

Reverent Surrender - The Easy Yoke

INTRO: Maria Brunner, of Poing, Germany, was willing to go to jail to get a break. Brunner's husband is unemployed, so she supports their three young children by cleaning other people's houses. Even without a job, her husband managed to run up \$5,000 worth of unpaid parking tickets. The husband kept the tickets a secret, but as the owner of the vehicle, Maria was responsible. She couldn't pay the fine, and unless her husband could come up with the money, she would spend three months in jail.

She welcomed the thought. "I've had enough of scraping a living for the family," she says. "As long as I get food and a hot shower every day, I don't mind being sent to jail. I can finally get some rest and relaxation."

Police reported that Maria repeatedly thanked them for arresting her.

TRAN: I think many of us may feel like that at times in life. So many things are going wrong, we have such stress, we are under such burdens that we are happy to get away from it all. In this case even if it meant prison time.

Matthew 11:28-30 "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."

I. Review:

- A. We have been working our way through biblical images of revert surrender
 1. We looked at the undecorated altar the first week
 2. The second week, we looked at the donkey Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday
 3. On Easter, believe it or not there was an image of surrender there too - the empty tomb
 - a) It stands for new life
 - b) To receive that new life, one must die to their old life - surrender their old ways of living, and enter into the new life by being resurrected with Christ
 4. Last time we look at the jars of clay - their frailty, and the strength that comes from the treasure inside
- B. Tried as I might, I could not get a real live version of our last image of surrender - so, we have to simply put a picture on the screen
 1. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am a city boy
 - a) I was born and raise 25 miles south of Chicago in the suburbs
 - b) There were few farms around growing up, and if there were any, they might have a few animals

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- c) But the plowing and farm duties had long been taken over from the oxen and given to the gas powered machines
 2. Even though I am a city boy, even I know what this is - it's a yoke
 3. It is used by a pair of oxen to pull a plow behind and plow a field
 4. Jesus frequently used images or illustrations from farming
 - a) None of the images or illustrations for surrender from scripture have been in any way fancy - the altar, the donkey, the tomb, jars of clay
 - b) They do not call attention to themselves - and the yoke is no different
 - c) The yoke might be likened today to a trailer hitch - so today Jesus might say, "Take my trailer hitch upon you..."
 5. This is our next biblical image of surrender
- II. Before we dive in here, let me ask you a personal question
- A. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me"
 - B. So, are you yoked to Jesus Christ?
 1. I ask because if you are not yoked to Christ, you are missing the substance and depth of the Christian life
 2. The yoke represents a Christ directed life
 - a) A life that has given up our own ways of trying to live
 - b) And has willingly accepted living by Jesus direction
 3. If there is any place to be in the Christian life, it is yoked with Christ
- III. So what does it mean to unburden ourselves at Christ's invitation
- A. Well, it really is an invitation, not an imposition
 1. Christ is not forcing some burden upon us
 2. He invites us to live under His leadership
 3. The question is, why wouldn't we?
 - a) Why would we not come under Jesus leadership?
 - b) Why would we not seek the rest that Christ is offering?
 - B. Sadly, there is a gap between claiming faith in Christ and living obediently to Christ
 - C. We have a tendency to cling to our burdens and excess baggage that does not belong in the Christian life
 1. Maybe you have been behind someone in line arguing with the flight attendant why their bag is not oversized, or overweight
 2. Think about the burdens we hold on ourselves when we don't release them in our walk with Christ
 - a) The possessions we hold too tightly
 - b) The activities we think are so important
 - c) The habits that get in the way
 - d) Personal baggage of guilt, lust, selfishness, anger, pride, etc.

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- e) When we do this, we take a weight on ourselves that we were never designed to take
- 3. In January 1999 the North Atlantic commercial fishing industry saw a deadly string of accidents. In a 13-day span, the *Cape Fear*, the *Adriatic*, and the *Beth Dee Bob* were lost at sea off the coast of New Jersey. In all, 10 men died, five never to be found. Commercial fishing is a dangerous way to make a living, but even so three ships lost in such a short period of time is extraordinarily rare, particularly when all three were from the same docks.
- 4. Investigations revealed the following facts about the three separate tragedies:
 - 5. 1 None involved a hull breach.
 - 6. 2 All three ships were piloted by veteran captains with 10 years or more in the wheelhouse.
 - 7. 3 All three ships were near the end of their journey, less than 15 miles from home.
- 8. So what happened? Two of the three ships were carrying too much weight, and one was carrying its weight improperly. Commercial vessels on the water in early January are mostly clam boats, as were the *Cape Fear*, the *Adriatic*, and the *Beth Dee Bob*. A commercial clam trap is 3' x 3' x 4' and weighs 300 pounds empty. Filled with these traps, they weigh in at between 1 and 1.5 tons apiece! The *Cape Fear* and the *Adriatic* each had 10 extra traps on board. That's 10-15 tons of excess weight!
- 9. Interviewers later asked other boat captains who fished these waters the following question: Why would a veteran boat captain completely ignore the papers on his boat and attempt to carry 10-15 tons more than was safe? Time after time, the answer came in the form of a quizzical look and a shrug. Simply put, the behavior was common practice. These captains didn't perceive themselves to be in danger. They were simply doing what was normal in their industry.
- 10. Ladies and gentlemen, there is a real danger in holding on to these burdens that we were never designed to carry
- D. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."
 - 1. Douglas Webster says of this verse in his book, *The Discipline of Surrender*, "we should remember that our Lord is our Savior, not our Sherpa."
 - 2. He goes on to tell the story of a millionaire socialite that had Lopsang, her Sherpa, carry the following up Mount Everest for her

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- a) A satellite phone, 2 IBM laptops, a video camera, three 35mm cameras, a digital camera
 - b) Two tape recorders, a CD-ROM player, a printer, an espresso maker, and enough solar panels and batteries to power them all
 - c) Webster says, “[She] trying to climb Mount Everest with all her equipment is a picture of a Christian trying to follow Christ but still hanging on to all the cares and [burdens] of the world.”
- E. Jesus gave His life so that we might be free from the burdens of sin and death, and the world that so easily entangles
1. You can’t choose a burden-filled lifestyle and expect the to experience the blessings of Christ
 2. We were meant to leave the burdens at the foot of the cross and follow Christ
- IV. Let’s look at some of the things we learn from the yoke of Christ
- A. This image of surrender has two parts
1. One part is learning
 - a) We learn from Christ
 - b) As we take on His yoke, we learn as He guides us
 2. The second part is action
 - a) A yoke is not really a tool for teaching, though it can be
 - b) A yoke is a tool of action
- B. The Sermon on the Mount is a great illustration of this dual relationship help we receive from Christ - learning and doing
1. We will not take the time to read the entire Sermon on the Mount - but follow along with me on the headings in your Bible or the pew Bible
 - a) Turn to Matthew 5:3
 - b) I am using an NIV Bible, and that is what the pew Bibles are - the headings will match those Bibles
 2. Matthew 5:3-12 - The Beatitudes
 - a) This section celebrates the life we have received in Christ, not the life we have achieved
 - b) They are about God’s provision, not our performance
 - c) When we take on the easy yoke of Christ, the easy tool of burden, we always move forward by this description
 - (1) We never grow out of spiritual poverty in and of ourselves - our riches are in Christ
 - (2) We always need to practice the spiritual disciplines of mercy, purity, peacemaking and perseverance
 3. Matthew 5:13-16 - Salt and light
 - a) Salt represents preservation and light represents illumination

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- b) When we take on the easy yoke of Christ, these things go with us wherever we go
 - (1) We don't take off the yoke of Jesus before work
 - (2) We are always under the easy yoke - and representing Christ becomes natural and normal as we live out Jesus' will in society
- 4. Jump down to Matthew 5:21-48 - There are several titles but I will lump them all into one category of "Heart Righteousness"
 - a) Jesus is teaching what it is like for a heart that is captured and following Him
 - b) When we put on the easy yoke, our hearts seek to follow the intention of laws like do not murder - really it is don't hate
 - c) Jesus is teaching new truths about those that accept His invitation, that take on the easy yoke
- 5. Matthew 6:1-18 - Again several headings together so we will call this section, "Hidden Righteousness"
 - a) Jesus starts the teaching in verse 1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness to be seen by others"
 - b) Allow your righteousness to be quiet, not showy
 - c) The Puritans had an expression - they wanted to live for an "Audience of One"
 - d) When we take on Jesus easy yoke, we seek to please God and God alone
- 6. Matthew 6:19-7:12 - We will call this section: Kingdom of God Priorities
 - a) What do we live for - according to 6:20 - treasures in heaven
 - b) What master do we serve (again showing priority)? Verse 24
 - c) Then Jesus easy yoke exposes false dynamics: worry, judging, etc.
 - d) Jesus easy yoke calls for simple obedience, humble devotion, and genuine communion with Him
- 7. Last one Matthew 7:13-27 - Life under the easy Yoke
 - a) Jesus gives us either or alternatives
 - (1) The broad or the narrow road
 - (2) True or false prophets
 - (3) Two different pleas - words and deeds
 - (4) Two foundations - sand and rock
 - b) Either we are living under the easy yoke, or we are not living under the easy yoke
 - c) The yoke of Christ only becomes a heavy and confusing burden when we try to live under it half-heartedly

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- C. There is another passage about the yoke I want us to see before we wrap things up today - so turn to Hosea 11:4
1. "I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them."
 - a) Very quickly, I have no idea what the translators of the NIV were thinking here
 - b) The words in Hebrew for "little child" are translated 32 out of 39 times as having to do with lifting a yoke
 - c) Where the little child came in I have no idea - so let me read this to you in the previous NIV translation - it will be on the screen behind me
 - d) "I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them."
 2. Now, this passage, and the entire book of Hosea is talking about God's love for the nation of Israel
 - a) Just a few verses before this God tells us how, after releasing them from being slaves in Egypt the nation chased after idols and foreign gods
 - b) And yet, God still loves them
 - (1) They have gotten themselves into a complete mess of a burden
 - (2) And yet God stoops down to meet us where we are
 - (3) Remember the verse in Matthew 11 - "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest?"
 - (4) This is a picture of God stooping down to lift the burden from the necks of the Israelites
 - (a) The burden they foolishly placed on themselves
 - (b) The burden that flew in the face of God
 - (c) And the burden that has been wearing them out
 - c) This burden has been on their necks so long, they don't know how to get up themselves
 - (1) So God stoops down to meet them where they are
 - (2) He stoops down to feed them and love them
 3. Because we, like them do not know how to operate without a yoke because we have been under the burden of this world so long, not only do we need Jesus to come and remove our yoke, but we need Him to
 - a) Stoop down to us
 - b) Love us
 - c) Feed us
 - d) Perhaps most importantly, provide us with a new, easy yoke

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- (1) His yoke
- (2) He says in Matthew 11:30 “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
- (3) It brings a question to mind: Why is His yoke easy and light?

D. The easy yoke of Christ

1. Dr. Dwight Pentecost used to give this metaphor which rather blew me away upon reading it
2. There was an old farmer plowing with his team of oxen. The new pastor in town happen to see them out plowing as he was out with one of the elders of the church, also a farmer. The new pastor noticed that one of the oxen was massive, and the other was just a small bullock. He thought this strange because the general rule is to make sure the oxen are equally yoked. So he made a comment to the elder who was riding with him.
3. “Why is that team of oxen so mismatched in size? I thought you wanted them to be more equal than that.”
4. The elder replied, “I want you to notice something. See the way those traces are hooked to the yoke? You will observe that the large ox is pulling all the weight. That little guy is being broken in to the yoke but he is not pulling any weight.”
5. The pastor’s mind quickly recalled the verses, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your weary souls.”
6. In a normal yoke the load is evenly distributed between the two that are yoked together, but when we are yoked with Jesus Christ, He bears the load and we who are yoked with Him share in the joy and accompaniment of the labor but without the burden of the yoke.
7. We that are yoked with Him are being trained in the spiritual life, while Christ bears the load.

V. Final thoughts

A. The yoke of Jesus is an invitation

1. No one is forced to take on the yoke of Jesus
2. No one need worry about having it thrust on them unwillingly
3. God will never force you to take it - He invites you into partnership with Him

B. When we understand that Christ’s yoke is a gift, who would want to continue wearing the yoke of the world

1. Jesus lovingly guides us as we work with Him
2. Jesus trains us in our spiritual life to love Him better
3. Jesus teaches us how much easier His yoke is than the world’s

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- C. The yoke is no flashy instrument of the spiritual life
 - 1. It is as common as it gets
 - 2. Yet it teaches us to fully surrender to Jesus
 - a) To give up those burdens that we bear
 - b) To seek the rest in Jesus
 - c) To allow Jesus to train us
- D. Do you need to rest in Jesus?
 - 1. Is there a burden that you have been carrying that you need to lay down?
 - a) Have the kids been getting on your nerves? Are you struggling in your relationship with your spouse?
 - b) Have you been burdened over finances? Are you trying to carry that weight alone?
 - c) Do you have a relationship that has been stretched and strained and you carry the burden with you - trying to figure out how to handle it?
 - d) Is there someone that you are burdened to see come to Christ?
 - (1) You want desperately to see them know God and love God
 - (2) You have tried everything you can - could it be time to take off unburden yourself of thinking it is up to you, and trust Christ
 - 2. Maybe you have been trying to hold on to the yoke of Christ, but done so half-heartedly
 - a) You want Jesus to help, but you don't want to give up control
 - b) You have felt like you can still handle this, but maybe today you are realizing your need to fully commit to being teamed up with Jesus
 - 3. Its possible to see the yoke two ways
 - a) One is that you have never known Jesus before - you are tired and weary from the world, and you want to change yokes - you want Jesus
 - b) The other is discipleship - how you learn and follow Jesus - do you need to turn your back on the world's way of handling life, and take on Jesus' way of handling life.
- E. Today we have no special items to pass out to you
 - 1. No special yokes to go around for everyone
 - 2. We simply close with a time of prayer