** 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

We see this idea of God's will being done and we immediately see in that the coming of the His kingdom, the Church. That is absolutely true, but there is so much more in that thought. Note what Christ says in...

John 4:31-34

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31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." **32** But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." **33** So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" **34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

Jesus proclaims that it is His, I'm not sure what to call it, duty, fate, destiny, task, whatever we call it, Jesus understood what needed to be done. This is seen in His prayer in the garden...

Luke 22:42

11

42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

What Jesus understood was that to do God's will is the ultimate responsibility not only for Him, but for any of us. The yoke that we accept when we commit to Christ is doing God's will alongside Him, with Him, and for Him.

This is the next point of this lesson...

12 2) The nature of the burden

Working with Christ to do the will of God is the yoke that we share with Him, the burden is doing His will in spite of ourselves and our lusts to do otherwise, in spite of all the influences of the world to do otherwise, in spite of Satan seeking to devour us. Here is the dynamic, there are two wills in the world, one we have already seen in Christ's prayer, God's will, now note what Paul says in...

2 Tim 2:26 **13**

26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Satan also has a will and he deceives and ensnares man to follow after his will. Those are the two wills of the world, God's and Satan's. We might think that our will is what is important, but we need to understand that that is only so as it relates to us individually, but has no bearing on the world other than whatever influence we might have on helping shape someone else's will. That is the burden of doing God's will...

14 A) What are we doing to help shape others?

Do we show the world the love of God, or are we so wrapped up in our own anger, jealousy, gossip, disobedience that what the world sees is as far from God's truth as is imaginable. The other part of that burden is...

15 B) What are we doing to shape ourselves?

Now I've listed these as separate things, but in reality they are one and the same. What we do to shape our own lives to the will of God is seen by the world and helps to shape any who look at us. Does the world see anger, does the world see indifference, does the world see us for what we truly are? I had a gentleman tell me recently that, when he found out I was a minister for the Church of Christ that he lived with a woman for a number of years that also attended a Church of Christ. What do you say to that? Here was a man who had no idea that the scriptures teach that that isn't what God wants, because of what he had seen in someone who wasn't working to shape themselves to the will of God.

Peter talks about this concept in two different passages from his writings...

1 Peter 2:12 **16**

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

And also in...

1 Peter 3:1-2 **17**

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, **2** as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

The way we live our lives, the things we do and show to the world have an enormous influence on it, whether we ever see it or not.

The nature of the burden we share with Christ is the total, unwavering commitment to do God's will, all of His will, in everything we say and do.

Peter speaks to this in...

1 Peter 4:11 18

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Whatever we do, we are to do in the name, which means by the authority, the Word, of God. That is the burden that we bear with Jesus Christ. John makes a very pointed statement in...

1 John 3:18 19

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

We can't just pay lip service to being a child of God. That is exactly what John is saying, words mean nothing, actions tell all.

So why? Why bother with trying to keep His commandments, especially when they really aren't what we would like to be doing? Why put up with trying to show love and compassion to a world, to people that return nothing but anger, ingratitude, or any of the other bad attitudes that are seen out there? This brings us to our last point...

20 3) The nature of the reward

I am curious, what reward did Christ receive for doing His Father's will? He was elevated in the world, raised on a cross. He was recognized as the Son of God, the King of the Jews, that's what the sign above His head read. He was acknowledged by the people, they slapped Him, spat on Him and jeered at Him as He was dying.

Heb 5:8 21

8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. **9** And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

Perfection, perfection in what? Perfection in appearance? Keeping God's will won't change our physical appearance, but it will change how people see us, but more importantly, it will change how God sees us. The idea of perfection here is the idea of completeness. There are things in this world that are seen to be parts that are needed to be complete. Those things are different for each of us. Maybe it's children, being able to support our families, having a respect for others and they for us, having a good spouse who loves us and trusts us. These are all things that can be parts of making us complete in this world, but friends, the whole point of this lesson is to point out to us that doing the will of God is truly the only component that can make man whole, completely complete, if you will. Only by accepting the yoke and burden with Christ of doing God's will can we ever hope to enjoy God's perfection of standing before Him forgiven of our sins.

How would you like to be perfect? Are you willing to pay the price required for perfection? Are you willing to wear the yoke with Christ and bear the burden of doing the will of God as He did? The reward is worth it. Perfection!!!