

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE EASY YOKE

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:30

The Greek word which is translated here as “yoke” literally means, “a coupling”. Of course the coupling together of “oxen” immediately comes to the mind of most people, as oxen are put together (for the purpose of plowing or pulling some implement) with a device which is commonly known as a “yoke”. While some application could perhaps be made (as it often is) to such a “coupling” of oxen, I do not believe that this is at all what the LORD JESUS has reference to here. If it was; there would of necessity be the concept of a collaboration of effort on the two parties thus coupled, regardless of whether or not one pulled more of the load than the other.

The “yoke” of which the LORD speaks here is not one wherein one ox pulls most of the load while the other has an “easier” time. There is no collaboration of effort in this “yoke” of which the LORD speaks, but rather the setting forth of the fact that all that is required is performed by the ONE whose “yoke” it is. So I do not believe the LORD is speaking of an “ox yoke” here at all.

HE said to take “MY yoke” upon you. The Jews often spoke of the “yoke” of the law, since they (at least outwardly) had a great respect and regard unto the law of Moses and believed that it was necessary for a man to “couple” himself to this law and walk according to its precepts. Their understanding of the purpose of this law was to “bind” a man to it, as an obligation which he could not escape.

The LORD’s words, here, are meant as a means of comfort to those who know themselves to be weak and already “*heavy laden*” under the demands of the law which neither they nor their fathers could bear. Thus HE commands all who presently are bowed down and in a hopeless condition, (required to adhere to the rigorous demands of the law, but unable to do so) to put off the “yoke” of the law of Moses, (which can do nothing but condemn them) and to take HIS “yoke”, which neither condemns them nor demands anything of them.

Such a “yoke” certainly was not acceptable to the Pharisees nor is it anywise acceptable to the religious world of today which constantly requires some activity of men, in order for them to gain spiritual blessings of one type or another. The LORD said that HE came to “*fulfill the law*” (see Mat.5:17) and in so doing, HE has delivered HIS people from the demands of that law.

This is what the apostle Paul speaks of when he says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” (Rom 8:1-4)

A man cannot serve two masters, he will either serve the law or HE will serve CHRIST, but there can be no mixture of the two. This error has troubled the church since the very earliest of days, and we see the whole epistle of Paul to the Galatians, written to correct this aberration of

the gospel. CHRIST does not deliver HIS people from the law of Moses only to put them back under it in some other form or to introduce some more stringent "requirement".

Any and all "requirements" which are given to those who are the sons of GOD by the grace of GOD, have been satisfied by HIM who comes to save sinners, and not to load their backs with another law of this demand or that. The law (i.e.; principle) of the SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS is that which frees the sons of GOD from the law (i.e.; principle) of sin and death. The "principle of sin and death" is anything which says, "do this and live" or "do this and gain blessings." CHRIST has secured any and all blessings for those for whom HE came.

The promise of GOD in CHRIST JESUS is that HE is become the PERFORMER for HIS people. HE does currently work in them "*both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" (Philip 2:13) Paul declares this to the Galatians, "*For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*" (Gal 2:19-21)

The "yoke" of CHRIST is "easy", not because no effort is required, but rather because HE is the ONE who has put forth and accomplished all of the effort needed for the complete and utter salvation of those whom HE commands to learn of HM. There is nothing left for them to do. Would they need obedience, HE is their obedience. "*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom 5:19-21) "*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*" (Heb 5:8)

The "yoke" of CHRIST is the revelation of the character of CHRIST. "*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.*" (Mat 11:29) When the SPIRIT of GOD is come HE does not speak of HIMSELF but rather HE testifies of CHRIST and HIS perfect righteousness. Should we love GOD with all of our heart? HE said of HIMSELF, "*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*" (John 6:38) Should we love our neighbor as ourselves? "*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Rom 5:7-8)

The "yoke" of CHRIST is the revelation of the "satisfactory" and "substitutionary" work of CHRIST. The greatest rest for the sons of GOD ("*ye shall find rest unto your souls*") is in being made able to see that CHRIST has satisfied the total demands of the law for those HE has intended to redeem. HE has not made some attempt at a general and universal redemption for all men, which yet requires the addition of a man's "faith", but rather HE has entered in once into the holy place and obtained eternal redemption for a particular people.

If HE has "*obtained*" that redemption, then nothing can be left which needs to be performed. This is a message which must be proclaimed from every hill and housetop. CHRIST is the REDEEMER of HIS people, the SAVIOR of sinners, and the PROVIDER of every perfect gift.

The "yoke" of Moses' law demanded obedience and promised condemnation for those who did not live up to its stringent demands. Because of the innate rebellion which is in the hearts of all men, this law can do nothing but stir up the natural enmity of the mind towards it and minister damnation. Thus the man who is awakened to see his own sin, must be crushed under it.

The "yoke" of CHRIST, on the other hand, ministers LIFE and LIGHT, because it reveals a perfect LAWKEEPER. Rather than stirring up enmity in the hearts and minds of those who take it up (by grace through FAITH) it brings them into conformity with that "yoke" and causes them to "*delight in the law of God after the inward man.*" (Rom 7:22) Perfect love casts out fear. Rather than living under the "law's condemnation", the man who is "in CHRIST" lives under the law's perfect fulfillment and satisfaction, he cannot be condemned; "his burden is light". mam