

Jesus Is Our Example

'Come to Me all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:28 to 30).

Those are wonderful words of Jesus. The idea of the 'yoke' is like a farmer or our 'Master'. A yoke makes oxen go where the Master wants them to go, and do what the Master wants them to do. The whole message of the Bible is 'God wants to give us salvation'. He wants to transform us, prepare us for heaven and finally, introduce us to a whole new existence. We need to concentrate on being transformed into the likeness of Jesus and that includes being totally obedient like He was. We need to learn from Jesus and apply the knowledge to our lives. Just reading the Bible is not enough to change us. 'Receive with humility the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the Word of God, and not merely listeners to it' (James 1:21 & 22).

We need to form a one on one, close relationship with Jesus in order to learn from Him. We need to spend time in His company and get to know Him intimately, just as Jesus knows the Father intimately. 'I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you' (John 13:15). We need to make Jesus our Lord and our Master and follow His example. If we follow the Lord, we are not pushing against His will, and that makes our lives flow easier and we will find peace. Jesus also once had a 'yoke'. He was, and still is connected to His Father, and in obedience went to the cross to save and liberate us humans, and in return we need to be committed to the Father's purpose. His yoke is all about service and obedience to God.

What kinds of things will Jesus teach us? He has told us He is gentle and humble in heart. Just as Jesus learned from His Father and did the things God told Him to do, so we also need to learn to do the things Jesus did and said. Jesus said if we do that, we will find rest for our souls. We will be at peace within ourselves. The soul who learns from Jesus, is a soul at rest. If we are proud, confused and live for ourselves, or striving to live without Jesus' yoke to guide us, we cannot learn from God. The Pharisees were a good example of what not to do. Allowing Jesus to guide us will bring spiritual growth, and to do that, we need to be close to Him. What motivated Jesus? The close, loving relationship with the Father motivated Jesus to fulfil the task given to Him, and that is the yoke we need to have too. We must be obedient and fulfil whatever tasks are given to us, just as our Example, the Lord Jesus did. By taking His yoke and completing our tasks, we glorify God the Father. Jesus was speaking to the Father when He said, "I have glorified You on earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). Jesus showed us His 'yoke' by only ever doing what God the Father told Him to do. 'I am able to do nothing from Myself ... because I do not seek My own will, but only the will of the Father Who sent Me' (John 5:30).

Several times in the four Gospels we read about Jesus saying just that; that He came solely to do God's will. 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and this is the will of Him Who sent Me; that I should not lose any of all that He has given Me, but that I should give them new life and raise them up at the last day' (John 6:38 & 39). In other words, God the Father wants to give us salvation through Jesus the Son. Jesus delighted to do God's will. Jesus life was dominated by the desire to please the Father and to accomplish all that the Father had given Him to do; and He never once wavered from that thought. That thought determined Jesus' attitude to life; made Him become our servant; He was utterly selfless; Jesus was never negative or selfish, ungracious or unloving. He was always wanting to direct people to the Father and teach people about the Father. That is what made Him reach out to touch sick people; reach out to bless the children; raise the dead; and finally, that is what took Him to Jerusalem and to the cross. That is why at the end He cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The Father was at the centre of what Jesus did, and we must also desire to do God's will in its entirety, right to the end of our lives. Jesus taught us how to face life, but He also taught us how to face death. His very last words were, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" (Luke 23:46). That is faith, because when we are dead, there's nothing more we can do. Faith is the way we face death. We all need to face life by living to please the Father and to honour and glorify Him. We need to follow His example and allow that to bring us the greatest delight. We need to learn from the Lord Jesus daily. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus suffered anguish but He prayed, "Not My will but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). We also read that although Jesus is God's Son, He learned obedience by what He suffered. Jesus became the Source of salvation to all those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8 & 9). Jesus lived in total submission to the Father, His plans and His purposes. Jesus is the most influential Person in all of earth's history. The Apostle Paul had the same determination to follow the Father. He faced beatings and death but did not waver from 'fighting the good fight'. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

In the book of Daniel we see that Daniel's three friends from the tribe of Judah, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego) were also prepared to die in order to be obedient to the Father, and were delivered by the Angel of the Lord (Jesus) from an extremely hot, fiery furnace (Daniel 1:6 & 7; 3:12 to 27). Daniel was delivered from the hungry lion's mouth (Daniel 6:16 to 23). The obedience of these four incredibly brave men changed history in favour of the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar made a decree that everyone had to honour God (Daniel 3:29). Later King Darius made a decree that every person had to fear the Lord (Daniel 6:25 to 27).

We are all capable of pushing God out to the fringes of our lives instead of keeping Him at the centre where He should be. Jesus – who is our example – never once did this even as a teenage boy. Every year Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem for a Passover feast. One year when Jesus was about 12 years old, He failed to return home with His parents. They searched for Him for three days, and when they found Him, His mother Mary firmly scolded Him for worrying them. Jesus reply was; “Did you not know that it is necessary for Me to be in My Father's house doing My Father's business?” An example for teenagers to follow is; Jesus was always obedient to His parents (Luke 2:41 to 52).

We need to follow Jesus' example of obedience and dedication to God. Fierce determination did it for Jesus, and will do it for us too, and with God's help, we will succeed. We cannot, cannot, cannot, do this on our own. We must be submitted to God, humble ourselves and ask His help, and by the grace of God we will achieve total obedience like Jesus did. If we fail, we need to repent, confess our sins, and get right up and press on to the goal. Total submission to God can actually keep us from falling into sin (Jude 1:24). But if we do fall we know we have an Intercessor, Who intercedes on our behalf and can pull us back up again (Romans 8:27; Hebrews 7:25). We all have different callings so we need to ask God what our task is and do what He asks of us. We will not succeed if we try to do someone else's job. The example for this is found in the scriptures. The body of believers is made up of many parts. If God calls us to do a task, we should not try to do a different one. If we are a 'hand', we should not try to be a 'foot' (1 Corinthians 12:12 to 25). We all belong in our own place, doing our own job, in obedience to God's will. Just as Jesus was obedient and was completely and totally successful in His purpose; which was the plan of salvation the Father gave to Him for us; so our obedience to God is the key to a successful Christian life.

'According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Holy Spirit, that you may obey Jesus and be washed in His blood. Grace to you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus our Messiah, Who according to His great mercy, became our Father again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last days' (1 Peter 1:2 to 5).

Amen and God bless you.

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