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210 - Sunday evening, 14th April 1926

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Sermon preached by Mr. J.K. Popham  
on Wednesday evening, 14th April 1926.

Text: Matthew 11 v. 28, 29, & 30.

"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 soul, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

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The 29th and 30th verses follow the gracious invitation contained in the 28th verse which verse we noticed last Lord's day. The invitation has in it a qualification. Some might like to say a condition. It is the same in effect which ever word you use, for if you are labouring, if you are heavy laden, you answer the condition and you answer the qualification. The word is of no use, whatever men may think, however generally they may think about it, it is of no use to those who are easy and comfortable, have no burden and are not labouring. It is on the same footing as that gracious word in the prophecy of Isaiah - "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Come, buy and eat, yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price." It is then, an unspeakable mercy to be hungering and thirsting for God. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness". And the blessing is attached to this people invited by the Lord to come to Himself. If then we are not labouring in any way, particular way. If we have no burden on us, no particular burden, then this invitation, as well as the Person who sends it out, will be just a sound, a name and nothing better. Happy therefore is the man to whom is given such a sense of sin, such a realisation of his condition under the law, such a feeling of being burdened, so burdened that standing upright is impossible, and many fears are felt of being crushed beneath the burden. Happy is he, I say, though far from being happy in his feelings, because the great and ever blessed Lord Jesus sends this invitation to him. Is it not wonderful that God should speak to sinners friendly, that He should look on them in their different conditions and say to them - "Come to Me?" That He should let them know He regards them in their labour; and pities them under their burdens, and will have them to come to Himself

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and this we must say - He means what He says, He has rest to give. He means it. He knew what labour was. He knew what a burden was. Labour and burden which broke His guiltless heart. He knew what conflict was, grappled with the powers of hell and death. He knew the burden of imputed sin and the sureness of death as the consequence of it, He well knew. And then He knew what rest, sweet rest was, when having overcome all, He entered into His rest. This is beautifully set forth in the work of creation and the end of it; And God rested from His labour, from His work of creation, and sanctified the seventh day because therein He did no work. And the Lord, having accomplished the work of redemption also rested. He had completed His work. He said to His Father- "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He began this rest on the cross. He began to enter into it when He said "It is finished." When He sent His Spirit away to heaven. Some spoke of Christ dying in the dark. If He had died in the dark, his church would have remained in the dark through Eternity. He did not die in the dark. He went into the light when He said - "It is finished." He had nothing more to do, nothing more to suffer. Nothing more to suffer. Nothing more to endure. The curse was expended. He drank the cup up fully. He knew then what it was for the beams of divine love which in their brightness had been suspended, to come again. What it was for His Father who had deserted Him to return, and what it was to have the full satisfaction in His Spirit, that He had nothing more to work, but just to enter into His rest. Now that rest is the rest his people are to enjoy, that rest is to enter their consciences. Their consciences are their friends. Their consciences are their tormentors when guilt is on them. Their friends when the blood of Christ is sprinkled there. They enter into the rest that remaineth to the people of God, and says the Apostle Paul, "We which have believed, through the power of the Holy Ghost, do enter into rest. Rest from pains and toils of slavish kind. The blood of Christ is the rest of the soul, the peace of the conscience and nothing more is to be had of that kind of labour for the time being. And when this rest is enjoyed then a person enters into experimentally, into the Lord's favour, and into the covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, and sees by faith,

each one, more or less distinctly, how everything is arranged for his safety on earth and after death the plenitude of heaven. Ordered by God. Made sure by God and sealed with the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant. When you see this, and O some have seen it and do see it at times, again and again; When you see this, then you see life here is ordered, changes are ordered, losses, crosses, staffs or rods; all ordered and intended to work for good according to that scripture- "All things work together for good to them that love God", and it is known, and "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." And this has a wonderful effect in respect of giving rest to the spirit. What would you alter? Faith says- Nothing. Which of you by taking much thought can add one cubit to his stature? Why says faith - I do not want to take thought about it. I am provided for, for time and eternity, and that full scripture is on the side of a person thus blessed. "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And so while the world wears itself in the fire for very vanity, the child of God rests in the Lord. Rest in the Lord the scripture is, and wait patiently for Him. The child of God rests there, and he enters in the spirit of it, into that word - Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Does not want to go toward tomorrow. It is natural to all of us. We have concerns and interests and things in this life, but sufficient unto each day is the evil, and the burden and the care thereof. O when you have had a few days of this during your pilgrimage, you say, I do not want to drink the old wine of the world's care and the world's pleasure and the world's turning away; the new wine of the gospel is better. It refreshes my spirit. It supports my mind. It tells me that all is finished, though so much remains to endure. This rest is a promise of heaven, a foretaste of heaven. This rest depends upon the faithfulness of God. This rest comes by faith. "We that believe enter into rest," says the apostle. It is the rest which the Lord Jesus is. This is your rest. This is your refreshing. This is what the soul loves to feel - real rest. It is a persuasion in the mind, a real solid spirit given persuasion in the mind that all is well. All is settled and my soul", says the hymnwriter, and says every believer entering into this also, " all is

settled and my soul approves it well." The certainty is wonderful. O, if the Lord Jesus died for me, says faith, then I need fear no banishment from God, since Jesus died for me (Hymn 227) What will the effect of this be? It will be this - "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ. Now what will the effect be? Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear and let your conversation be without covetousness." Jesus suffered and bore sin in His own body on the tree, that we should no longer live therein but live unto righteousness. What a favour it is to be so blessed as not to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. We all do it when we turn away from God and rest in any measure, at any time, rest on a past experience. Rest on these blessed imperishable doctrines which in their power sanctify the soul. This rest, I say again, is like a promise of heaven. It is God's rest. "This is My rest." He rests in Zion and there Zion rests. He rests in His love, and there she rests. He rests in His finished work and there she rests. He rests in His own blessed work of redemption, and is just her bed, her soft resting-place, her quietness and her assurance for ever.

And it gives you rest in respect of the changing things and scenes of this world. It gives you rest in respect of the changes you experience in providence whatever they may be, your soul rests in the will of God - "That ye may prove", as the Apostle Paul says, "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It is a good will in itself, an acceptable will to the believer. A perfect will to faith. What a blessing it is, my dear brethren, to know God and His rest. It is glorious. His rest shall be glorious, and that glorifies the church, for His rest is there. "Glory to God in the church by Christ Jesus, world without end." Everything is brought up to this - All things in God.

And now says the Lord Jesus, to these to whom He has sent out this invitation - "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." A yoke in the scripture means affliction, oppression of an enemy. It means union- yoke-fellow and in these two respects

there is an awful yoke that every child of God has some experience of. A yoke under which the whole of the world is- the yoke of sin. A dreadful yoke that, servants to sin, under service to sin. We were all born slaves. All home-born slaves to this awful thing - sin. and we never should be free from it but for the sovereign grace and love of God, and the regenerating work of the Spirit, and the blood of Christ. There is the yoke of bondage, the law. Says the Apostle to the Galatians, "Who hath bewitched you?" Do you want to come again under the yoke of bondage? I testify to everyone of you that is circumcised that you are debtor to do the whole law. It is a yoke of bondage. A galling yoke as every child of God knows more or less distinctly when he is under that law. It is a yoke that imposes labour. It is a yoke that curses when the work is not done. It is a yoke that demands a tale of bricks everyday and lashes the conscience when that tale of bricks is not fully brought. It is a yoke that drives the soul to desperation, a yoke that threatens hell and damnation, A fearful yoke is the yoke of the law. It is the oppression of the Devil who puts the yoke on the soul when he comes and oppresses it with temptations, suggestions driving, hurrying, so that there is no peace for the soul while under it. O it is a great and a dreadfully heavy yoke when the enemy comes and drives your spirit, makes you feel you cannot do this quickly enough and you must do that and everything says, make haste. A dreadful yoke when temptation is in the form of infidelity or when it takes the shape of uncleanness or when it works worldliness and there you are under this fearful yoke, the course of this world, the deceptfulness of riches choking the word. It is also in the scripture expressive of union - "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." If you go into the world and yoke yourself with it, you are sure then to come under that word - "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." What union hath Christ with Belial, what concord hath light with darkness, so this yoke is what the Lord's people are sometimes subjected to, but from which they are to be delivered, and they are to come out from these things with which they may have yoked or united themselves. Whenever you enter into an alliance with the world which is not in any degree or way whatever necessary, which no business brings you into, but which is just the result of your affections and your depraved will

and nature, then you come under that word - unequally yoked and a terrible thing it is.

But now says the Lord- "Take My yoke upon you." You have had some experience of other yokes, "take My yoke upon you." The Lord Jesus shows grace and love. He brings by His Spirit His atonement to the conscience. He lays His love in the heart. He brings the sinner into an experience of His goodness. It is different from everything else. It is of a heavenly nature, and the effect of it is heavenly. It is different from everything that the world knows, the world has, from everything that we know, everything that we have by nature.

Let us look a little as helped at this. Now free grace, sovereign grace abounding over sin, breaking the yoke of sin. Justification breaking the yoke of the law. Sanctification breaking the yoke of pollution. The gracious incoming of the Spirit of God whereby the love of God is known, being shed abroad by the divine Spirit. The love of Christ which passeth knowledge, felt in the soul, entered into in some measure. The gospel in its freeness, its greatness, its suitableness to the case. The scriptures in their life-giving efficacy, as in the hand of the Spirit. Light, the light which shows a soul the way from hell and dark things and dark works of death. The testimony of God in the truth. The doctrines of sovereign grace and love. These one may say may constitute this blessed yoke of the Lord. A yoke not in respect of intolerable weight, though it is intolerable to a proud nature and perhaps the Lord Jesus may have had this in His mind when He called this a yoke. Intolerable to nature, says a proud man, I won't have it, but it is sweet to the living soul. Mary had it. A sweet yoke she found it to be. It delivered her from all other yokes and labours, and she sat at His feet, yoked there, held there; other yokes had been destroyed by the anointing. This yoke was easy to her, very easy and it is so in every gracious person more or less distinctly. My yoke is easy. Ah, it was easy to sit at His feet, easy to learn of Him. His words were found by her, and they were sweet, and His word the rejoicing of her heart. It was sweet to leave the cares of serving for the time, sweet to leave everything that she had about her naturally and just sit at these dear feet and look into His gracious face and listen to His divine teaching. Who does not know it who has

been brought into the presence of Christ in some measure? Easy when you feel grace abounding. Easy then is it not? Easy when the Lord sweetly persuades you that you shall lack nothing here or hereafter because of His love to you. That makes it easy to sit down and leave the world and everything in His management; everything to His care and depend on His faithfulness. When you feel a little of love in your soul coming down, and it moves and estranges you from the world, estranges you from your self, weans you from your foolish ways and just brings you to sit contentedly at those blessed feet, as it is written in Deuteronomy - "Yea He loved the people, all his saints are in Thy hand, they sat down at His feet. Everyone shall receive of Thy words." Sat down like David in the presence of the Lord. Sat down. Take the gracious word of the living God. Whenever you get any word from Himself with His own life, in His own light by His own unction, it takes hold of you, arrests you, comforts you, solaces you in your troubles, sustains you under your burdens, comforts you in your afflictions and you sit down. The will of God is your comfort. The will of God is your support. The will of God is then acceptable, good and perfect to you.

Take the Lord Jesus as a king and you a subject, a contented subject, able to say in your measure - "O Lord, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us. They are dead. O what a wonderful experience. They are dead. They shall not rise. They are extinct. Would that the Lord would grant us that. That is an easy yoke, however fretful nature may be. However determined not to submit to this or that, the yoke is easy. "Here, says the soul "would I constantly abide and every moment live." Every moment. It seems for the time that you grudge everything that draws your attention away from this. It is not an hourly, a constant, uninterrupted experience, but it is very sweet to have it at all.

"Take My yoke upon you." What is it to take this now. A man says - I can take nothing except it be given me. That is very true. What is it to take this yoke upon you? It is to believe that all is finished, though so much remains to endure. 'Tis to believe when everything contradicts your faith. 'Tis to live in that love that is shed abroad in your heart. 'Tis to believe that He will never do an unkind thing to you. Never lay on you an unnecessary stroke, and never do anything to, or for you, that will not be for your benefit. Faith takes it up. Faith in the way the Apostle puts it is very wonderful. "Lay hold on eternal

life whereunto thou art also called." How the work of God fits in here. Lay hold of what? What God has called you to - eternal life. And this will be within this scripture - "Take My yoke upon you." Well beloved friends, those who do it are Christ's heavenly men. Christ's dear people of whom it is said - they that are spiritually minded, know what life and peace are. O what a light yoke it is. What a beautiful thing it is to sit down under the Lord Jesus and to be content with Him and with the things that He says, and the things He gives and the works He works.

"Learn of Me." You have learned of the devil. Alas Eve learned of the devil to her ruin and our ruin. "Ye shall be as gods" said the teacher, the devil, knowing good and evil, and she followed the teaching, the deception. She was deceived and we have learned of him who was a liar from the beginning, and a murderer, and we have learned of the world. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and we have had these evil communications, and we have been corrupted, and we have learned of our own wicked hearts, the heart which is deceitful above all things, we have listened to and been deceived by it, and a terrible thing it is. We have learned all this. We have learned of pride to lift our heads. We have learned of rebellion to war against God. We have learned of unbelief to doubt His word and question His truth. We have learned of fallen reason to begin to reason about things which are to be believed ( and not reason about) according to the Spirit's teaching. We have learned of all these bad, these vile wicked teachers and now says the Lord - Leave the doctors, leave the lawyers, leave the scribes and the pharisees, leave them all and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. "Learn of Me." And what are we to learn of Him? Just what He teaches. And what does He teach? That salvation is of grace. That salvation is of the Lord. That He is ready to save a poor lost sinner. Hezekiah learned this of Him in his affliction. He said - "The Lord was ready to save me." I a poor distraught creature, said that my life was cut off as a weavers shuttle." Now he says - "I found the Lord was watching over me, ready to save me." Learn of His wisdom. He sits as a refiner, and the purifier knows just when the work of refining, of purifying is done.

"Learn of Me," to do an impossible thing, impossible to nature, but He learned it. He was "made perfect through sufferings", and learned obedience by the things which He suffered."



And one was this - "Not as I will. Not My will but Thine be done." I have got a will and you have a will and that will says - I am going this way. That will says - I won't submit to that dispensation. O how the axe lifteth up itself. O how a proud sinner lifts himself up against God and what a yoke it is. O the trouble it brings. "The rebellious dwell in a dry land." Now the Holy Spirit comes and touches the heart, enlightens the understanding into the nature of rebellion; opens the eyes to see a little of the goodness and the grace of Christ, and the work of the Spirit and the mind becomes affected, the will is touched and supplanted and the sinner says - "Thy will be done." What a blessed yoke it is. "I am meek and lowly in heart."

"Learn of Me." Who in the day of His humiliation suffered His reputation and name to be taken away. We who have no reputation but that of being sinners in the sight of God, we lift ourselves up. He who has the highest reputation possible to Him, namely of being the Son, the only Son of God, being as a man, the God-Man, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, He humbled Himself. O to follow Him in this His great mercy; to be enabled to fall down in genuin, gospel-wrought humility and feel that the Lord is good, and the Lord is doing that which is best.

"Lowly," That word was originally used to express meanness. The Lord Jesus says - "I am lowly." He took a towel and a basin and He washed the feet of his disciples. What an act of lowliness, and the Apostle tells us He left us an example that we should walk in His steps.

"Learn of Me." These things never grow out of nature. A proud nature can never submit even to learn them or listen to them, but says Christ - "Learn of Me. I walked this way. You are to be My followers, my subjects, therefore, learn of Me who am meek and lowly in heart."

One more word here, namely, learn of Him when He was in His great affliction and sorrow, when He said "I know that I shall not be confounded; He is near that justifieth Me." You say, and I say, the moment that trouble comes- Now it is all over. Almost ready to give up hope entirely. Now what a mercy it is to be favoured to follow the Lord Jesus in that particular. To hang fast to His blessed word that has been put into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. To trust a faithful God. He is near. He is near that justifieth Me. He is near when Joshua has filthy garments on him, to justify him. He is near when

Jeremiah is in the low dungeon, to say to him - "Fear not." He is near when Peter is sinking, to lift him up. He is near when his disciples are afraid because they have taken no bread with them. He is near. O to be enabled to trust Him. Trust Him in the dark. Trust Him when His way is in the sea and His path in the mighty waters and His footsteps are not known. Faith honours God. Faith is intended to honour God and to hold Him fast to His blessed word. He says - "Put Me in remembrance, Let us plead together." "Learn of Me." He said with regard to one lesson when they smite on one cheek, turn the other also." You need faith and power to do it when the world may treat you as it treated the Master, your Master. "Learn of Me," He says learn that it is enough for the servant to be as His Master. Well may the Lord help us, for we are poor learners and poor scholars. We need His patience in these things.

"And ye shall find rest unto your souls." Whenever sin is the master there is no rest in the soul. It does not matter what the sin is, you will have no rest. When you run and gad about after the world, you have got no rest for your soul. When you follow the dictates of nature, you have no rest for your soul. When you walk in pride, when you walk in unbelief, when you walk in lust, when you walk in covetousness or hardness of heart in any way departing from the Lord, you have no rest. You all know that who fear God. You need no preacher to tell you that, there is no rest.

Now when you are favoured to take this divine yoke of grace on you and sit at the Master's feet, and learn of His love and grace and mercy. When you learn the precious lessons that the blood of Christ imparts, then I say, rather the Lord says, "You shall find rest and quietness of mind such as Job found when he said - "I go forward but He is not there, backward but I cannot perceive Him, on the right-hand where He works, but He hideth Himself, on the left-hand but there is no seeing Him; but here He rested- He is in one mind and what His soul desireth even that He doeth. When He hath tried me He will bring me forth as gold. Now that was real rest, solid rest. When God put King Saul into the hand of David, and nature in David was subdued and faith was strong David had rest, he said - "I won't touch the Lord's anointed." God's time is the best. He will bring me forth one day. He had rest to his soul. When all the people in the ship with the Apostle Paul were perturbed and troubled, then the good man had rest in his soul, for <sup>he</sup> rested in the word of God. The storm was not as strong as Paul's faith. The creaking

planks of the vessel did not disturb his faith. He had rest. He said to all with him - "I believe God." And when you believe God in your soul, when you believe His blessed word, when you rest in His faithfulness, and when you look to His power, then you have rest to your soul, meekly submitting to the will of God. Meekly giving yourself up to His direction. Meekly putting into His hand yourself and all your matters, having for the moment no reserve, no reservation in your spirit. Just you fall flat before Him and without any reservation commit yourself and your way to Him. It may be a rough way, you do not know, but you say it is in the hand of God. Where else would you be? Faith says nowhere. "Ye shall find rest to your soul." Rutherford has a strong word but it is true, and some of you have known it no doubt. He says - The will of God is a bed to lie down on in a fire. What? Yes, the will of God is a bed, a soft bed, and faith says - the softest that I have ever been in. What can He do that is not good? What will He do that is not for the best for his poor people?

Therefore take My yoke upon you. Learn of Me. I shall never, never misguide you, mislead you, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your soul, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light. O it is an easy burden this blessed gospel. A light burden whenever it is found. Whenever you take it up you will know it to be light, and it is in this power, in this grace and love, that a child of God can do one thing, impossible to nature, namely, deny himself, take up his cross and follow his Lord. Then he is openly comfortably Christ's disciple.

May the Lord help us to regard this and give us grace to follow it. "Take My yoke upon you, 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."

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