

What Yoke Are You Wearing?

by Bayless Conley

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Good morning, everyone. Good to have you here. Hi, out in the plaza or wherever you might be watching and listening from. Just to give you a heads-up, we are going to be starting today's message in everyone's favorite chapter. It's the chapter of the Bible that most people are familiar with. They love Leviticus chapter 26. So you can find that and get a little head start.

The title of my message is "What Yoke are You Wearing?" And up here on the stage, this is actually an ancient yoke. This is what they look like. It was a piece of timber like this. It was made so that you can put two oxen in it. One oxen's neck fit on one side, the other on this side. And it would join them together for the purpose of pulling a plow or a wagon or something similar to that.

In the Scripture, it's used to describe several things. In the Bible, first of all, in a negative sense, a yoke is symbolic of slavery and bondage. In a positive sense, it's used to describe submission to God and to His law. And thirdly, in a general sense, a yoke is used just to describe two people or two things that have been connected or joined together.

And we're going to be looking at several different yokes from the Bible today and figuring out where we are and what is applicable to us in our lives in our present circumstance. The first one we're going to find is there in Leviticus 26, and it is the yoke of the enemy. Here in verse 11, God is speaking. He says,

¹¹ I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. ¹² I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. ¹³ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright.

Now, actually, in verse 12, here, where it says, "I'll walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." That very verse is quoted in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, in connection with the Church.

So these verses that we read prophetically speak to our day and the lives that we are living. Egypt was a type of the world. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was a type of the devil. And the truth is, we have been redeemed from Egypt and every work the enemy had that caused us to bow down. Christ has broken it. Christ has liberated us from it.

First John says, (1 John 3:8)

⁸ For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

So the yoke of the enemy that would have caused God's people to bow down and to be subjugated and in servitude, thank God Christ has broken that yoke.

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In Lamentations, it says, “Sinner, transgression is a yoke.” What a heavy yoke that can be. The more that you repeat a sin, it becomes a familiar sin, and the tighter and heavier that yoke can become upon your life. But it refers to every work of the devil: sin, sickness, oppression, fear. Christ came to destroy those things.

And here’s the good news. Jesus has already done the work. Romans says that sin shall no longer have dominion over you. I never have to be a slave to sin again. I never have to put that yoke of bondage of the enemy upon my neck again.

I had a friend. We were both teenagers. And he was with some of his buddies, and they were trespassing one night. They were just somewhere they shouldn’t be, just a bunch of young men goofing around. It wasn’t some huge crime. But out of nowhere, a little, skinny security guard popped up and yelled at them, and they all took off running. They were laughing and having a good time.

And this little, skinny guard is running after them. And one of them just thought to themselves, “This is ridiculous.” And he turned around and stopped. And the security guard ran up with a big grin on his face and pulled out a set of handcuffs. Like he has just caught this master criminal. He’s going to be on the six o’clock news. The famous one that brought down the huge international art thief or whatever it is. And the guy just looked at him and looked at the handcuffs and said, “No, you’re not putting those on me.” The security guard said, “Oh, okay?” And he put them away. And then everyone just went their ways.

Now you know you don’t have to sin. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” Romans chapter 6. However, if you do, thank God for 1 John chapter 1 and chapter 2. If you do, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. If you do, you just repent. Confess that sin to God. And the devil is maybe going to be standing there with a yoke and a chain. You say, “No, you’re not putting that on me.” And Jesus stands between you and the devil and says, “That’s right. He’s Mine. That’s right. She’s Mine. She need never wear that yoke of bondage again. He need never wear that yoke of slavery to sin again.” Thank God. Christ has set us free.

All right, the second yoke spoken of in the Scriptures is the yoke of unrealistic expectations and demands; the yoke of unrealistic expectations and demands.

We’re going to go back in time. Solomon, the son of King David, his life is finished. He dies, and his son Rehoboam becomes the new king of Israel. And the people when Rehoboam is inaugurated, the people all come to him because their lives had become very difficult under Solomon. And this is what the people said, and we’re going to read from 2 Chronicles 10, beginning in verse 4, this is the people talking to King Rehoboam. They said,

⁴ “Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”

⁵ So he said to them, “Come back to me after three days.” And the people departed.

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So the people come back. We find it in verse 12,

¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day." ¹³ Then the king answered them roughly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders, ¹⁴ and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"

And ten of the tribes walked off that day and said, "All right. Then you're not our king." And they went and established a capital in Samaria. And from that day, for generations, Israel was divided. There was the nation of Judah, consisting of the tribe of Benjamin and Judah, with their capital in Jerusalem, and then the other ten tribes, with their capital in Samaria. And there was bloodshed and fighting for generations after that day.

You see, Solomon, at the end of his life, had completely backslidden. The man that gave us the book of Proverbs. The man that God had granted wisdom to disobeyed some of God's commands. He multiplied wives to himself, and they turned his heart away from God. And Solomon began to worship idols. He became an idolater. And he overtaxed the people. He put these heavy levies on everyone that they couldn't sustain, and then he introduced forced labor. And Israel was reeling and barely surviving under his tyranny. And now Rehoboam says, "I'm going to make it worse." And they rebelled.

Now friend, if change doesn't come from the top voluntarily, it will eventually come from the bottom by revolution.

Now, the relationship here is a king and his subjects. But it can be true of any kind of a relationship, a boss and employee. The boss puts unrealistic demands and expectations on the employees. The boss tries to put a yoke on them that he could never endure himself or that she could never endure herself.

There are some men that I know and have known that, honestly, I admire their achievements and certain traits and qualities in their lives, but I would never work for them because they're cruel to their employees. And because change didn't come from the top, in some cases, revolution came from the bottom. And the ministry, the job, the work was crippled. And in some cases, there was a complete downfall.

I remember we used to play basketball every Sunday after church services. And so me and a bunch of guys, we'd go over to a local school, and we'd play. And one of the guys is really athletic, but he was just tired. I said, "Why are you so tired?" He says, "Well, work." I said, "Look, I work too. I just preached three times. Give me a break." He said, "No." He said, "You don't understand." He says, "I took this new job, and I interviewed. I've been there for several months now. And I get paid a salary. I don't get paid hourly. And they told me, 'Look, this is going to require you to be in the office approximately 40 hours a week, and here's your salary.'" Pretty good salary. But he said, "It turned out I have to spend a minimum of 70 hours a week in the office. And then I have to take another 10 to 15 hours of work home with me every single week." He said, "I hardly get time to see my kid or to be with my wife. And as soon as we're done playing today, I'm going to go home and spend what little time I can with my family before I pass out and go to sleep." Well, there were some unrealistic demands and expectations there.

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Well, you know, the other side of the coin is true. Some people expect to get paid a very good wage for having a poor work ethic. They have the opportunity to advance themselves, and they don't. And they feel like they should be paid equal to what someone else does that has actually done the hard yards and put in the work. And the opportunities were available to both, but some people feel, "Well, I deserve what they get." No, you don't. Life doesn't work that way.

I remember hearing the story of a lady. She's working. It's a small private manufacturing firm. And she found out that a fellow employee made considerably more than she did. Their jobs were similar. So she marched into the boss' office with attitude all over her. She said, "I found out what so and so makes, and there's quite a disparity between their salary and my salary. I expect to be paid what they get paid. This is unfair." The boss said, "Listen, do you realize that they've been here longer than you?" She says, "Well, yes." He said, "Look. In fact, he's been here ten years. You've been here one year." "Well, that shouldn't matter."

He said, "Do you know that for the first two years he was here that he put himself through night school and took business classes so that he would have more knowledge that would help him on the job? And he does things that you may not know about." She says, "It still doesn't matter. We deserve the same salary. Our jobs are not that dissimilar." He said, "Do you realize every morning when you come to work, he's already here?" She said, "Well, I never thought about it, but I guess."

He said, "Well, he's done that for ten years. He comes in early. He's learned how every machine on that shop floor operates. He's learned all of the workers' names. He's learned their families' names. And anything that I need, if a machine breaks down, he's my go-to guy. He knows what parts to order. He can do everything from getting parts to getting a finished product to our clients. That's why he makes more than you do. You've had those same opportunities. Have you gone to night school?" "Well, no, I haven't done that."

"Are you going to start coming in early?" "Well, no, I don't get paid to come early." She said, "This is unfair. I'm going to report you for discrimination." Unrealistic expectations.

Society preaches that. That is not the way life works. We have to seize the opportunities that are available to us.

It's true of husbands and wives as well. Some demand far more than they're willing to give. And in a marriage relationship, when one is doing all the taking and very little giving, there's going to be trouble.

It's like this one husband. He is with a friend, and he's talking to this guy. He says, "You know what, my wife, she's not the woman I married. I'm just so disappointed. She's changed so much." His friend said, "What are you talking about?" "Well, she doesn't have that real cute figure she used to have. And sometimes, she doesn't even make dinner, and the house doesn't stay clean. She's just not the woman that I thought I married." His friend said, "Okay, wait, time out. How many kids do you and your wife have?" He said, "Four."

He said, "Listen, you realize her hips are never going to go back to their original dimensions after having four kids? All right, so what? She's put on 15 pounds in the last 25 years. You've put on 40, at least. And I assume your wife works. Does she work?" "Well, yes." "Full-time like you?" "Yes." "So you expect her, when you both come home from your full-time jobs, you expect her to clean the house, make you dinner while you watch TV? And when you get done watching

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your sports, you expect her to be in the mood? Brother, those are unrealistic expectations. You're living in a fantasy world."

Listen, being a perfect husband or being a perfect wife is a yoke that no one can endure. I'm glad Janet doesn't expect that of me, and I certainly don't expect that of her.

Now the same thing can be true of parents and children in relationships. And there are always two sides to things. We live in a society that wants to give out trophies for participation.

Somebody says, "Oh, you're just from an older generation." Yes, I am. But the older generation is willing to think for itself. Life doesn't work that way.

And you get a kid, the parent expects them—the coach to play them just as much as everyone else whether they win or lose, even if the kid doesn't have any skills. Life doesn't work that way.

And if you are always rewarding your kid for doing nothing, when they finally step out the door, they're in for a rude awakening. Life doesn't work that way.

But on the other hand, the other side of the coin, you got some parents that are far too hard on their kids. They don't want their kids to be soft when they grow up. I get that. And we do need to set goals for our kids and require things from them and teach them to do chores and to have a good attitude. And we need to stretch them. But for some parents, it's like they expect no noise in the house, and you need to only make straight A's in school. You need to become a concert violinist, a star in sports. And when you grow up, you need to be a doctor or a lawyer so you can support me—unrealistic expectations.

I remember Harrison came to me once when he was a little boy. He said, "Dad, I realize you're the pastor, so you have to be an example. And I'm your son, so I have to be an example too." I said, "What?" He said, "Well, I know you've got to be an example, and so I have to be an example being your son." I said, "Stop. I do expect you to obey your mother and me. I expect you to obey God's Word, and I expect you to obey your conscience. But as far as anything else, what other people expect of you, just forget about all that, be a kid, have fun."

And we always gave our kids room to be kids and to make mistakes. And we certainly haven't been perfect parents. And I attribute the grace of God more than anything else. But to this day, our family is very close. And I am so, so thankful for that. But that was a yoke that he couldn't bear. It was unrealistic that he's got to be an example for everybody else in the church and all the adults.

I mean, some of you don't realize. Our kids, our youngest son, Spencer, is walking down the hallway at church. He's like eight years old. A lady stops him, "Oh, you're the pastor's son. You need to pray for me." That stuff would happen all the time.

Well, with Rehoboam, there was a revolution from the bottom because change didn't come from the top voluntarily.

I had a friend. I wasn't a Christian at the time when we became friends. But his father had decided that the son was going to be an Olympic gold medalist. And his daddy decided that, determined that when he was 10.

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So at ten years old, he put him on a very strict diet. And every day, he had to run 12 miles, every day, every day, every day, every day, 365 days a year. It didn't matter if it was raining, "You've got to put your 12 miles in." "No, you can't play with your friends." "No, you can't eat this, you can't eat that." 11 years old, 12 years old, "You've got to run your 12 miles." "It's snowing outside, dad." "No. You've got to run your 12 miles."

Finally, when he was 16, there was rebellion, obviously. He said, "I'm not doing this anymore." He left home as a teenager. And within a couple of years, he's still a teenager; he marries a 36-year-old divorcee with a bunch of kids. He did it just to antagonize his father, and he succeeded. It was unrealistic to expect that of a 10-year-old kid.

Now, how do you know if you're being too hard as an employer? How do you know if you're trying to put a yoke on your spouse, that shouldn't be there, or your children? All right, it's pretty simple, listen to them.

That's what Rehoboam didn't do to the people. The Bible says when the people saw that Rehoboam wouldn't listen to them, they said, "We're done. We're gone."

Listen to them. They're speaking to you all the time through word, through action, and through attitude. Learn to look. Learn to listen. And most of all, talk to God. God will show you. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, ask God, and He gives it liberally without finding fault." God will show you, and He'll give you wisdom and tell you what you need to do.

All right, we come to yoke number three. Are you ready? This is the yoke of the law. In other words, keeping the law to be saved or to somehow please God.

We read in Acts chapter 15. The church has gathered together in Jerusalem because there was a sect of believing Pharisees that were saying, "We believe Jesus is the way. We believe in salvation. But anybody that gets saved also has to keep the law of Moses; otherwise, their salvation is not legit." We pick it up. Acts 15:5,

⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

So Peter responds. Verse 10,

¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Not saved by keeping the law or by doing good deeds, but saved by grace through faith.

Now the law is good. It reveals our sinfulness. It shows us that we need a Savior. It points us to Jesus, but the law doesn't save us. The Bible says the law is to serve as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

So I've got the law, and it says, "you shall not," and I do it anyway. Okay, I realize I got a problem, something that I cannot conquer myself. I need something greater than me. I need Someone greater than me. And that is the law's purpose.

Again, we're saved by grace through faith, without the works of the law.

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And I know a lot of people think, "All right, pastor, I get it. I understand. So what's the issue?" Here's the issue. That today, just like then, many people are beginning to suddenly turn from the grace of God, looking to their own good works to somehow justify them or give them favor with God.

I used to write a lot of poetry as a teenager. I remember I had one. It was a one-line poem. And it said, "Within a tear, I see my life rolling down the face of God." And I think that symbolizes how many people feel about their life. That God is perpetually disappointed with them. That God tolerates them, but their life is really a disappointment. And God is just sort of half mad at them, and He puts up with them. And if they'll do well for a few days, if they'll toe the line, then maybe God will give them a temporary nod of approval. No, my friend, the kingdom doesn't work that way.

We're not accepted with God because of our good works. We're accepted with God because of what Jesus did on Calvary.

Listen to this. Our right living does not inspire God to be good to us. God's unmerited goodness toward us inspires us to live right. There's a big difference between the two.

Galatians 5:1, Paul writes, he says,

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

What yoke is that? Verse 4,

⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Pastor Harrison, our oldest son, we also have twins that are 35. Is that right? 34. I got my wife on the front row. Rebecca and Spencer. And Spencer is a kid. It just would take him forever to get ready because he'd just get distracted easily. It was just sort of his way. And he's actually brilliant. He has made his life, made his living with his guitar, and doing quite a few other things, a real unique young man. But he'd take a long time to get ready.

And so we left them with my mom and dad once. Janet and I went on, I think it was a ministry trip for a week. And they're getting ready for school, and Spencer's doodling and distracted, and his grandmother, my mother, says, "Spencer get ready." "Okay. Okay, Grandma." And a few minutes later, he hadn't done much, hadn't got his shoes on. "Spencer, get ready." "Okay, grandma." A little while later, he's gotten distracted again. And she comes. She gets really stern. "Spencer, get ready," and he starts to cry.

She goes, "Spence, what's wrong?" He says, "I'm afraid we won't be a blessing to you." She said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Dad said that we're to obey you and to be a blessing. And I'm afraid we won't be a blessing." How many know a grandson's slowness to get ready is not going to diminish grandmother's love for him? But I think we feel that way with God sometimes.

Friend, He doesn't love you based on your good works. He loves you based on who He is, not on what you do. You're His child, and He loves you. In fact, He loved you and valued you before you ever did anything good or bad. Now, we believe in good works, but we believe they're the

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fruit of salvation, the result of salvation, not the cause of salvation. It's the result of receiving the life of God, of embracing the goodness of God. It makes me want to do right. It makes me want to live right. It makes me want to change from the inside out. But I don't do these outward works to somehow convince God to change me inwardly. That's backward. It's exactly backward from what the gospel teaches.

All right. The fourth yoke is what I'll call the yoke of equal relationships. And it could be positive or negative—the yoke of unequal relationships.

There was an Old Testament command that was to serve as an object lesson of this. I'll quote it. It's Deuteronomy 22:10 (KJV). It says,

¹⁰ Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

It's two different animals. Don't put an ox and an ass together because they have different temperaments, first of all. They have different strides, secondly. They're going to be constantly chafing against one another. That one's going to be pulling one way. One's going to be pulling another way. One's going to go fast. One's going to go slower. There are going to be problems. And it might even prove dangerous because of the conflict between these two animals.

Now, in the New Testament, it puts it this way. Second Corinthians 6:14, the Bible says,

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?

(the believer referred to as righteousness, the unbeliever as lawlessness)

And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Now, some translations put it this way. Stop forming intimate relationships with unbelievers. Now that doesn't mean you don't engage a lost and a dying world. We have to. We have to share the gospel with people. We need to befriend people if we're ever going to show them the love of Christ. We're to preach the gospel to people. So it's not saying cut yourself off from the world, but he says stop forming intimate relationships with unbelievers.

And generally, we look at this and talk about this in the context of marriage. You can apply it to other things, but I just want to keep it there as we talk about it. A marriage in a negative sense, if you have a believer that marries an unbeliever, they're always going to be pulling against one another. There's going to be constant chafing. There are different values and different priorities. And the effect is you'll always be tired from pulling against that; always chafing against it. It may be a fight coming to church. It may be a fight tithing off of your income and giving God the first part of your income. It may be a fight having a Bible study in your home or having Christian friends.

And it can affect your character and morals. A constant intimate relationship, friend, it can affect your views and your attitudes, and how you look at things. It could even tempt you to compromise your morals and your integrity just to keep the peace in the home.

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When I was a teenager living on my own, I had my favorite pair of jeans. It was pretty important to us. I don't know, today, it seems like it's more sneakers today, but it was your jeans in my day. And I had some like tapestry patches sewn on the holes, and I just loved these jeans. And I'm at the laundromat. And I had just gotten a brand-new red shirt. I threw my red shirt with my favorite jeans in the wash machine, and they were in there having close fellowship. And when I pulled them out, my blue jeans were now pink jeans. Yes, it was pretty traumatic.

But, you see, that red shirt in that close fellowship, the dye had bled over into the jeans, and that's what happens in close intimate relationships, the attitudes and the values and the outlooks of one that bleeds over into the other almost unconsciously, it can happen.

I don't recommend it, and God actually commands you as a believer not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever in an intimate relationship.

Now, on the positive side, there are great benefits to being equally yoked. The labor is easier. You're both pulling the same load in unison. It makes your work, as I said, much easier. There's mutual encouragement. Generally, when one is down, the other one is up. You can share your relationship with God. You can pray about things together. And more than likely, your kids are going to serve God. You're not going to be hearing things like, "Why do I have to go to church? Dad doesn't go to church." I highly recommend being equally yoked. It's a much better situation than being hitched to an ass, that is, if you're an ox.

I have seen enough people disobey this command throughout the years, and they've paid a steep price. And I've had people tell me, "But he's so nice, and he doesn't mind my Christianity, and he's actually more of a gentleman than the Christians that I've dated." Listen, if you go ahead and marry him, you're going to get the devil for a father-in-law.

But Jesus actually taught that. He said to people, "You are of your father, the devil." There are only two families in the world, friend. There are not more than that.

Now, if you're already hitched to an unbeliever, you already made the decision. You got married. All right, stay married. Or maybe you were both unbelievers, and then you got saved, you've come to Christ. All right, stay in the marriage. Show the love of Christ. Pray for them that God would open the eyes of their understanding that they would be saved. And let the glorious light of the gospel shine through your attitude and through your unconditional love. Don't constantly preach at them. That's the worst thing you can do. Don't nag them. Don't preach at them. Live it before them. Let them see the reality of a changed life through your lifestyle, through your attitudes, and through your actions. And hopefully, their eyes will be opened, and they will be brought into the kingdom of God as well.

And then we come to the final yoke that I want to talk about, and that's the yoke of Jesus. Matthew 11:28, Jesus said,

²⁸ Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus says, come, everyone that's laboring, that's heavy laden, I'll give you rest. The whole world is laboring to find rest. People drink to excess, and they take drugs. Do you know why? They're trying to find an inward rest.

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I went down that road for a long time. I was a pretty severe alcoholic and had huge problems with substance abuse. But I was really, I was looking to fill an empty place inside. I was searching for an inward rest. Some people, they accumulate more money and more things. I've just got to get more. If I can get this, maybe then, maybe I'm going to have that inward peace. But it'll never be enough. People will change sexual partners all the time. This one and that one and this one and that one, and they're trying to satisfy an inward emptiness. My friend, only Jesus can give you that rest.

He said, come to Me. You're laboring. You're heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He said, "Take My yoke and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart." The yoke of Jesus is a yoke of gentleness and humility. And when we take His yoke upon us, we cease caring what people think or say. It doesn't matter if we're applauded or recognized. It doesn't matter if people overlook our significance. We're content to do the will of God and remain unseen and unnoticed if He so wills it.

We get out from under the yoke of pride and pretense. And my friend, that is a burden that is slowly killing most of the world. It's a wonderful thing to shed that yoke and to take on the yoke of Jesus' humility. We become absorbed with following Jesus rather than being consumed with trying to impress people or worrying about what they think of us. We can begin living to please God and not men. The turmoil and the anxiety that our soul was filled with leaves and is replaced by the peace of God.

This contentedness and rest comes into our soul when we take on the yoke of Christ. Your reputation or your status in the eyes of others ceases to matter to you. Friend, that's a big thing.

I remember I was preaching in East London, South Africa, many years ago; Pastor Harrison actually went on that trip with me. And the host of the conference, I was the main speaker, the host of the conference, when I got there, he said, "Look, if you don't mind, we're just going to call you Bayless. We're not going to call you Pastor Bayless." He said, "This gentleman here, his name is Jim. He's an engineer. We don't call him Engineer Jim." He says, "And this gentleman, Bill, he's a jeweler. In fact, he owns the largest jewelry store in East London. We don't call him Jeweler Bill. And this is Ed. We don't call him Farmer Ed. So if you don't mind, we're just going to call you Bayless." I said, "Fine." It was fine with me then. It's really fine with me now. I don't mind at all.

But listen, with some people, oh, you dare not forget their title. You will be perpetually on their naughty list if you forget their title. And I understand showing proper respect for people. I mean, I do that. But myself, I honestly don't care. But when that's an issue to you, whatever it is, and it may be an earned doctorate, and you put in your time, and you're to be commended for that. But if someone doesn't refer to you as "doctor," and they call you by your name, and that becomes a huge issue with you, and you're offended, you're under the wrong yoke. You put on the yoke of Jesus. It's a yoke of humility. It's a yoke of gentleness.

When you come to Jesus, how do you know what He wants you to do? Well, you know, they would take a yoke, and they would yoke up an older ox, and they'd put a younger ox with the older ox. This older ox was called the lead ox.

In fact, Harrison, come on up. All right. So they yoke up the older ox (there you go) with the younger ox, and then when the older ox turns, the young ox comes with it. There's just the gentlest of a nudge. And the younger ox learns where to go and how to do the job. And the

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Scripture, Jesus says, take My yoke upon you. And there'll be an inward nudge. He does it through the Holy Spirit. It's just an inward "Go forward," "Stop." It becomes the most natural thing in the world. He will teach you when you get yoked together with Him. It's a wonderful way to live life. Thank you.

Now, we've actually talked about a lot of different yokes here today. Some of them are very good, others quite harmful and destructive. A yoke is like sin, oppression, sickness, and maybe shame associated with your past.

I want to kind of bring this to a conclusion by quoting a verse to you. It's from Isaiah chapter 10. And it was referring to the Assyrians that had subjugated Israel. And it applied then to the Assyrians and their mastery over God's people, but it can apply to any kind of a yoke. Listen to it carefully. Isaiah 10:27 (KJV). The Lord is speaking,

²⁷ And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

"The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." This is talking about an evil yoke, a yoke that the enemy has placed on God's people. Now, the anointing, some translations say the anointing oil; oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

I like the Jubilee Bible. It says, "And the yoke is destroyed because of the presence of the anointing."

Pastor Kenneth was talking about it earlier. The anointing in Scripture refers to the tangible manifested presence of God. It's the tangible presence of God. It destroys yokes.

Under the old covenant, God's presence dwelt above the ark, above the mercy seat in the ark. It was this box that was overlaid with gold. Inside was the copy of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and a jar of manna. There were some golden angels over the top. But God's presence, that's where it dwelt, under the old covenant.

It's a long story. We don't have time to get into, but because of Israel's disobedience, the ark was captured by the Philistines. And so the Philistines take this ark, this symbol of God's presence, that they brought it into the temple of their god, Dagon. They worshiped an idol that was half man and half fish. It was a demon god that the Philistines worshiped.

So they put it in there. And they come in the next morning, and Dagon, the statue, has fallen on its face before the ark. And they thought, "There wasn't an earthquake last night, was there? I didn't feel anything. Did you feel anything?" "No." "Well, let's put him back up again." So they put Dagon back up. The next morning, they come in. Dagon has fallen on its face again before the ark. This time his hands are broken off, and his head is broken off.

Symbolic, my friend, when the presence of God is there, the head represents authority, and the hands represent the ability to reach out and inflict you. The devil's authority and his ability to touch your life are broken and destroyed because of the anointing—the presence of God.

Psalm 22, "God inhabits the praises of His people." Literally, God enthrones Himself upon the singing praises of His people. It brings the presence of God. Isaiah said, "God, You meet the one who rejoices."

What Yoke Are You Wearing?

God comes when we rejoice. His authority comes down. His anointing comes when we worship Him out of sincere hearts.

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