

YOKED WITH CHRIST

(Matt. 11:29-30)

After inviting people to come to Him and find rest in Him, Jesus then elaborates on what it means to be in relationship with Him.

Matthew 11:29 (NKJV)

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

To come to Christ is to come on His terms. It comes with recognizing Him for Who He is as my Lord (Master) and that I am now His disciple. A disciple is a learning follower. Coming to Christ involves becoming His disciple, as the Great Commission makes clear in Matt. 28:19-20.

“In ancient writings, a pupil who submitted himself to a teacher was said to take the teacher’s yoke.” – **John MacArthur**

Thus, the yoke was a common symbol of submission. In Judaism, it was a common metaphor for the law, but now Jesus applies it to Himself. Coming to Christ in effect meant exchanging the yoke of the law for the yoke of Himself! The essence is this: What is going to run your life? Is it going to be Jewish legalism, or is it going to be Christ? Who or what is going to be Lord? That is the ultimate issue!

Philippians 3:8–9 (NKJV)

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Coming to Christ involves entering into a YOKE relationship with Him – acknowledging that He has the sovereign right of control (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Now we must learn and grow in this role, but in salvation we enter into it.

“The ‘yoke’ (v. 29), put on animals for pulling a heavy load, is a metaphor for the discipline of discipleship. If Jesus is not offering the yoke of the law, neither is he offering the freedom from all constraints. The ‘yoke’ is Jesus’ yoke, not the yoke of the law; discipleship must be to him.” – **D.A. Carson**

As believers, we are no longer under the law of Moses, but this does not mean we are under nothing – that we are not under any yoke at all. Now, as believers, we are under the law of Christ, as Paul indicates in Galatians 6:2. While we are freed from sin, we are now the slaves of Christ (1 Cor. 7:22). While sin is no longer our master, Christ now is our Master, and we are His disciples (Rom. 6:7, 11, 22). Those who have truly come to Christ are now under His YOKE.

A “yoke” is a neck harness for two. Most commonly, oxen were yoked together to do work in the field.

The NT instructs believers not to be yoked together in fellowship with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). It is to be in union together. In coming to Christ, we yoke up with Him – we enter into union with Him. The NT constantly emphasizes that we as believers are now “in Christ”.

The Rabbis referred to the yoke of the law, but here the metaphor of “yoke” refers to one of discipleship. As we enter into this yoke relationship of discipleship with the Lord, the result is that we begin to learn from Christ (cf. Eph. 4:20). It is a learning relationship. He is the Master/Teacher, and we are His disciples.

And what do we find? Do we find Him to be a harsh taskmaster – and that being in union with Him is HARD? No, as we learn from Him, we find Him to be gentle and lowly in heart, resulting in rest for our souls.

1 John 5:3 (NKJV)

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Gentle is sometimes translated as “meek,” and lowly in heart as “humble in heart”. Some tie the idea of gentleness to the Messianic servant passages in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 42:2-3; 53:1-2).

What a beautiful picture of graciousness. He is not harshly jerking us around in an abusive manner. Rather, He is gentle and humble in heart. Think about this: the sovereign Lord over all is “humble in heart”. We see this in His relationship with His disciples. He was ever amazingly patient, tolerant, and gracious with them. And yet, it is always evident that He is the Lord who is in charge. It is great to be yoked up with such a person. He is totally in charge, and yet He is gentle and not forceful in His dealings with us.

And in this YOKE relationship we learn to be like Him. We too learn to be gentle and humble and in doing so find the way of rest for our souls. There is a positional reality of REST that we enter into upon coming to Him – that's verse 28. This is our eternal position in Christ. But then, as we enter into this "yoke" relationship with Him, there is also the reality of practical sanctification in which we learn to find rest in Him in our daily experience. Both are found in Jesus.

So note the connection of thought between verse 28 and 29, and yet the distinction.

Verse 28 is dealing with justification, while verse 29 goes on to deal with sanctification. They are related and yet distinct.

"Justification is an event; sanctification a process. The two must be distinguished but can never be separated. God does not justify whom He does not sanctify, and He does not sanctify whom He does not justify. Both are essential elements of salvation."– **John MacArthur**

We see that balance here in Matt. 11:28-29. In verse 28 we have the REST (or peace) with God that comes in justification at the moment of saving faith (cf. Rom. 5:1). It is a REST given by Christ to those at the time they come to Him in faith. But then in verse 29 we have the REST (or peace) of God that comes from learning from Him that we find for our souls in practical sanctification (cf. Phil. 4:6-8). The one leads to the other. In verse 28, Christ gives us REST, and in verse 29 we learn to have REST for our souls. Both are borne out of saving faith, but one relates to justification and the other to ongoing sanctification. Coming to Christ, He gives us rest! Coming to Christ, we are YOKED up with Him and begin to learn His rest!

Positionally, we rest in Him, and in practice we learn to find rest in Him as we more and more learn to cast all our cares upon Him (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7). We learn instead of being anxious to pray about everything and thereby experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:6-8).

Are you tired - burdened down by the sin and stresses of life? Are you burned out on religion and the demands of legalism? Come to Jesus. He offers REST! Learn from Him and let Him teach you about His rest! He gives us rest from the penalty of sin; He gives us rest from the power of sin, and ultimately, He will give us rest from the very presence of sin (Rev. 14:13).

Matthew 11:30 (NKJV)

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

The way of sin is hard (cf. Prov. 13:15). The yoke of the law is HARD (cf. Acts 15:10). The yoke of legalism is HARD (cf. Gal. 5:1). But in contrast, the yoke of Christ is easy.

Christ’s yoke is His yoke. Two times Christ calls it His yoke in verse 29 and again in verse 30. He carries the load. Yes, in union with Him we share in this yoke, but it is essentially His. And His yoke comes with REST.

We positionally REST in a right relationship with God because of our union with Christ. No matter what comes, no matter what happens, that REST remains secure and unmoving. You can rest easy in this relationship.

And regarding our practice, even in all the struggles and challenges of life, being in union with Christ means we always have Him with us to help us. His yoke means we always have His grace available, and His grace is sufficient no matter what we go through (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Being in yoke with Him means the Lord is our shepherd, providing all that we need, and therefore we shall not lack (Ps. 23:1).

Being linked with Christ is the EASY way in comparison to the world’s way.

1 John 5:3 (NKJV)

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

They are not burdensome because what Christ commands of us – what He asks us to do – He also empowers us to do by the Holy Spirit Who lives in us. In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).

Peter says, “***His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness***” (2 Pet. 1:3). This is the EASY way – Christ’s yoke is easy. And His burden is light. Some translate this as, “***My load is light***”. Whatever Christ asks you to carry is light because He is with you in the yoke. Christ with you makes all the difference. It is because of this that Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13).

Note: He didn’t say there would be no burden, but rather that with Christ in the YOKE it is light. It is what Christ gives you, and since it is His yoke, we can trust that it is good. He has promised that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:12). He will not allow

us to be crushed. His burden, therefore, is “**light**”. He is there to always do the heavy lifting, and He leaves the EASY/LIGHT part for us.

And as we learn from Him, we more and more learn to REST in Him, which is why we find it easy and light.

“Christ’s yoke is not burdensome because His character is ‘gentle and humble in heart.’ His service flows from grace, not legalism; from love, not judgmentalness; and from gratitude, not trying to earn what is unattainable by human effort.” – **Ed Glasscock**

God never intended for us to bear life’s burdens alone. A yoke is a neck harness for TWO. Christ invites us to yoke up with Him, and in this we find REST!

The story is told of a man who was carrying a heavy basket along a dirt path one day. Because of the heavy load, the man’s young son offered to help. The father cut a large stick and placed it through the handle of the basket. His own end was very short and heavy, while his son’s end was long and light. When each took hold of the stick, it was the father who essentially carried the burden. That is a picture of our yoke with Christ. He essentially carries it, which means it is EASY and LIGHT for us!

“The Lord will never tax us beyond our strength, never impose a task beyond the ability He gives. He is on the other side of the yoke, and He carries all its weight. The responsibility is His. The results are His burden, not ours. The Lord is the kindest, most considerate Master in the world. Come! Take! Learn! Find!” – **John Phillips**

True REST, spiritual REST, is found only in Jesus. Yes, Come! Take! Learn! Find! Jesus invites, “Come to Me...and I will give you rest! COME!