

Call to Obedience #272
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

"If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it." —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

HIS YOKE IS EASY

By Reimar Schultze

"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 11:29–30

It is truly a fact of life in Christendom that when Christians are confronted with this "easy yoke" passage, their faces display instant expressions of doubt, skepticism, or downright disbelief. Millions of God's born-again children, soon after conversion, have abandoned the ship Zion, declaring that the way of the Lord is too hard. They say, "I just cannot live it."

So, this begs the question: what does Jesus mean by "my yoke is easy"? Does it mean that it is as easy as it can get? Does it mean that it is without any hardship, trial or tribulation? Does it mean that it protects us from conflict within and without or the struggle of the soul altogether? You know the answers to these questions. His "yoke is easy" means that it is easy in relationship to that of the sinner, because the Christian is yoked with Jesus while the sinner is yoked with the devil. So when you go to prison, when you are afflicted with sickness, when you are without the comforts of life or of friends, it is a lot easier to have Jesus yoked in with you than that wicked one. Make no mistake about it, there are not three yokes: one for the saint, one for the backslider, and one for the ungodly. If we are all for God, we are yoked with Christ. If we are anything less than that, we are yoked with the evil one, and the way will be hard.

Ah, now you can see the easy-hard relationship in reference to the yoke. The key is: with whom are we yoked? And, my friend, if you are a Christian, and life is difficult and heavy, it simply means that your head is in the wrong yoke. It is only as you stick your head and neck all the way into the same yoke that Jesus has his head in that this Scripture will be realized in your life.

The Way of the Transgressor

Let me now take you a little further to nudge you into realizing that it is the way of the sinner and backslider that is hard. This is found in the words of Solomon, one of the wisest of all times. He said, "...the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15). Now, I have you sandwiched in between two great Scriptures. Oh, there is no way for you or me to escape or to biblically say, "The way of the godly is hard." The apostle John also confirms this by saying "that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Now, who are the we here? The we are the apostles and those of like-spirit with the apostles. The we are the victorious ones, who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They are the ones who testify

in the language of the Amplified Bible, that his commandments are "not irksome (burdensome, oppressive, or grievous)."

Hence, truly, Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, was right when he remarked, "It costs a man just as much or even more to go to hell than to come to heaven." Yes, "...the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23). Sin is a spoiler. Sin is a deceiver. Sin is a corrupter. Sin is a killer!

Tell me, friend, are we not confronted on the very first pages of the Bible with the stark contrast between the way of the sinner and the way of the righteous? Which was easier: for Adam and Eve to live without sin or to live in sin? Were they happier inside the garden or outside the garden? So tell me, what is lesson number one on this matter? Is it the way of the godly that is hard or the way of the ungodly? You know the answer. Then go to the first page of the Psalms and tell me who is more blessed: is it the man who walks in the way of the ungodly or of the sinner or of the scornful, or is it the man of righteousness who walks not in the way of sin? Does it not say of the righteous that he **delights** in the Law of the Lord and that whatsoever he doeth shall prosper?

Surely, sin is a terrible taskmaster. It has no blessed rewards—none whatsoever. It plants no good seeds, and it brings forth no life-sustaining harvest. The way of the transgressor is hard. Look how sin spoils marriages, rips apart the hearts of children when divorce knocks on the door. Look at how sin runs up financial debt, and how its fruit of resentment, criticism, self-pity, jealousy, the lust of the flesh and of the eye, and the love of the world stings and saddens its customers. Look how the transgressor goes to bed—his mind is haunted with fears of the fruits of his sins and of the Judgment to come. He ever lives under the cloud of guilt, shame, and condemnation. To get relief from this hard way, he goes to pornography or fornication or adultery or alcohol or drugs or he lavishes upon himself the goods of this world or he escapes into books or exotic vacation spots, ever running away from the inward torture of his soul or, which is even worse, that his conscience is seared as a hot iron and he has lost all sensitivity to the Judgment to come and a hell to shun.

Look at the face of the transgressor. It looks hard, often frightening. Have you noticed that the transgressor looks old at age forty, and a saint looks young at age sixty? Because of his obedience, Moses had not lost any of his youthfulness, even at age one hundred and twenty. Go to the funeral of the transgressor and watch the gloom and doom in the hearts of his friends who are also without hope. But attend the funeral of a saint and feast on the joy of the resurrection of his acquaintances. Have I said enough to convince you that Jesus' yoke is easy but the way of the transgressor is hard?

Training for Righteousness

Now then, why does the way of the righteous seem so hard and so difficult at times? The reason lies simply in this inviolable truth: **the way of the righteous is only hard when he is not righteous!**

The way of Jesus is hard—yea, impossible—unless we go all the way, unless living for Jesus becomes our constant aspiration! If we forsake all to follow him, then and only then are we in his easy yoke and under his light burden. Until the point of total surrender, the way of the not-so-righteous "righteous" is hard. If we are not in this walk with

God all the way, we will neither fit in with the sinner nor with the saint. We simply cannot taste of the fruits of righteousness, peace, and joy by holding back, not even a penny, a minute, or the smallest piece of our agenda. This is the secret to understanding the "yoke is easy" message. The power of the Holy Spirit for us to live happily with God will not enter in, short of our forsaking all to be yoked with our Master. To illustrate this, let's look at some examples:

Flying a Boeing 727 commercial jet through clouds, turbulence, low visibility, and lining it up with a runway very near the beginning of that runway becomes hard or impossible for the occasional weekend pilot. But to the pilot giving his entire life to a flying career, this task becomes as natural as for a housewife cleaning her kitchen. He delights in it. So it is, for example, that the average Christian cannot enjoy prayer meeting because he does not practice the presence of God all week long—he does not pray without ceasing—and when he comes to pray with others, he is doing something that is strange, unpleasant, and difficult. But to the one whose life is prayer, and for whom prayer is life, for the one who prays without ceasing, attending a prayer service is just as natural and delightful as for a professional pilot to break through the overcast and see the runway lights right in front of his nose.

Part-timers just cannot enjoy the things of God. The ways of God are hard when our feet are stuck in the mud of the world, when we are spiritually out of shape. Take an athlete. Many of us admire a long distance runner. We like to have posters of him as his chest breaks the ribbon at the finish line. And there are moments of inspiration when the Olympics are on television that we on the next day find ourselves running down the highway to imitate part of that great athlete's accomplishments. But we only go a few hundred yards and pain shoots up our legs and our heart wants to jump out of our chest. The fact is, the difference between us and the athlete is that he has forsaken all to be a runner while we have abandoned nothing to run the race. He has put himself on a strict diet and gotten rid of food and drink that impairs his health. He has disciplined himself to a regular schedule of weight-lifting, stretching exercises, and sleep. He has put himself under the supervision of a running coach. So while we run half a mile and begin to say "impossible," the true athlete just gets warmed up and feels the adrenaline rush in his legs saying run, run, run!

Unless our whole lifestyle on a consistent, daily basis is regulated to love Jesus, to serve Jesus, to adore Jesus, to celebrate Jesus, to obey Jesus—every minute of the day—we will continue to miss the spiritual runways, and we will continue to have spiritual cramps in our legs, complaining that it's too hard.

To find his easy yoke and his light burden, we must give ourselves to discipline. On the one hand, we must abstain from all that is evil or that even has the appearance of it. On the other, we must discipline ourselves to engage in all that is holy and just. This is the same as a professional pilot or an Olympic candidate does in order to succeed in his field.

We know that we are saved by grace, but if we think that with that privilege of salvation, the Holy Spirit will automatically infuse us with power without us consistently exercising Christian disciplines, we are mistaken. We can be born the son of an ace fighter pilot, but being born of a man of such greatness in no way makes us able to do

stunts in the sky. We have to make the same sacrifices as our father did in order to soar into the heights and to enjoy adventures in the heavens. We may be born the son of an Olympic champion, but if we choose to fill our belly with the husks given to the pigs, we will never find ourselves streaking across the earth at less than four minutes per mile.

Sonship to great parents gives us an advantage. We are Christ's inheritance—that's an advantage—but we cannot expect to live godly and triumphantly as our Lord unless we also incorporate the daily disciplines that Jesus was engaged in. Consider some of these disciplines: Bible memorization—Jesus knew the Scriptures so well that at twelve years of age, he confounded the scribes, Pharisees, and the doctors of the Law (Are you giving yourselves to Bible memorization?); Jesus had a habit of rising much before day to pray (How is your morning prayer time?); Jesus fasted; and Jesus abstained from all appearance of evil, he avoided every idle word, and he never looked at a woman to lust after her. Indeed, without our committing ourselves to such disciplines, we will not be able to stay in Jesus' yoke.

So when Jesus said "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden...Take my yoke upon you...For my yoke is easy " (Matt. 11:28–30), he was inviting the whole world to come out from under the oppressive yoke of sin to get into his easy yoke of holiness where the power of God "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24).

There is no easier yoke than Jesus' yoke and no harder yoke than that of sin and complacency. Forsake all to get into his yoke, and give yourselves to the kind of spiritual disciplines the Lord himself exercised to keep you by his wounded side.

Call to Obedience #272
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA

www.schultze.org