



Title: The Christian's Rest
Theme: Relief from Life's Greatest Burdens
Series: Living in the Aroma of God's Grace

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

“Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.”

It has been well said that “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.” It is imperative that we understand that Christ came to redeem mankind from a sin-cursed world. Coming to Christ enables the child of God to overcome that spirit of religiosity and learn the joy of walking in step with the Holy Spirit who produces a purer and more spiritual way of worship to God and Christ. The key truth to today's text concerns the salvation of mankind's soul and how those who are heavy burdened with sin are to come to Christ for His yoke is light.

I would propose to you that sinners who find the rest which is promised through having Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, have the Lord's rest because they have responded to the Holy Spirit's convincing influence with a right heart of repentance. He has convinced them of the righteousness of God and the fact there is a coming final Judgment. (John 16:8)

Repentant sinners live in the aroma of God's grace because they became aware of their sinful condition without Christ. They grew sick and tired of service to the sinful nature, the world's draw and the lies of the devil. They understand the dangers of living a life bound to the sinful nature.

Christians who find relief from life's greatest burdens are those who express the heart of Ephraim who expressed godly sorrow for his sins. He prayed, “After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.” (Jeremiah 31:19) They are like the prodigal who came to his senses and confessed, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” (Luke 15:17) They approach God like the tax collector who prayed, “...God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” (Luke 18:13) They are responsive to the preaching of God's messages and say, “...“Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) These are the heart attitudes of Christians who enjoy the full grace of God in their lives.

Just what are the blessings of living in the aroma of God's grace?

The first step to enjoying these blessings is to have an understanding of what is meant by saying the Lord's yoke is easy. Jesus says, "For My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The Greek word for "easy" (*chrestos*) means to furnish what is needed, it can mean well-fitting or able to be used. The yoke that Christ puts on the child of God is not harsh or galling. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: William Barclay; Vines)

The great Christian historian William Barclay gives a little history about the Palestine ox-yokes. He tells us they were made of wood and the ox was brought to the carpenter and measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out and the ox was brought back to have the yoke tried on. Then the yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gall the neck of the patient beast. The yoke was literally tailor-made to fit the ox so he could give the best performance possible.

In those days, as now, shops had signs above the door; and it has been suggested that Christ may have made some of these oxen yokes. No doubt He was a great carpenter. (Mark 6:3) Many signs like today had nice short slogans. It has been suggested that a slogan on a sign above the door where Jesus worked as a young man could say, "My yokes fit well." I am not saying that Jesus had such a sign, only that the slogan would describe His ability to make yokes that would fit the oxen perfectly.

What the Holy Spirit wants you to catch is that the yoke the Lord Jesus puts on you will fit you perfectly. The life He chooses for you will not burden you and the task He sets before you is measured out to fit you well. Whatever God sends us is made first, to form us into the image of Christ, second, to fit our true needs, and third, to fit our abilities exactly. I have seen Christians who have Spiritual gifts, but they disregard them. They put on yokes made by their own self-will thus finding the religious life a burden. I have seen great men and women of God take upon the yoke the Lord has made to fit them perfectly, enjoy that abundant life found in Christ Jesus, and oversee their ministries very productively.

Christians who put on the yoke Christ has made for them for service with Him, find that the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, indwells them with the power of God to achieve all that God has called them to do.

The greatest burden that faces mankind is sin

Living in the aroma of God's grace requires that a sinner in repentance put on the life of Christ. He then can find rest from the burden of sin that he had yoked himself to in his youth. The greatest burden that faces mankind is sin. Through Jesus Christ being both Savior and Lord repentant sinners find relief from that burden. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) The Psalmist writes, "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'--and you forgave the guilt of my sin." (Psalm 32:5) The Book of Proverbs tells us this, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

The Holy Spirit of Christ proclaims a wonderful truth through the writings of the beloved John. Upon our confession of sin to Him, Christians receive forgiveness. Their standing before God is not guilty because of the ultimate price paid by Jesus upon the Cross of Calvary. To forgive us our sins means to forgive the guilt of sin. (The Preacher's Outline Bible) The word "forgiveness" (*aphiemi*) gives the idea of the cancellation of all debts or the dismissal of charges. In reality it is our sins that put Christ on the Cross, yet because of the shed blood of Christ, all charges against us are dropped.

Jeff Allen shared the testimony of his life without Christ. He was bitter and lived only for himself. Sin took him farther than he ever wanted to go and he found himself standing over the crib of his son, beating his little boy while he laid in the crib.

After awhile he grew sick of the lifestyle he had yoked himself to, lay his burdens at the Cross of Calvary and discovered the love of Christ. He accepted Jesus Christ into his heart and life and immediately found forgiveness and enjoyed that supernatural release from the guilt of sin.

Jeff Allen was given the same illumination of God's love as the Psalmist who wrote, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12) 1 John 1:9 goes farther into a truth that relieves the burdens of sin lived before salvation in Christ and sins foolishly fallen into after a sinner becomes a child of God. As a whole of Scripture we are taught that the basis of our fellowship with the Lord is not our sinlessness. Rather, His forgiveness is given to us based on what Christ has and does for us. In writing about walking in the light of Christ, the beloved John wrote, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." (1 John 2:1)

Jeff Allen not only experienced the forgiveness of the guilt of sin, but also experienced the supernatural work of being purified from unrighteousness. He like many born again Christians experienced purification (*katharizo*). This gives a picture of an act of cleansing from the pollution of sin so that a new life in Christ can begin. Born again Christians express a life that reveals a truth proclaimed by Jesus Christ, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Ken Davis in his travels in the ministry came across a bar-tender who knew Jeff Allen before Christ came into his life. This bartender told Ken, "Jeff Allen is the angriest, most bitter man that I have ever met." Ken Davis was able to give this testimony about Jeff Allen, "Not any more."

Christians are free from life's greatest burden, sin, because Christ paid the ultimate price. He gave His life so sinners may receive forgiveness and be set free from the bondage of sin. People inherited sin from Adam. They are in slavery to sin and unable in their own strength to set themselves free. They may be able to break away from one sin, only to be caught by another.

Christians are able to find relief from a life in bondage to sin because Jesus paid the highest price possible for the redemption of mankind. It is like the true story told of Abraham Lincoln by Pastor Adrian Rogers. There was a very sad time in American history when slaves were purchased and sold on the auction block. All people were created for God's glory yet some were born into slave families and kept in slavery all their lives to be sold, purchased and sold again. Yes it is true some were able to gain their freedom.

Abraham Lincoln was at a slave auction where he saw a beautiful black slave woman standing on an auction block to be sold. Men were bidding like crazy to purchase this beautiful black woman and it was clear that their intentions were to make her a plaything to feed their lust. Mr. Lincoln was bound and determined to become her redeemer and friend. He made it quite clear he was going to pay the highest price regardless. He won the bid. After purchasing her, Mr. Lincoln told the slave woman that she was free to go. However, of her own free will she chose to stay and serve Mr. Lincoln.

Just as those slave traders lusted after that beautiful woman, the pleasure of the flesh, the lures of the world, and the lies of the devil feed the sinful nature. Mankind's soul is in bondage to sin. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

Only by coming under the blood of Christ, the highest price possible that could be paid, does the repentant sinner find true liberty. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Christians are free to choose whom they will serve, people who have not been set free by Christ are blind and cannot see. Sin holds them captive.

The second greatest burden in a sin-stricken world is protecting and feeding the spiritual heart

The greatest burden of life, sin, finds relief in having Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. The second greatest burden in a sin-stricken world is protecting and feeding the spiritual heart. Jesus said, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4) Jesus' instructions are "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me..." .

We sing a song that has this chorus "Jesus be Jesus in me." It is a great song and we should take to heart what the Bible teaches on how Jesus kept His relationship with God our Father alive and well as He walked in this sin-stricken world.

In most Bibles today you will find headings and after those headings there will be a number on Scriptures. These headings are called pericopes and they give you a brief description of a key truth found in those passages of Scripture. Today's key Scriptures are found under the heading "The Temptation of Jesus."

The Holy Spirit anointed the Apostle Peter to give God's elect (1 Peter 1:1) a powerful exhortation as they live in a sin-stricken world. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith." (1 Peter 5:8)

In these Scriptures Peter warns Christians of the danger of making the fact of God's sovereign care an excuse for inactivity in maintaining a healthy surrendered life to will of God. His own experience of being sifted, tempted and tested makes him give a heart cry to the children of God, "Be self-controlled and alert."

Satan (*diabolos*) is a false accuser who is able to falsely accuse and divide people. He is a mastermind behind wearing down the saints. (The Complete Word Dictionary NT) He is a constant enemy of God, of Christ, of the followers of Christ and of all truth. He works evil by tempting people, (John 13:2; Acts 5:3) and by hindering God's Work. (1 Thessalonians 2:18) (Easton's Bible Dictionary; Tyndale Bible Dictionary; Harper's Bible Dictionary; New Bible Dictionary)

The great news is that Jesus Christ defeated Satan and purchased victory for the children of God. Jesus said, "...the prince of this world... Has no hold on Me. (John 14:30) Matthew 4:3 says, "The tempter came to [Jesus]." Jesus was attacked along three lines and He shows Christians how to find relief from the temptation of the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes.

Before we consider those temptations it is imperative that you understand, Christians who enjoy the full grace of God are Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke tells us that Jesus returned from the Jordan “..full of the Holy Spirit...” and “...was led by the Spirit in the desert...” (Luke 4:1) Holy Spirit filled Christians grow in testing and find that the way Jesus overcame Satan’s temptations is the only way to find relief from life’s burdens.

Satan’s intent in the temptations was to cause Jesus to sin by taking shortcuts to the accomplishment of God’s purposes for Him and to achieve God’s will by depending upon His own resources.

Satan’s first temptation was the lust of the flesh. In Matthew 4:2-3 we read, “After fasting for forty days and... nights, [Jesus] was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’” (Matthew 4:2-3) Jesus could have done this, but He would have been exercising His powers independently of the Father’s will.

Christians after a long season of being tested will be tempted to satisfy their inner longing by exercising their gifts to satisfy self-will. God has spiritual food that enables Christians to truly satisfy any hunger, this food brings eternal fulfillment and life. Feeding on the Word of God gives true direction on how, where and when to exercise their divine gifts sacrificially for the edifying of the Body of Christ thus finding relief from the burden of succumbing to the flesh.

Just as Jesus is the Son of God and has full authority over everything, Christians have Holy Spirit given gifts not to be used outside of God’s perfect will. When Spiritual gifts are used to satisfy self or gain glory to oneself, sin abounds, but when used in accordance to God’s will, they bring glory to Christ.

Jesus’ second temptation shows Christians how to get victory over the pride of life, “Then the devil took [Jesus] to... the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God... throw yourself down. For it is written...” (Matthew 4:6) “He has commanded His angels concerning you to guard you carefully.” (Luke 4:10) Once Satan saw that Jesus was going to look to the written Word of God for His weapon against him, he took a different approach to attacking the work of God. This is one of life’s greatest burdens, once Christians have defeated Satan in one area, he changes his approach of trying to destroy that intimate relationship that the Lord has for the children of God.

Christians who understand the dangers of this become illuminated with the truth that they must not divorce one part of Scripture from another, but compare all doctrines to the whole truth of Scripture. Many a false teacher has presented their beliefs in a very convincing way as they have taken the Word of God out of context and turn them into to a pretext.

There is a problem that arises among God's people known as sensationalism. Once the children of God have tasted a powerful move of God in their lives, especially in a powerful deliverance of some kind, there is that temptation to put themselves in that place where they can see God's miraculous intervention, just to reconfirm the fact God is still doing a powerful work in their lives.

Every born again Christian can tell you of a time when God really did something that showed His hand upon their lives. Some testimonies are more exciting than others, but that does not change the fact God has done some kind of a work in or through a Christian's life. Some become risk takers putting themselves in places, expecting God to bring a powerful deliverance.

In this particular temptation that was being presented to Christ Satan was quoting Psalm 91:11-12, "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you..." yet Satan very cleverly left out the rest of the verse, "...in all your ways." It is important to understand that kept with in context, "...in all your ways" means even though the Lord may allow terrible things to happen to His children, such as Job, Paul or even Jesus, it was allowed so they may experience God's faithfulness and presence. However, the people of God are not to be doing things that demand that God work a miracle to deliver them out of dangerous situations created by their own choice and actions.

There are missionaries who have enjoyed God's mighty protective hand while being held captive by dangerous adversaries, and there are missionaries who have put themselves in dangerous situations so they can boast of God's mighty deliverance in their letters or in home visits. This burden on the church and family members is relieved by following the example of Christ, living out "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matthew 4:7)

Christians are freed from the burden of the pride of life that easily robs intimacy as they seek the whole counsel of God's Word and they find relief from the burden of the lust of the eyes as well. Matthew 4:8-10 says, Again, the devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you... if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said, "Away from Me, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" (Matthew 4:8-10)

Here again we see Satan wanting to alter and destroy the plan God had arranged before the creation of the world. Satan was saying, "I can accomplish the will of God for you, you can have the kingdoms of this world right now and not even need to go to the Cross. Satan has always wanted to be worshiped and to take worship away from the Lord. (Isaiah 14:12-14)

He comes to mankind and says, "You can have whatever captures your eyes, all you need to do is worship the things created and not the Creator. Give the created things your strength, time, extra money and adoration and fulfill all your dreams now. You do not need to wait until God's time of putting everything in proper order, His way will keep you from enjoying all that is appealing to your eyes.

Jesus got victory over Satan's temptation by finding the only truth worth grasping, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him." To give true worship to God meant Jesus had to accomplish what the Word of God said He must do to please God and meet His only standard for the redemption of sinful mankind. The way of the Cross, the shedding of Jesus' blood was the only way for the redemption of mankind to be accomplished.

Just as the Lord Jesus knew what His purpose and calling was, Christians, by prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God, may know what God's will is for them. They are freed from the burden of being tempted to compromise God's will by staying obedient to what the Lord has revealed to them. Christians can literally overcome Satan's lie that says you can satisfy the lust of the eye by worshiping the things created and not give your worship only to the Creator.

Many sinners who were once caught in Satan's lies have been set free and they are now seeing the things they once worshiped being used to glorify God and Christ in and through their lives.

Some of the most exciting testimonies are those who once played football or some other sport for their own pleasure are now finding true joy of seeing their athletics skills being used by the Lord. Doctors who once practiced medicine for fame and money are now taking their medical skills out to the homeless or to other countries to bring medical care to the poor and needy. Music artists are becoming music ministers who proclaim the truths of God through songs that glorify Christ. Many children of God are now enjoying the truths taught by Christ, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." (Matthew 6:22-23)

Christians are now walking victories over pornography, the desire to get revenge, and chasing the world and the things in it. They have been relieved from the burden of the lust of the eye and have trained their eyes to look for the things of God, for the coming of Christ, and for God's guiding and protecting hand every day.

Christians find God's rest and relief from life's greatest burdens by going to Christ and taking on the yoke He has made for them

Christians find God's rest and relief from life's greatest burdens by going to Christ and taking on the yoke He has made for them. They learn from Him because He paid the ultimate price so they are free from the burden of sin. When the accuser begins bringing up the past life before Christ, they do not become burdened down, they claim the precious blood of Christ that makes the worst sinner clean.

The burden of maintaining that live vibrant relationship with the Lord is made easy because they feed themselves the written Word of God and pray in Holy Spirit revelation and illumination so they may know and be empowered to overcome the lust of the flesh, the pride of life and the lust of the eyes.

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