

January 5, 2011

**Are Greed and Complacency Hindering You
From Being Yoked with Lord Jesus?**

The serenity of being *yoked together* with Jesus is one of the most powerful images of Kingdom purpose we find in the Gospel text! Picture yourself being harnessed and pulling a wagon like a much-loved ox. Now picture Lord Jesus carrying that weight Himself through His Spirit in you!

***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.
For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.***” (Matthew 11:30)

Hebrew ancients often referred to the "yoke of Heaven", meaning our *absolute trust in God*. Who better to be guiding our every step and decision? It's when our hearts are willing to walk in the obedient trust of His Lordship that we "take His yoke" upon us. And when we're being directed as fully yielded "oxen" by our Lord Jesus, we're able to "learn from Him." That means we've intentionally dislodged our old sinful motives and ways according to His power at work in us so that HIS righteous ways and purposes can be instilled in our lives. At that point our souls, which is our mind, will and emotions, can be "at rest" in union with Jesus.

Too often, however, we either ignore the plans and purposes God has for our lives—the reason His yoke is on us—or we rush ahead into laborious effort to make something happen that He hasn't intended. Or, we get distracted by old familiar goals and ways, and shrug off His yoke to do what we want instead. Then of course we moan because the burden seems too heavy, and our "Christian walk" far too difficult. This should signal us that we need to humbly stretch out our necks to once more submit gratefully to His tender and merciful yoke!

Let's examine for a moment how our nation at large has suffered from decades of rebellion against the yoke of Jesus. The current economic downfall of the US is not THE source to the hardship so many are going through. Rather, it's our *collective sins against a holy God* that have brought this country to the brink of destroying ourselves. Military weapons haven't been needed to bring about our ruin. The only armaments that have blown holes in our national sense of security have been *internal: greed and complacency*.

Greed isn't manifested just by the amount of things a person strives after or accumulates or hoards for personal use. It's far more eloquently revealed in the *depth of debt* they've gotten themselves into in order to feed their insatiable cravings,

expectations and wants. Not only are the greed-driven out of harness with Jesus; they're in the driver's seat heading rapidly for a precipice!

Complacency, on the other hand, has no intention of heading anywhere no matter who is driving. As long as the majority of self-proclaimed Christians remain entrenched within systems of clergy-dependent religious practice, spiritual lethargy will reign. The directions given from the pulpit or ecclesiastic hierarchy may vaguely tug the "wagon of their life" one way or another, but the complacent don't care. What they're *told* to do is disconnected from what they *choose* to do away from their Sunday "religious pit stop."

Keep in mind that complacency feeds Satan's purposes. He wants to undermine the personal determination and zeal which God calls for in each of His children to actively fulfill their part in extending His Kingdom—or, to use our "yoke" analogy, to move ahead in the power of the Spirit of Christ to joyfully "pull His load". Think how threatened Satan felt when he heard the promises of Jesus to those who out of devoted trust in Him would *do their part* by His authority:

- *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will **do even greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).*
- *"And I will do **whatever you ask in My name**, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (John 14:13).*
- *"And **these signs will accompany those who trust**: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:17,18).*

If the above promises are not part of your life experience in Christ, have you been seduced into worldly-focused greed and self-absorbed complacency? Have you rationalized that it's okay with God if you mix a little wickedness with the righteousness you think you have? A little darkness with the light you presume is in you? (See 2 Corinthians 6:14.) Perhaps you've been "fiddling while Rome burns", *occupying yourself with unimportant matters and neglecting Father's priorities for you during this present-day crisis.*

Why is this picture of our *Lord's yoke being cast off* so descriptive of western Christianity today? So many are mired in the WHATs of this world—*what* they have (or don't have); *what* they need to make themselves happier; *what* the other people in their relational realm need to do so that the status quo can remain unshaken. But they've forgotten WHY our Lord died and their responsibility to make disciples of everyone who responds to that Great News. (See Matthew 28:18-20.)

When your goals and motives are bent on WHAT you have and on the non-Kingdom activities you do, you've become a "Christian" in name only. The WHY of someone who belongs to Jesus has everything to do with you spending eternity with our Lord and with being used by Him to lead others into His fold.

Assess yourself and those close to you in the faith:

- What do you and they talk about most frequently?
- How often do you discuss WHY God has you living and working and volunteering where you do?
- Ask those close to you what your words reveal about your heart, your inner person. Be diligent and judge what's really important to you (see Luke 6:45). Your very words reveal whether you live consciously aware of Lord Jesus and His goals for your life, or whether you're consumed with self-satisfaction and personal security.

The 300-unit senior mobile home park in which we live is a microcosm of what goes on throughout much of complacent Christendom in this nation. In the well-attended weekly Bible study they sap a gnat (Matthew 23:24) out of a Bible passage, each person eager to offer an opinion of meaning. Discourses about anything to do with each person's particular "church" abound as they compare practices, activities and programs offered there. But, from testimonies we've heard from various participants, they refuse to discuss anything that has to do with personal commitment to love and serve Jesus. We've discovered that any conversation that lends itself to bearing witness about the Person of Jesus and walking in obedient trust evokes discomfort. Denominational traditions have boxed many in, or worse, confined Jesus to a box that can't be opened because of fear He might call them to be changed.

You may wonder how people can live in such spiritual complacency, disregarding what the Word specifies are the interests of Jesus. But complacency enjoys like-minded company, even if it means being surrounded by others whose religious life keeps their heads buried in the sand. Even more grievous, that unspoken message of religious lethargy is being passed along to the next generations—those who are being discouraged from denying themselves, picking up their cross and following Jesus as Lord and King.

Maybe you're among those who are sensing that the time really is short. What if, as Jesus promised, this gospel of the kingdom is close to being preached to every ethnic group on earth, and the end is nearing? (Matthew 24:14) Who among those you love will still be clinging to their self-seeking greed and idle complacency? If Jesus were you, what would He be speaking and doing among them? **"Because of His love, grace and power in you, don't take 'No' for an answer if they're willing to hear!"**

If you've been reluctant to represent Christ to those around you in the past, or haven't known quite how to approach others about Him, use this Lifebyte and Dr. Leaf's materials to enable your mind to become completely free for His use: *"You, my brothers, were called to be free... to serve one another in love"* (Galatians 5:13). Replace the toxic thoughts and memories that have hindered you from lovingly and fearlessly representing Him to all you encounter. As the apostle proclaims, our Father has called us to *"declare the praises of Him who called you **out of darkness** into His wonderful light"* (1Peter 2:9). We do have glorious Kingdom purpose in Jesus!

Your servants for His praise while it's still day,
Mike & Sue