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Sermon preached at "Ebenezer", Clapham, by Mr. J. Delves on Sunday evening

January 12th 1936

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour 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". Matthew 11 v.v 28,29,30

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In these verses the Lord Jesus kindly and condescendingly invites the burdened and heavy laden sinner to come to Himself: to come for rest: for that rest that He declares Himself to be, and which He promises to give. This exercise in a child of God is a constant one. True believers rightly exercised before God will be constantly engaged in coming, because of their constant need. Our needs do not become less as time goes on with us, but they are increased, and we shall never arrive at that stage when we can be independent or self-sufficient, when we can produce anything ourselves that will give peace, and satisfaction, and rest in our hearts and consciences. Hence, by the power of faith, living souls must be constantly coming. They are coming as unto a living Stone, they come to Christ, and the mercy for us is this, that we come to One who has an infinite sufficiency, One who can answer every need, fill every vacant place, One who has commanded blessings for Jacob. Therefore, though our needs are great, we may, by the power of faith, plead the Lord's own promise, where He says, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

In our coming sometimes we have to come upon the ground of His own promise. We come and take our standing, so to speak, upon the divine injunction to sinners to come and plead that promise. One of the effective methods, if I might rightly use a word of that nature, is to remind the Lord of His own Word. "Put Me in remembrance", He says, "Let us plead together, Declare thou that thou mayest be justified". And I believe at times a believing saint, a poor needy sinner, may come, and wrestle with God upon that ground. Lord, Thou hast said this, Thy word is this, Thy promise to comers is this, here I stand Lord, fulfil that promise in my case, and supply my need, and bless me with this, and give me rest. There are many difficulties attending this coming, difficulties which arise from within and without. Coming is not easy often, although at times there is a sweet running; yet often the coming is the coming of a labourer, of one heavy laden with his sin, and his guilt, and with providence, perhaps, which is afflicting, with circumstances which are distressing; yet whether it be circumstances, providence, affliction, soul needs, or whatever it may be, in this there is no restriction to one who is laden thereby; he may come to Christ. "In that day the great trumpet shall be blown, and

they shall come which were ready to perish, from the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Sometimes this coming is sweet, it is blessed, it is relieving in the soul, it is confirming, strengthening, establishing. Sometimes in this exercise, the Lord Jesus and the believing comer meet together, they have communion. The Lord speaks to one and there is a response to His Word. O! it is wonderful to be found coming to the Lord Jesus. All ye that labour and are heavy laden, heavy laden with sin, with guilt, with circumstances, perhaps, that are painful, heavy laden by reason of burdens pressing upon you, by some trial, by affliction, by a difficult path, by mysteries, by darkness, by doubt, by temptation and fear, and a number of other things. Sometimes by a combination of things he is burdened.

"With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin."

But the encouraging truth is this that we come to a King. King Jesus.

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring."

This is encouraging to faith. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "Whatsoever ye shall ask, believing, ye shall receive." Therefore you keep pressing your case: keep coming: you won't meet with a refusal: that can never be the issue. Though now you may be kept waiting, the time will come, must come, when you will hear His voice, and when you will be able to say, not only that He shed His blood, but you will say, "For me." Then you will say it has been worth all the labour, and the struggling, and the pressing and urging of your case. "I will give you rest.

Now there is a point here, and that is, Christ is able to give what He promises. We might perhaps make a promise with a good intention and when the time comes to answer that promise, be unable, much as we would wish to fulfil it, but this is never the case with the Lord Jesus. What He promises, He is not only in Himself able to perform, but He will, and He must perform. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Give Him your case then. "I will give you rest, and He is able, He is that rest, He is the rest. This rest is freely given, not purchased. although we read of those who are invited to come to the waters, that they are to buy wine and milk, yet it is without money and without price. If something were required from us, if some price were to be paid for it, we should have no hope of acquiring it. But it is a rest that is given freely, sweetly and blessedly given. This is our mercy: "I will give you rest." It doesn't set up a certain standard of works to be accomplished, and say, Now after you have done all this, after you have kept all My commandments,

after you have fulfilled My Word, brought yourself up to a certain standard of perfection, I will give you rest in Myself. No! The rest is the sweet rest of a poor perishing sinner, it is the rest that is brought into his heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost. "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

It is wonderful rest, it is rest from labour. When that rest is given to a saint of God, and faith given to perceive it, there is a rest from sin, and the labour caused by sin, bondage, and guilt. There is a rest that is found in the Person and obedience of the Lord Jesus. This rest brings peace, pardon, liberty, joy, happiness, blessedness and love in the conscience. Wonderful rest! It is a rest in the spirit, which when it is felt, overcomes all circumstances at that time. It is a rest in the will of God. It is a rest in a sweet subjection of the spirit to that will. It is the rest of an overcomer, who gains the victory and rejoices in arisen Christ. It is the rest of one who feels in a sweet sense his union to the Lord Jesus. It is the rest of one who is delivered from the snare of the fowler, and delivered from the law, with all its legal claims. It is the rest of one who walks in liberty, sweet, holy, gospel liberty, and who can say,

"The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do,
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

It is the rest that Christ Himself is, and which He gives. It is rest in His atonement, wonderful rest. A stinging, guilty, defiled, burdened conscience finds rest here in the application of the Saviour's blood. As the blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and two side posts of the houses of the Hebrews when they were in the land of Egypt, so the precious blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon the conscience: thus the healing virtue and efficacy of the Saviour's blood is felt in the removal of the burden of guilt, and there is rest, ---- sweet rest!

"Does the gospel word proclaim,
Rest to those who weary be?
Then, my soul, put in thy claim,
Sure that promise speaks to thee."

A rest is here, a rest in His love. "He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing:" When the love of Christ is shed abroad in the heart, there is rest, there is conformity, satisfaction; there is peace. I will give you rest; and the rest is the rest of heaven, and an experience of it here is the earnest thereof, the earnest of the inheritance, a pledge of that everlasting rest which is in store for every chosen saint of the Most High God. But the difficulties, the labour, the hindrances, the unbelief! Very searching is that word I read in the

Hebrews, "They entered not in because of unbelief," that is to the promised land, which there was a type of the land of rest; they entered not in. One of the deepest and the most vile sins is the sin of unbelief: it fights against God, disproves His Word, or seeks to, and endeavours to turn one against divine revelation. It is an awful sin, is unbelief, and yet how wonderful it is, notwithstanding that, at times, at least, in this world of change, and distress and sorrow, there is an entering into rest. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God, and Jesus is that rest.

Then the injunction, "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." There is a yoke then, which coming sinners are enjoined to take upon them. "Take My yoke upon you. The Lord does not say, I will put it upon you, though He does that. But here He says, Take it upon you, and the yoke is His. Take My yoke upon you. A yoke, as we usually understand the word, is an instrument of wood, shaped to place upon the shoulders of oxen, as in the East, for the purpose of drawing or carrying burdens: oxen were yoked together. Now in Scripture this term "yoke", may be used to imply uniting or bonding together. The Apostle Paul in the Hebrews, advises against being unequally yoked together. Be ye not, he says, unequally yoked together with unbelievers. A fitting word this to any young people who may be exercised in the face of future relationships in life. If the Lord has given to you His fear, and you are exercised before Him, and prospects of that nature arise, make that a first thing. Is there, can there be, a true union in some measure in these things? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." A yoke then, is something which unites or binds together, and in this sense we may consider it. "Take my yoke upon you". Stand upon my side, take My Name upon you, and make a profession of My Name before men, and let it be publicly known upon which side you stand, in whom you believe, and upon whom you depend, and to whom you profess to be joined. Take that upon you. This is not easy, because in addition to the ordinances of the Lord's house there is what I might term a general profession before the world, by which we are subject to reproach and scorn, to contempt and slander and many other things. Who is on the Lord's side? Let it be known. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God".

But the yoke may be said to imply and intend affliction, trial, responsibility, and care. It is good, we read in Lamentations, for a man, that he bear the yoke in his youth: that is to say, ordinarily speaking, it is good for one in the youthful days of his life to share responsibility

and burdens, and as we generally speak, stand upon his own feet. The yoke here implies the burden of trial, difficulty, affliction, and responsibility. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Take this yoke upon you. But the yoke more particularly implies a servitude. The injunction here is really this substantially, Serve Me, honour Me, profess my Name, walk in my ways, take it upon you. To take it upon us is to take up our cross and to follow Him. It may be like a yoke upon our shoulders sometimes. We are enjoined to do this. If any man will love Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me. This is taking the yoke upon us. Sometimes it is a hard yoke. To take the yoke upon us is to be willing to suffer reproach for His Name's sake. Yes! The Lord's people, some of them, in their vocations in life, those with whom they may have to associate, suffer for their religion, and some may even in their home and family circle: yet here is the injunction, Take My yoke upon you. It would seem to me, that to take His yoke upon us is to subject ourselves to His Word and His will concerning us. We are to do that. Now if the Lord should come to one and give him a clear direction in respect of any matter, though naturally he may shrink from it, yet if the Lord enjoins it upon him, he is to subject himself to His revealed will to him, and take the yoke upon him. He may lay a trial perhaps upon one, a certain trial for a certain purpose, and he has to bear that trial, and perhaps he doesn't know why, but he is to take the yoke upon him there, to carry that burden. You may have some peculiar trial: it comes perhaps into your home, your house, your circumstances, and you have to carry that cross. The Lord help you to take it up. Take My yoke upon you. It may seem like a gracious resolve in one, who is fearful of himself and sensibly weak, to stand and to be willing to suffer for Christ's sake, and to bear, upon a profession of His Name, what the Lord may lay upon him. Is your pathway difficult, intricate, dark, mysterious? Take My yoke upon you, walk in My ways, acknowledge Me, and I will be with you.

"And learn of Me". To learn of Christ is, in the first place, to receive instruction. Learning is receiving knowledge, instruction, from those who may be teaching us. Teaching! Learning! Now, as this may be said to apply to believers. that to learn of Christ is first to receive graciously His Word, His teaching, His instruction, His precepts: it is to have the heart opened to receive knowledge and understanding. Naturally we have all much to learn: no one attains perfect proficiency, there is always something to be learned. Much more so in spiritual things. O! the blindness, the darkness, the ignorance, the confusion, which sometimes seems to veil one's mind with respect to divine things. "Learn of Me."

How ignorant we are, some of us. If I were to speak for myself, some of us seem to be just learning a little of our terrible ignorance of God: we seem to know really less than we once thought we knew, we seem but to grow in a sense of our own ignorance. How often I have in secret to pray something like this, What I know not teach Thou me. But He says, Learn of Me, I have wisdom, I have understanding, I have strength, learn of Me. And after all He is the best Teacher. "Ye need not that any man teach you", we read, "but the anointing (of the Holy Ghost) shall be in you and shall abide with you." "They shall all know Me from the least to the greatest." "Learn of Me." Now to learn we must have a mind to receive His teaching. It is a mercy to have that, to have our ears opened to discipline, and to learn to profit by His dealings with us.

To learn of Christ is to obey His doctrine, to believe His doctrine. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," Therefore we may learn of Him, and sometimes, my friends notwithstanding our terrible sense of ignorance, and inability to learn and receive instruction, there is a gracious reception in the heart of the Word of Christ. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." O! It is good learning sometimes. There may be a sweet opening up by the divine Spirit of some precious truth, some heavenly, saving doctrine, and the Lord may be pleased graciously to apply it, and give understanding in it, and an experience of it. "Learn of Me." To learn of Him is to practise what we learn: It is not only and merely to receive the truth as such, but it is to walk in it, to walk it out. "Go on to seek to know the Lord, and practise what you know." Don't cast it aside after you have learned it, but receive it into your heart, practise it, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This description Christ gives of Himself. "I am meek and lowly." He is so described in the prophecy of Zechariah, where He is said to come as one meek, lowly, and riding upon an ass. In His circumstances He was such, the circumstances of His birth, the humble circumstances, and throughout His whole sojourn when He was upon earth, He was this, of humble station of life. For the most part He moved among poor people. To these He preached the gospel, and they received the Word; but this doesn't apply to His outward circumstances so much, though it was true of them, for He did not ever attempt to be anything great in this world. His kingdom was not of this world, it was a spiritual kingdom, but He was meek and lowly in heart. To be meek,

ordinarily, is to be teachable; a meek person is one who is low in his own esteem, teachable, subjective, one who may suffer without seeking revenge: a meek person. But if we speak of this in reference to the Lord Jesus, we should have to say He was this in His heart as a Man. He was meek, very meek. He suffered reproach without ever seeking revenge. When He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. He was meek in this, and we are to take this yoke upon us, and be like Him, and seek for conformity in heart and life to a meek and lowly Jesus. We are to follow Him then. But meekness consists in this, and it was very true in the case of the Lord Jesus, it consists in a quiet submission to the mind and will of His Father. Christ submitted Himself passively and freely to do the will of His Father, as we read of Him, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane; when there praying to His Father, He said, "O! My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." In that submission to the will of His Father His meekness is conspicuously evident. He was meek and lowly in heart.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and My burden is light." This may seem difficult to understand in view of the many burdens of the Lord's people, and the difficulties that attend their pathway toward heaven, but still it is true. My yoke is easy, that is, it is comparatively so. Compare the yoke of the gospel to the yoke of the law. It may be said to be light and easy. The yoke of the law is intolerable: no man can effectively serve God under it. It requires that which we cannot rise to. If we try to serve God under the law, we have an intolerable yoke, but the yoke of the gospel is easy in comparison, because the gospel is a yoke of love, of peace, of pardon, of liberty, and the Lord enables His people to take this yoke upon them and to follow Him; and by the sweet constraining power of His love in their souls, they are enabled to do so, and walk in His ways, depending upon His love and truth. And in comparison to the ceremonial law it is easy: there was a burden of ceremony, a round of service, a ritual which was costly and burdensome. But under the gospel we are delivered from all that yoke of bondage as the Apostle terms it, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." This yoke, the gospel yoke, in comparison to the yoke of the ceremonial or the moral law, is easy, is bearable, is light. Take it upon you. Amen.

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