

The Yoke of Restraint and Obedience.

Mrs. E. G. White.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Christ's yoke is a yoke of restraint and obedience. We owe full and complete obedience to our Lord; for we are his by creation and by redemption. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are to bear the yoke of Christ that we may be placed in complete union with him. "Take my yoke upon you," he says. Obey my requirements. But these requirements may be in direct opposition to the will and purposes of the human agent. What then is to be done? -- Hear what God says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The yoke and the cross are symbols representing the same thing, -- the giving up of the will to God. Wearing the yoke unites finite man in companionship with the dearly beloved Son of God. Lifting the cross cuts away self from the soul, and places man where he learns how to bear Christ's burdens. We cannot follow Christ without wearing his yoke, without lifting the cross and bearing it after him. If our will is not in accord with the divine requirements, we are to deny our inclinations, give up our darling desires, and step in Christ's footsteps.

The Lord does not encourage the wisest, the most cherished plans of human beings if he sees that they are not for the health of the spirituality of his cause. Sometimes the Lord's purposes come in direct opposition to plans in which the human agent can not see a flaw. Then it is that the right hand must be sacrificed and the right eye taken out. Purposes that seem in every way desirable may have to be given up. The Lord sees that for the spiritual health of the human agent and for the future well-being of his cause all self-confidence must be cut away. Human wisdom and self-sufficiency must be broken down.

Men frame for their own necks yokes that seem light and pleasant to wear, but they prove galling in the extreme. Christ sees this, and he says, Take my yoke upon you. The yoke you would place upon your own neck, thinking it a precise fit, will not fit at all. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me the lessons essential for you to learn; for I am

meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. The Lord never makes a false estimate concerning his heritage. He measures the men with whom he is working. When they submit to his yoke, when they give up the struggle that has been unprofitable for themselves and for the cause of God, they will find peace and rest. When they become sensible of their own weakness, their own deficiencies, they will delight to do God's will. They will submit to the yoke of Christ. Then God can work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure, which is often entirely contrary to the plans of the human mind. When the heavenly anointing comes to us, we shall learn the lesson of meekness and lowliness, which always brings rest to the soul.

God brings men into trying places, to see if they will trust in a power out of and above themselves. He sees not as man sees. He often has to break up human connections and change the order which man has mapped out, which is perfect in his estimation. What man thinks is for his spiritual and temporal interests may be altogether at variance with the experience he must have in order to be a follower of Christ. His idea of his own value may be far out of the way.

Tests are placed all along the way from earth to heaven. It is because of this that the road to heaven is called the narrow way. Character must be tested, else there would be many spurious Christians, who would keep up a fair semblance of religion until their inclinations, their desire to have their own way, their pride and ambition, were crossed. When, by the Lord's permission, sharp trials come to them, their lack of genuine religion, of the meekness and lowliness of Christ, shows them to be in need of the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ's command, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," is the touchstone that discovers the quality of the experience. When a man's inclinations or ambitious hopes are crossed, he reveals the spirit that governs him.

Christ declares that the only course for men and women to pursue for their present and eternal good is to comply with his invitation. He invites all to wear his yoke and learn his meekness and lowliness. He knows that it is positively necessary for them to do this. But no human being can wear the yoke of submission and obedience who does not learn daily in the school of Christ. Whatever may be a person's supposed amiability, however qualified for usefulness he may appear to be, however righteous he may be apparently, he cannot work for God unless he learns of Christ. Qualifications for true service can never be acquired apart from Christ. No one, whatever his supposed abilities, can bear the test of trial unless he is a student in the school of Christ.

Our Saviour purchased the human race by humiliation of the very severest kind. He, the Majesty of heaven, disrobed himself of his glory, and clothed his divinity with humanity, that he might pass through what humanity must pass through. He submitted

to mockery, abuse, scorn, and to a cruel, shameful death to make it possible for man to be saved. He points us to the only path that will lead to the strait gate, opening into the narrow way, beyond which lie broad and pleasant pastures. He has marked out every step of the way; and that no one may make a mistake, he tells us just what to do. "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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This is the only way in which sinners can be saved. Knowing that no one can obey this command in his own strength, Christ tells us not to be worried nor afraid, but to remember what he can do if we come to him, trusting in his strength. He says, If you yoke up with me, your Redeemer, I will be your strength, your efficiency.

The blessings connected with Christ's invitation can be realized and enjoyed by those only who wear Christ's yoke. Accepting this invitation, you withdraw your sympathy, your affections, from the world, and place them where you can enjoy the blessing of close fellowship and communion with God. By coming to Christ, you bind up your interests with his.

The Lord has determined that every soul who obeys his word shall have his joy, his peace, his continual keeping power. Such men and women are brought near him always, not only when they kneel before him in prayer, but when they take up the duties of life. He has prepared for them an abiding place with himself, where the life is purified from all grossness, all unloveliness. By this unbroken communion with him, they are made co-laborers with him in their life-work.

Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing." As we advance step by step in the path of obedience, we shall know how true is the promise that they who follow on to know the Lord shall know that his going forth is prepared as the morning. Clearer light is ready to shine upon all who follow him who is the light of the world. Everyone who takes upon him the yoke of Christ, with full determination to obey the word of God, will have a healthy, symmetrical experience. He will enjoy the blessings that come to him as a result of the hiding of his life with Christ in God. In business life he will work out the principles laid down in Christ's sermon on the mount. He will renounce the bag of deceitful weights, and will despise the fraud of tricks in trade. He will earn money, not to hoard it, but to put it in circulation. He has an abiding sense that he is a part of the heavenly firm, and that it is his duty to trade upon the talents given him by God. He realizes that he is adopted into the family of God, and that he must act toward all as Christ acted when he was upon this earth.

What a diligent, constant work is the work of the true Christian. Ever he wears the yoke of Christ. Evil surmisings are not allowed to take root in his heart. He has genuine modesty, and does not talk of his qualifications and accomplishments. Self-admiration is not a part of his experience. There is much to learn in regard to what comprises true

Christian character. It certainly is not self-inflation. The true Christian keeps his eyes fixed on Him who searches the heart and tries the reins, who requires truth in the inward parts. His constant prayer is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Compliments are not to be given to sinful, erring men. The glory and majesty of God should ever fill our souls with a holy awe, humbling us in the dust before him. His condescension, his wide, deep compassion, his tenderness and love, are given us to strengthen our confidence, and remove that fear which tendeth unto bondage. The Lord wants us to give him all there is of us, in a steady, evenly balanced Christian life, a life that illustrates the principles of his law.

Let us not endure the thought of being religious dwarfs. Let us press on, receiving the counsel of Jesus Christ, having that faith which works by love and purifies the soul. We must ever be growing unto the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus, till we are complete in him. Christ will come and abide with every soul who will say from the heart, Come in. He loves everyone who has a desire to follow him. He knows that it is the impatience and fretfulness of the human heart, and the pride that loves not humility, that keeps the soul from good. He invites us, Come unto me. Take my yoke upon you. I require you to do nothing that I have not done before you. All I ask you to do is to follow my example. Walk in the path I have marked out. Place your feet in my footsteps.

"Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds." "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."