

Take My Yoke Upon You And Learn of Me

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I'd like this morning to go directly to the text, read the text and then ask the Lord's blessing on it. Our text for this morning will be found in Matthew 11:29.

29 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.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, I thank thee that thou has given us this hour. Lord, I pray that you would take us away from the world and the thoughts in the world. Take us away, Lord, from ourselves and the thoughts that arise in our minds, the distractions, Lord, that are so heavy upon us for, Lord, you know that we are a cumbered people. We ask, O Lord, that you would quiet our souls and bring us, Lord, to thy feet to be instructed. Bring us, Lord, to give us ears to hear. Give us hearts, Lord, that have been plowed. Lord, may you speak through they word this day. Define for us, O Lord, what thy yoke is that you have put upon thy people and, Lord, may you enable us to walk therein. Bless this hour now to thy praise and to thy glory and may you be glorified. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Matthew 11:29, "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." When Jesus said these words, he was speaking using a metaphor, a metaphor that was very popular in the culture that he grew up in where they would take the ox and they would put a yoke upon his neck. They would fasten a plow to that ox and that yoke and the animal or the ox would then be under the control of the one who was operating the ox. The Lord uses this metaphor this morning to tell us something about the relationship that he has with his people. He tells us first and foremost to "Take my yoke upon you." The Lord has a yoke to put on his people. Often when I read words like this and I hear words like "take" and I hear commands in the Gospel, I'm often reminded of Hawker's words when he said, "The Lord's commands are his enablings." How is it a child of God can be brought under a yoke? I'll tell you something: it's not easy. You and I could never do it. You and I could never put that yoke upon ourselves to be joined to Christ.

But just as the metaphor holds up and the yoke is put upon the ox's neck, this yoke is put upon us for the Lord is the yoke. The Lord himself is the one who joins us to himself. He

becomes the life of the child of God. Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, in the letter to the Philippians, in his letter to Philemon, in his letter to the Colossians. In all four of those letters, Paul refers to himself as being in bonds, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being in bonds. Being under the yoke of Christ. We seem to condition ourselves so much when we hear "bonds" or we hear "yoke," we immediately think of bondage and we run the other way. That's what we've learned. We've learned that the freedom and the liberty cannot mean a yoke. When Jesus all throughout his ministry and all throughout the word explains that the yoke that he puts upon his children, he puts there, he joins his children to him by faith.

That's the yoke I want to talk about today. There is a life for the child of God that he lives unto the Lord because of the yoke of Christ, because of Christ's controlling presence in his life, because what Christ has done and it is finished, because of the Holy Spirit and how he leads us and how he constrains us and how he always leads to Christ. This is the yoke that the Lord Jesus Christ talks of here. Paul says it in 2 Corinthians 5, he tells us that we are constrained by love, that it's the Lord Jesus Christ who constrains by love. He says 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." That's the yoke that the Lord uses in the child of God's life to constrain him. He's not a taskmaster. The Lord speaks to his children in a still small voice. And today under the power of the Holy Ghost, my desire is that the Lord instructs us today in what that yoke is. What is it that he teaches us? That's what the yoke is put upon the child of God, to make him teachable, to conform him to the image of Christ because we've lost that. We lost any communion that we ever had in the fall. We lost everything. We lost any ability or any desire to worship the Lord. The Lord has impressed upon me this morning the dire necessity for this yoke to be put upon his children and already I know and I do it myself, I start to shrink up a little bit and I say, "Yoke. Yoke. That must be a bad word." But it's not. If you sit here today and you say that you don't want to be controlled by Christ; if you sit here today and you say that you don't want the Lord to become your life, there is something deficient in your soul and that deficiency is Christ himself.

It is the love of Christ that constrains us. It is the faith of Christ that takes this yoke and takes the communion and takes the fellowship with Christ and joins us to him. Then in 30, he says, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He tells us something about this yoke that it's not a burden put on us from the world. It's not a burden put on us by Satan. It's not a burden put on us by the law. It's not a burden put on us to must-to, have-to, gotta-do. The yoke of Christ is one that points to what Christ has done. Not what you and I need to scurry around and do. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying today, what the Scriptures say, what the Holy Spirit is saying. If you get riled up today and you walk out of here thinking you've got to do something for the Lord and you don't see what he's done for you, you're no better than the Arminian up the street. You're no better than the church across the street. You're no better than when all of these religionists are meeting today trying to figure out how they're going to get to heaven. But if the work of Christ isn't finished, if he has not joined you to himself, there is no life. Everything outside of Christ is death and I pray that the Lord shows us that.

But what does this yoke mean? It means that the Lord is Lord, that he is the Lord of your life. Jesus said these words in John 13:13, he said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. I am a Master and Lord." Do you know when he said that? He said that right before he washed their feet. Our Lord and our Master even condescends down to our needs. He condescends because he knows he has suffered before we have suffered so that he can succor us.

He is our guiding presence. He is a controlling presence. I think of what John wrote when the Lord was speaking about abiding in him and John wrote, "Without me ye can do nothing." That's what Christ said. That's who he was to John. To David, it was the Lord "who performeth all things for me." He was yoked to Christ. To Paul, it was "I live by the faith of the Son of God." He was yoked to Christ. Christ had brought Paul from the life that he had and had joined him to him, to lead him into the path to go, to guide him into the way, the truth and the life. And if Christ is not what's leading you to where you're going, you're unequally yoked. Later, that terminology is used in the epistle that Paul wrote, "Be not unequally yoked with the world. Be not unequally yoked with the unbelievers." That's where that comes from, these words that Jesus said. Unequally yoked means you're not yoked with me. That's what that means. And to be yoked with Christ, the Lord defines what that means all throughout the Scriptures. He defines what it means to be a controlling presence in your life. Listen: you and I aren't any different than the crowd that said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." You and I aren't any different when they chose one of the world, Barabbas, and said, "Crucify him." We live that out in our lives experientially every day when we choose the things that Christ is not yoked to.

So it's easy to cast a stone and put "us and them" and if that's the way you live your life, you're not experiencing Christ because experiencing Christ shows you what you're capable of. You're capable of being over in the camp with the "them," to be over with the hardened reprobate. To being over there saying, "I won't have this man to reign over me." But this command which is the enabling of Christ to be yoked with him, is all of his work. It's what he has done.

In Proverbs 3:5, Solomon writes, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Do you know what that is? It's being yoked with Christ. You know, the book of Judges ends with this that "every man did what was right in his own eyes." You know, when you do what's right in your own eyes, you're not yoked with Christ. You see, being yoked with Christ, being joined with Christ, Paul later would write that we have the mind of Christ. That's when we're yoked with Christ. Don't walk out of here today and go to a carnal life and say you have the mind of Christ. Don't go out looking in this world and fellowship with the world and say that you have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ doesn't lead there. The mind of Christ and the yoke of Christ leads to the way of Christ. Do you want to know what way that is? That's the way of the cross. That's the way of what the life in Christ is.

We're going to talk about that because Christ said, "Learn of me." Well, what is it, Lord, that you're going to teach your children? What is it, Lord, that you desire to teach your

children? Galatians 5:13 says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." I want you to understand today if you don't hear anything else: the liberty, the liberty, the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus is in this yoke. Does that sound contradictory to you? Does it sound like one of those things that you can't understand? Then you know it must be understood by faith. It must be understood and apprehended by faith. That's what Paul says here, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." The liberty in Christ Jesus does not lead you to pamper your flesh or to do what our flesh wants you to do. Furthermore, the rest of this verse says, "but by love serve one another." The liberty in Christ and the yoke in Christ also does not permit you to pamper the flesh of your brethren. That's what being yoked with Christ is.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." That's how easy it is for us to reason the two things together. "Well, the yoke that I have of Christ, you know, sometimes that's too hard. I've got carnal things that I like." I do too. I have carnal things that are important to me but the Lord has impressed upon me every day of my life to pray that he destroys those things. Destroy those carnal things that my mind is so easily taken up with because when my mind is taken up with carnality, it's not being yoked with Christ. It's not unto the power of Christ. It's unto the power of this world. It's under the prince of the power of this world. I don't know about you, but I desire to be free of that. I desire to have a mind of Christ. I desire that those carnal desires and those lusts that I have get beaten back and trodden down every day. Mortified by the Spirit. "Lord, show me first that they're not of you and then, Lord, destroy them. Lead me to where communion is with thee. Show me, Lord, what life is, that what being yoked with you is much different than what the word says Christianity is." I don't know how else to tell you there is no inward work in the world's Christianity. There is no experiential living. There is no living upon Christ every day and how Christ is working and leading and mortifying you to the world, to Satan, to sin, to the bondage of the law.

But then we come to this little part after "Take my yoke upon you," he says, "and learn of me." Learn of me. He knows the weakness of our understanding. All of us in this room learn differently. We know that the Lord had to go out and break the leg of a sheep and bring him back around his neck because he wandered. Well, not all the sheep were wandering at that time. We learn different ways, in diverse ways. The Lord gives faith in measure each day of how much he wants his children to have. You know, I think of that lady who came and just wanted that crumb from the Lord. I told my children that last night. When you come to the house of the Lord, sometimes we get this idea that we come here and we're supposed to banquet and get really fat upon what we hear. Well, you know, if the Lord just has a crumb, if just one crumb of him falls from his table, it sustains the child of God. It's enough in his soul. It's enough to credit for the Lord said, "Yeah, that's me that was spoken of today. That's the power of what I've done. That's how I work in my children's lives." If that brings conviction in your life, he brings the child of God to his throne to cry out for mercy. "O Lord, undertake for me. I am way too wrapped up in the carnality of my mind. Lord, only you can break this bond. Only you can yoke me to yourself."

"Learn of me." Listen, the Lord teaches three ways and he doesn't teach, as I said earlier, as a taskmaster. He's not the austere judge that he used in the parable. That's not the Lord. He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit which is the Comforter. But how does he teach us? We must be learners all our lives. You know, when you become no longer learning at the feet of Christ, you've become stagnant. Stagnancy leads to death. We're told that we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. The child of God is continuously growing. There is so much that the Lord has to reveal to his children that we're not capable; we're not even capable of I couldn't even throw a fraction out there to you of the knowledge of the Lord. His ways are so much higher than ours. We judge everything by what we've picked up in our journey. The Lord is so much higher. The Lord is so much deeper.

But I want to talk to you now, keep your finger here in this passage because we're going to go to three places how the Lord teaches us and the first place I want to go is in John 8 because the Lord teaches us through his word. Remember, all of this is linked together unto what the Lord said. "Take my yoke upon you." This is that yoke. How does the Lord teach us? "And learn of me." How is it? He teaches us through his word. Look at John 8 and we'll be in verse 30, "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word." That's the yoking. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." There is the freedom. Now, I don't know about you, maybe you feel like that weight of burden on you and you say, "Oh, if I continue in the word. I'm not continuing in the word," and guess what? You're not free either. Freedom in Christ is when he enables the child of God to continue in the word of Christ. That's how he teaches us. He teaches us first by his word.

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But then look how beautiful this starts to flow for us, that gives us a little insight to our carnal nature. "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed." That's the carnality of us that likes to raise up and say, "I don't like this bond. I don't like the fact that I'm going to suffer. I don't like the fact that, Lord, your path is on the straight and narrow. Your path says no to the world. I don't like that path."

"They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" Isn't that what we want to know? "How can we be free, Lord?" We know what we struggle with each day. We know what those things are that pull at us in one direction and pull at us in the next direction. When we hear the preacher up there saying, "You're free in Christ or free in the word and the word sets you free," we sit there and we say, "Well, I read the word every day but I'm entangled. I go from one place to the other and I go to the next. I've read the word."

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." You see, outside of the yoke is sin. Outside of the faith of Christ. Isn't that what we're taught? Everything not of faith is sin? Outside of Christ is sin. If you serve that idea, if you serve that, you're a servant of sin.

"And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever." Those are precious words there. "Lord, you can rescue me from the servitude of sin?" Yes. And praise be to God that he does. Praise be to God that he does go and get that sheep. Praise be to God that he does put him around his neck, that he breaks that yoke of being unequally yoked.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." Do you see that? Do you see that? You sit there and say, "Oh, that's horrible. They sought to kill Jesus." But listen: experientially, experiencing Christ every day, that's what our carnal man does. Our carnal man seeks to kill Christ. Our carnal man seeks the world. Our carnal man seeks the pleasures of the world. It seeks to be out from the yoke of Christ. The Lord is saying that to his children today. That's what we do in this fallen nature. I hope you understand how wicked and lost and unreformable it is and it will always be that way. We have a dire need for the Lord to show us the intricate workings of our enemies because we look at these enemies as something that are under our feet, that we've destroyed them, that we live above them. Doesn't it bother you that when you leave the house of the Lord or even when you come to the house of the Lord, you're still carnal? I read that this week in a sermon by Philpot. It was actually addressed to pastors and he was asking the pastors, he said, "You know, if you ever want to know how carnal your fellowship is, just listen to the conversation before church starts, before the time of worship." Not after, before the time when the people come to the house of God, when they come to the day that the Lord has set apart and all they have on their minds is the carnality. I'm right there with you. I understand. I know what it's like to be carnal in my mind and have carnal things on my mind and this being the Lord's Day.

"Learn of me." The Lord says he's meek and lowly in this same passage. He leads us to his word. He teaches us by his word. Do you want to know the importance of the word? That's how the Lord teaches us. It's one way. But now we move on to the second way. We shy away from this one too. That one is found in 1 Peter 2 and that's by example. The Lord teaches his children by example. You know, we don't like that from the terminology that there are so many religionists out there that say, "Christ was my example. I'm going to go and follow him." I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the true child of God who is yoked with Christ. Christ teaches him through his word and he teaches him by what he's done. Are you telling me you don't come to the word with a desire to see what Christ has done? I do. That's his work. To show me what my Lord went first in. That's what the example means.

Let's look at 1 Peter 2, beginning in verse 21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Now, to me that's a blessed Gospel truth. I hope that's not bondage for you. I hope you're not one of those religionists sitting in here today that says, See, I've got to follow his steps." Now, let me write down what he did. He's telling me how to live. I'm going to go out there and live it." And people fail miserably because it's not by your power. It's not by you that willeth. It's not by you that runneth. But it's of him that showeth mercy and him alone.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Here are those steps, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." He committed himself to the Father. That's what the yoke of Christ does in the child of God's life. Do you know what's not in that union there? Man and what man thinks of you and what man judges you. No. He is committed unto the Father. He is committed because he's yoked with the Father and you and I, if we be in Christ, are yoked to the Triune Lord, not to be under judgment of the world.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." To live unto his righteousness because of his finished work on the cross. That is what being yoked to Christ, that's what we learn. We learn that we walk in his righteousness and we seek not a righteousness for our own self because his is perfect. It was in perfect obedience. That is coat that is wrought, it's a perfect obedient coat of righteousness. Do you have that? We spend so much time trying to concoct a garment to put on of our own righteousness mixing a little bit of Christ's righteousness with it. O Lord, perish that thought in our minds.

But how blessedly true verse 25 is, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." By the yoke of faith. By the yoke of Christ that he puts on his children and he says, "My life will be your life." I'm with you on this, I look in the mirror and I'll think about how ungodly my life is at times and I'll think about how, "Oh my goodness, how is it that what I see in that mirror is a picture of Christ?" And the Lord sends great conviction and shows me how it's not but, you know, he's always been faithful in my life to show me where the way is and it's in his Son. It's in his Son's finished work and it's in his Son who lops off that deadness that's in me. It's that Son who constantly prunes, who constantly is taking away the deadness, the deadness, the deadness and things in you today that you don't even believe is deadness, what you believe is life.

So that's two ways our Lord teaches us in this yoke, to learn of me. It's by his word and by example. The third one is definitely one we're going to shy away from and that's in Hebrews 12 and that's by correction. I've already mentioned a broken leg a couple of times but Hebrews 12 is a beautiful passage if not scary passage but it's scary to our flesh. To the new man, to the spiritual man, to the inward man, to the one with Christ, it is sweet Gospel because when the child of God is taught at the feet of Christ, he is revealed how much of a sinner he is.

Verse 6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement," you're outside the yoke, I'll tell you that, "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards," no relationship with me. My yoke, the way that you will learn of me is

through correction, it's through chastening. You say, "Wow, that's mean." Well, we're not done.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence," and I've got to say that that's true. I correct my children and they give me reverence. They do not want to disappoint me again. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" You see, in our carnal life, we have examples and things that we do and the Lord says to us, "I do the same thing with you. How can you then say that it's wrong? How can we then reply against the Potter and say, 'Why do you form me this way?'"

"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he," here it is, "but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of," what? What does the chastening, loving hand of the Lord do for the child of God? "That we might be partakers of his holiness." He drives the unholiness out through correction, through revealing the evilness of the way that we're going and he reveals a holiness of himself. That's the part that is the correcting part and the sorrowful part for the child of God as he sees and he's revealed who he has sinned against. The love, the mercy, the grace, that he sinned against.

"That we might be partakers of his holiness." This is vital godliness. This is what the word of God talks about, godliness. Godliness is always sacrificed in this life for worldliness. It always is. "Oh, but the masses are doing this. These people are doing that. There is safety in this. I've got to do this." Where is the holiness of Christ? I'll tell you where it is, it's in his chastening hand. He must show the wickedness of the way before he shows you why it's wicked because being unequally yoked with unbelievers is unholy but being yoked in him is where holiness is.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." And he just told us that all of God's children will be exercised this way. All of them. Every one of them will be chastened. And he also told us, "If you're not then you are outside of this yoke, outside of this union, outside of Christ."

Let me take you to one more place. This is just teaching in general. Titus 2, the last place we'll go before we return to our text. Titus 2, beginning in verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," all of the children of God. We know that. We're not going to be silly and chase rabbits here and think that it's all men because we know Judas was not saved by grace. Enough of that discussion.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us," "Lord, what is it that you teach us?" What does grace teach the child of God? "That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." There is your examination this morning. Does the teaching of Christ through his word, does the teaching of Christ by his example, does the teaching of Christ through his correction, does all of that teaching that the Lord teaches you, does it cause

you to deny ungodliness, worldly lust and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world? Because that's the grace of being yoked with Christ.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." You see, that's what being yoked with Christ is, is that the child of God is not looking for something out in the world. He's not looking for something from Satan. He's not looking for something from his fallen nature. It's looking for Christ to appear in his soul. That's what being yoked with Christ is. It is waiting and desiring to see the appearance of the day of the Lord in his soul. That's what it is and that's the only thing that will fill it and that's the only thing that will bring it joy. That's what joy is. That's what joy is to the child of God, the appearing of Christ, his Savior, to his soul.

Now, let's go back to our text and we have a couple more things to say. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." I hope you've seen that. I hope you've seen that what the Lord teaches you comes from his meekness and his lowliness. Not only that, it comes from and it produces that same thing in the child of God: meekness and lowliness. I mean that not from power, I mean, how he condescends, his longsuffering toward us to do so. Not as a taskmaster. Not as a burdensome law. But as one who loves us and gave his life for us.

"For I am meek and lowly in heart," and then the very last part, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Hebrews 4:3 says, "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." As though the works were finished. That's what rest is. Rest is entering into what he has finished from the foundation of the world. That's what this yoke does. That's what I want you to understand: all of this goes back to the yoke, Jesus said. "This is my yoke." In verse 28, he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." That's how the child of God is brought. This isn't any skipping through the tulips person, this is one heavy laden under sin, heavy laden under his unworthiness and the Lord says, "When you are brought that way, when you are humbled that way, I will give you rest. Don't come to me telling me how righteous you are. Don't come to me telling me how your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And then verse 9 in that same Hebrews 4, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." What is that rest? I want to read you something. I brought Mason up here again. I thought this was very good. He wrote about this passage and I'm going to read a little part of it. "He has spoken it and will he not bring it to pass? He has said it and will he not fulfill it? Ye shall find rest to your souls. Such sweet tranquility and inward composure as can be found nowhere but in him. Could the children of this world persuade us, there is no evil in their vain diversions and carnal delights, still we know we cannot expect our Lord's presence there, nor shall we find rest to our souls in any of those bewitching scenes. No, but the more rest we find to our souls in Jesus, the more we are delighted with him and become dead to all things that are contrary to spiritual peace and joy from him. We who have believed, do enter into rest. (Hebrews 4:3)"

I'm going to leave you this morning with this poem that he wrote at the end and then we'll close in prayer.

"Let me but hearts my Savior say,
Strength shall be equal to thy day.
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient grace.
I glory in infirmity,
That Christ's own power may rest on me.
When I am weak, then I am strong,
Grace is my shield and Christ my song."

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious Lord, may you reveal this day what thy yoke is for thy children. May you show us, Lord, it is a yoke of love and a yoke of faith. May you bring us, Lord, to thy feet to be instructed in thy word, by thy correction and, Lord, by thee and thee alone. O Lord, may we see thy example and may we be empowered to walk in thee by faith. O Lord, may you bless us this day with thy faith to apprehend what has been spoken that you may be glorified. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.