

## TAKE MY YOKE ON YOU

- A. Introduction: For most of this year we have been discussing how to become and remain unmovable in the face of life's trials and challenges. We've covered a lot of ground, but we have more to discuss in this and upcoming lessons.
1. Lots of things come at us in this life that can shake us. Consequently, the trials and hardships of life move many people from a place of faith and trust in God.
    - a. Being moved can range from doubting God's love and willingness to help to doubting if God exists or if it's worth it to serve Him.
    - b. Many Christians are moved because they misunderstand God's primary purpose in this world and, therefore, have inaccurate ideas about what God will and won't do for us in this life. This creates false expectations that end in disappointment when what they desire doesn't come to pass.
      1. For example, people hear that God is a Father who's better than the best earthly father. And He certainly is! They learn that He loves us with an everlasting love. And He surely does!
      2. But then, when troubles come to them or others, they get moved because they begin to wonder how a loving God could let bad things happen to people He loves, especially when He has the power to stop it. Why doesn't a loving God doesn't stop their suffering and pain?
      3. Added to that is the fact that much of the popular contemporary preaching in many circles today says that Jesus came to give us abundant life. By this they mean: a life of prosperity and favor where all our dreams and desires are fulfilled. When people don't achieve this abundant life, some get moved and get angry with God or lose faith in Him.
    - c. We can't address all of these issues in this one lesson. But, in this lesson, we're going to begin to sort some of this out as we work on becoming unmoved by the challenges of life.
  2. To become and remain unmoved by life's hardships, you must understand that God is working out a plan that is bigger than this life. This present life is not actually His main concern (more on this in later lessons).
    - a. Although His plan includes this life, this life is not all there is to life. We are eternal beings who don't cease to exist at death. And, according to the apostle Paul (a man who was personally taught the message he preached by Jesus Himself--Gal 1:11,12) if we only have hope in Christ for this life, we will be miserable in this life. I Cor 15:19
    - b. Paul wrote: "Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (I Tim 4:8--ESV).
      1. Notice that Paul contrasts the benefits of physical (natural) training (or exercise) with training yourself in (or exercising) godliness. Godliness is from a Greek word that means devotion characterized by a God-ward attitude that does what is pleasing to God (*Vines Dictionary*). It's a heart attitude that desires to serve God and then backs it up with action.
      2. It pays to serve God. But notice, that there is benefit for godliness in this life and also in the life to come. In order to remain unmoved by the trials of life you must learn to think in terms, not just of this life, but also of the life to come
  3. I realize that everyone listening to this teaching has problems and challenges, some of them no doubt quite serious. And what most people want from teaching is a technique that will fix their immediate problem and prevent more troubles from coming their way.
    - a. But it doesn't work like that. We live in a fallen, sin damage world, and even if we do everything right, troubles still come our way. There is no quick fix.
      1. Jesus said: In this world we will have tribulation (John 16:33). He said that moths and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal (Matt 6:19).
      2. It's not about stopping life's troubles because it can't be done. It's learning how to deal with them in a way that keeps you from being moved. Paul, a man who was himself unmovable

(Acts 20:22-24), said that in the midst of all these things (numerous trials and challenges), we are more than conquerors (Rom 8:35-37).

b. As a Bible teacher, I'm not trying to give you a technique to solve your most immediate crisis. I'm trying to change your perspective or your view of reality so that you see things in terms of the life to come and the overall plan of God (or the big picture). This perspective will enable you to triumph in life's biggest trials.

1. It will help you put the events of life in perspective and recognize that everything you see is temporary and subject to change by the power of God, either in this life or the life to come.

Therefore, nothing can come against you that is bigger than God.

2. This perspective will enable you to deal with life from a place of confidence in God which in turn opens the door to His help, strength, and provision in the midst of this life's hardships.

4. God devised a purpose for your life before He formed the earth. It's bigger than this life and it will outlast this life. II Tim 1:9

a. What is your purpose? God created men and women (you and me) to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. And He made the earth to be home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18

b. Both mankind and the earth have been damaged by sin. Because of Adam's sin men became sinners by nature and the earth was infused with corruption and death. Rom 5:12;19; Gen 3:17-19

1. Jesus came to earth the first time to begin the process of reclaiming what was lost to sin by paying for our sin as the Cross. Sin can now be removed from all who believe on Jesus and His sacrifice and they can be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.

2. Jesus will come again in the not to distant future to cleanse and restore the earth and establish His eternal kingdom on earth. God and man will then live together forever. Rev 21:1-3

c. God's primary purpose in the earth now is to bring people to saving knowledge of Himself, not to end human suffering. (We'll discuss this in more detail in later lessons.) Here's the point for now.

1. Because God is All-knowing (Omniscient) and All-powerful (Omnipotent) He is able to use the harsh realities of life in a fallen world (events He does not orchestrate or approve of) and cause them to serve His ultimate purpose of salvation.

2. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 15:58--Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (KJV), knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile—never wasted or to no purpose (Amp).

A. There's a lot in this verse (some things we've discussed and some we'll eventually get to). Note one point for now. Living a godly life is worth whatever you have to do to stay faithful and remain unmoved.

B. Nothing you do in service or obedience to the Lord is wasted or to no purpose because everything you do in Him works toward His ultimate, eternal purpose. Rom 8:28

B. It's quite common in many Christian circles today to hear this statement: Jesus came to give us abundant life, meaning a life of prosperity where all of our desires and dreams are met.

1. Jesus made a statement in John 10:10 that is cited as proof of this idea. The Lord said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (KJV). However, interpreting this verse the way that is currently popular requires taking the verse completely out of context.

a. Jesus identified the life He came to bring just a few verses further on as eternal life. John 10:28

1. By the time Jesus made the statement in John 10:10 He had already referred many times to the life He came to bring to humanity. He came to bring eternal life. John 1:4; John 3:16; John 4:14; John 5:25-29; John 5:39,40; John 6:40; John 6:58; John 8:51; etc.

2. Eternal life is not length of life. All human beings have length of life in the sense that no one ceases to exist when the physical body dies. Eternal is a type of life. It is the life in God Himself. John 5:26; I John 5:11,12

b. God made human beings in such a way that He can indwell us and we can be more than His creations. We can become sons by partaking of the life in Him.

1. Adam was supposed to eat from the tree of life in the Garden (Gen 2:9; Titus 1:2) as an expression of his submission to and dependence on God.

A. By doing so, he would have united himself and the race resident in him to eternal life.

We could do entire lessons on this, but for now, consider one point.

B. The essence of sin is choosing to be independent from God (doing what you want your way instead of doing what He wants His way). Consequently, because of sin, human beings are dead or cut off from God who is life. Eph 2:1; Eph 4:18

2. Because of sin, we are lost to our created purpose. God, who is holy, cannot indwell men who are guilty of sin. Jesus went to the Cross to pay for our sin so that we can be cleansed of it and open the way for God's original purpose to be carried out.

c. Every statement in the New Testament about why Jesus came to earth has to do with addressing our greatest need: salvation from sin and transformation from sinners into sons of God by receiving eternal life.

1. Luke 19:10; I Tim 1:15; Heb 9:26; John 3:17; Gal 1:4--Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came to save sinners from condemnation or judgment for sin and abolish sin. He came to deliver us from this present evil world.

2. II Cor 5:15; Eph 5:25-27; Titus 2:14--Jesus died so that we'd no longer live for ourselves but for Him. He gave Himself to deliver (redeem) us from all sin and purify a people for Himself.

2. Your biggest problem is not the trials, hardships, losses, and disappointments of life. Your biggest problem is that you are guilty of sin before a holy God, cut off from eternal life, and facing judgment for your sin in the life to come—unending separation from God the source of all life and goodness.

a. We aren't minimizing the very real hardships and suffering of life. We are putting them in perspective to help us keep from being moved by life's troubles.

1. As we pointed out in earlier lessons, when life is hard and our expectations aren't met we all get bombarded with thoughts. If you have false expectations about what Jesus came to do for you, it can lead to thoughts of inadequacy and failure: What am I doing wrong? Why don't I have the good life that Jesus came to bring us? These thoughts make a hard circumstance even harder because they undermine your confidence in God's goodness.

2. Jesus came to meet your greatest need and rescue you from the worst hardship possible. If you have a wonderful, abundant life and all your dreams come true but you end up in Hell, it's all for naught. Jesus Himself said: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Matt 16:26,27

b. I realize that this doesn't seem like practical teaching for people facing life's hardships. But this is a tremendous faith booster.

1. If God helped you on your worst day (any day before you were saved) with your biggest problem (guilty of sin before a holy God) why would He not help you now with lesser problems (and every other problem is a lesser issue)? Rom 8:32

2. What will that help look like? There are a lot of answers to this question which we will address in future lessons.

C. Conclusion: Much of the popular teaching in many circles makes it sound as though Jesus came to earth to be our friend and give us a good life, creating false expectations and setting us up for disappointments. But that's not His message. His first public words were: Repent and believe the gospel. Matt 4:17

1. We'll examine Jesus' statement in greater detail later. But consider several points for now. If you are going to become unmovable, you must have accurate expectations about what Jesus came to do and what He asks us to do. Jesus didn't come to make this life the highlight of our existence. He came to restore us to our created purpose.

- a. Repent means a change of mind and implies a feeling of regret, sorrow. The essence of sin is choosing to be independent of God (Isa 53:6). Jesus' message is: Turn from living for yourself (you will your way) to living for God (your will directed His way).
  - b. Gospel comes from a word that means good news. Jesus brought good news to humanity. The gospel or good news is that Jesus died for our sins as the Scriptures foretold, and that He was buried and raised from the dead as the Scriptures said He would. I Cor 15:1-4
  - c. When we repent and believe the gospel, our sins are washed away because of the shed blood of Jesus. God can then indwell us and begin the process of restoring us to our created purpose, the purpose that will outlast this life: sonship.
2. Jesus gave His followers many specific instructions about how to live in this fallen world. Note one: Matt 11:28-30
    - a. Jesus appealed to those who are "weary and overburdened" (J.B. Phillips). In this fallen world, that's most of us. His promise is that He will give us rest. Much is implied in that word (later lessons). The Greek word means repose or rest (lit. or fig.) By implication, it means to refresh.
    - b. Jesus commanded His followers to take His yoke on them. A yoke was a piece of equipment well known to Jesus' audience. It was used to link two animals (usually oxen) together to work.
      1. The yokes used at that time included not just the wood on the animal's neck, but also the harness over its head. Yokes were heavy and animals were unable to bend their neck.
      2. Jesus said the yoke He asks His followers to take on is light (literally easy). Yoke is used in the New Testament as a metaphor of submission to authority.
      3. Burden means task or service. Easy means useful and is translated easy, good, gracious, kind. v30--For My yoke is wholesome (useful, good) — not harsh, hard, sharp or pressing, but comfortable, gracious and pleasant; and My burden is light and easy to be borne (Amp).
    - c. Jesus said: Submit to My authority and learn from Me—I am gentle and humble (I am wonderful). Through submitting to Me and knowing Me, you will find rest for your inner man.
  3. Earlier we made reference to Jesus' statement that in the world we will have tribulation (John 16:33), but that we can be of good cheer (or encouraged) because He has overcome the world. Note one point.
    - a. Jesus contrasted His statement with the fact that in Him we can have peace (or rest for our souls), and that He imparts this peace to us through the things He says, His Word.
    - b. To experience rest and peace in the midst of life's challenges, we must take time to learn from Jesus. He reveals Himself to us through His Word, the Bible. John 5:39; Luke 24:27; 44; etc.
  4. If you're going to remain unmoved by life's hardships, you must find the rest and peace that Jesus gives through His Word. This means you must become a Bible reader.
    - a. Develop the habit of reading the New Testament from cover to cover, over and over. Through His Word, Jesus will show you why He came and what He has done, is doing, and will do for you.
    - b. This will give you a perspective that will enable you to stand your ground and deal with whatever comes your way without being moved. Lots more next week!!