

THE TWO YOKES

NO. 1032

A SERMON
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*“Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood;
but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.”
Jeremiah 28:13*

ALL through the book of Jeremiah you will observe that the prophet taught the people not only by words, but by symbols. At one time he took his mantle and hid it in the earth till it was soiled and worn, and then taught them something by wearing it. At another time he took an earthen pot and broke it in their presence. And on this occasion he put a yoke about his own neck as the token that Israel should be subdued beneath the power of Nebuchadnezzar.

This was a strange method of teaching. I have sometimes heard complaints made by those who are fond of criticizing things they know nothing about—when a teacher puts a truth very plainly, if he shall, as it were, act what he says, he is upbraided at once as being histrionic. I know not what ungenerous words are hurled at him. Yet after all, this was what Jeremiah did. He taught the people by signs and symbols.

So, too, our Lord Himself. I doubt not that when He uttered those words, “Consider the lilies,” He stooped down and plucked a lily, and when He said, “Consider the ravens,” He pointed to the ravens flying overhead in the sky. At any rate, we know that once He took a little child, and set it in the midst of them. What an outcry there would be if I were to take a little child and set him here and preach about him! Did we use any kind of symbol, to what ridicule we should expose ourselves!

The fact is, we might do much more good if we did less regard the general current of public opinion, and ventured to do strange things, that anyhow the truth of God might come home to a slumbering generation, and the Word of God, which must be learned by them or they must perish, were made to tell upon their minds.

The prophet Jeremiah, though exceedingly faithful in his mission, which he discharged as God would have him discharge it, with many tears in great love and deep anxiety, nevertheless had a great obstacle in his way. He was met by false prophets who withstood and contradicted him to his face. Not so very surprising either. It must ever be expected that it will be so. If God shall speak by any man, there shall be some other who protests that God speaks by him to the contrary.

If there be a Christ, there will be an Antichrist. If there be a Simon Peter, there will be a Simon Magus. If there shall be raised up by God a Luther, there shall be an Eckius, or some other controversialist who shall seek to resist and overthrow him.

Let no man's heart then fail him if he be flatly contradicted when he bears testimony for God. Let him rather expect it, and go on never caring, for the fact is, the truth will outlive error, and in the long run that Word of God before which all things else are as grass and as the flower, the perishing flower of the field—the Word of God shall endure forever and triumph over the ruin of all the words of men.

Tremble not, you feeble adherents of the truth, who fear lest your weakness should make the truth itself weak, and the strong logic and the powerful rhetoric of its adversaries should overturn the oracles of God. It cannot be. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Gospel, mighty though they be both in power and in sophistry. The truth shall abide, the right shall prevail, for God is faithful, and Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

With this, by way of preliminary observation, we will now come to the text and endeavor to make some use of it for ourselves. Hananiah took off the symbolic yoke, the wooden yoke, from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Jeremiah comes again and says, "You have broken the yoke of wood, but God has commanded that ye shall now wear yokes of iron." They were not benefited, therefore, by the change, but the reverse. This is suggestive of a broad principle.

From the symbol, which was applicable in one case, we draw a general truth. Whenever men say of God, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us," they may do so if they will, but instead of the yokes of wood they will be sure to get yokes of iron. If they will not submit to the government of Christ, they will have to submit to the tyranny of Satan.

Some yoke they will have to wear, and if they reject the easy yoke of the Christ of God, the wooden yoke as it were which He puts on men, there shall be made for them yokes of iron, which they shall neither be able to break off nor yet to support.

So our thought will run this way. First, that *men must wear some yoke or other*. And secondly, that *the yoke of Christ is a very easy one*. And thirdly, that *when it is refused, it is inevitable that men should wear a heavier one*.

I. MEN MUST WEAR SOME YOKE.

It is so naturally. There is no stage of life in which this is not the case. The child must bear the yoke in his youth. He is an unhappy child that is under no control. Probably there is nothing so ruinous to a man as to be allowed to have his own way, while yet his judgment is not ripe enough to guide him. And when we advance into youth, we are usually placed in some position of life where we are under obligations to some superior, be he parent, or guardian, or employer.

Nor if we become what is called our own masters, does it make much difference. As things go now, I think there are no people that are their own masters, for the masters are bound to yield to the terms which the servants dictate, and this condition of things is getting more and more rife.

I shall not discuss the right or wrong of this, where questions arise between capitalists and skillful laborers, but I will say that if the employed claim liberty, the masters might very well be allowed a portion of that choice prerogative. As it is now, I am sure he that says, "I am a master," is as much under the yoke to his servant as the servant is under the yoke to his master. That a man who lives in the midst of society should hold some relationship to all around him is indispensable.

But men are always for changing their forms of government. Some nations have a revolution almost with every moon, but for all that there is still a yoke upon them. And if it were ever to come to anarchy, to mob rule—ah, I warrant you, it would be a yoke of iron and of red hot iron too. God save us from it.

No yoke is so hard to bear as that yoke which a people put upon themselves when they reject all order, break through all law, and will not submit to any principle or any government, however just or righteous. You cannot get on in this world without a yoke of some sort.

We are not going to wear a tyrant's yoke any of us. Let lords and lands have what masters they will, in this land of ours we will be free, and our own masters still, but the selfishness of individuals or of classes must never determine the boundary lines of power or of privilege, for we can only maintain our freedom by every one of us paying that right obedience to the law which is due from every citizen, if he would promote alike his own comfort and the common weal.

Away from those lower grounds into higher spheres—it is certainly true that we must wear the yoke. God has made us, and not we ourselves, and God has made us to be His servants. We are daily in dependence on Him for the bread we eat. If any man shall say he is not dependent upon God, I will at least reply to him, "You are dependent for the air you breathe and the power to breathe it. The life that is within you hangs upon a thread, and that thread is in the hand of the Most High."

Every moment each one of us is most certainly sustained by God. And in return for this support, there is something asked, namely, that we would submit to His will, that we would obey His law, which is perfect, and just, and right, and that having sinned against Him we should rebel no longer or continue

His enemies, but be reconciled to Him. We are made dependent creatures, and from that very fact we must wear a yoke unto God.

Moreover, dear friends, we are all so constituted as creatures, with such passions and propensities, that when we break one yoke, the yoke which it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God, we at once bend our necks to another yoke and begin to serve something else—we serve ourselves, and oh, the slavery of serving one's self! He that makes his belly his god, and bows down to the lusts of the flesh, serves a tyrant indeed.

Something or other we must serve, not only because we are dependent creatures, but also it seems to be stamped upon us that we must follow some great principle, and must yield ourselves to some spiritual influence. A yoke of some kind or another we must submit to.

The man who shall say, "I am perfectly free, and I live for nothing but myself," is so mean an animal, that he is hardly worthy to be called a man. In his boasted exemption from all regard to his fellow creatures and to his God, he sets himself up, in his own esteem, and that after a diabolical model, alone and apart in his awful selfishness, like an iceberg to melt away and maybe to crush others as he moves along his course.

What is he but a beacon, against which all are to be warned? Sir, the yoke fits the human neck, and the human neck was made to wear it. We must have some God, we must have some ruler, we must have some principle, which shall master us, and be it ours in God's name to choose the right and the best master, or else, woe be unto us.

II. Not to dwell longer upon our first point, I proceed to notice THAT THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS AN EASY YOKE.

It is, as it were, a yoke of wood. Let us dwell upon this awhile. God grant that some who have never worn that yoke may, by the Holy Spirit's power, be led to carry it.

If you become a servant of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the man of Nazareth, He asks of you nothing but what is absolutely right. His life, which is the Christian's law written out in living characters, is perfection itself. His precepts which distil like dew from His lips, are all pure and good, just and kind. It ought to be enough for a man, and would be enough for him if he were not fallen, to know that all rule is right, and to submit to it at once.

When God gives a man a noble spirit, he pants to enlist in honorable service. He craves a post in the council or the camp. His heart's inquiry is, "Where can I find a leader who will always lead me aright? Where shall I discover a law which will never lead me into evil, if I obey it? Where can I discover an example, which I may imitate in its very jots and tittles, and yet never be found any other than I ought to be?"

I commend to such spirits, Jesus the Christ of God, for there is nothing in His precepts or His practices, in His profession or His life, that is not consonant with righteousness of the highest order, majestic in its compass, and scrupulously minute in its obedience.

The yoke of Christ is framed in our interest. The law of Christ is drawn up and dictated by our Counselor for our welfare. If man were infinitely wise, and could draw up a code for himself which would involve no hardship, and entail all that was happy, he could devise no regulations more healthful, more profitable, or more pleasant than those of the Savior. He would discover that to believe in Jesus was the highest wisdom, to repent of sin, the most delightful necessity, to follow after holiness the most blissful pursuit, and to serve God the greatest delight.

Service and sovereignty blend here, as when Joseph became Prime Minister of Pharaoh he was lord over all the land of Egypt. To serve God in very truth is to reign, and to become a servant of Christ is to be made a king and a priest unto God—to be ennobled with as much dignity as human nature can bear.

Jesus Christ, if He forbids you anything, only forbids you what would harm you. Say any of you of sin—"Tis sweet"? Ah! and so are many poisoned things. Your nature goes after it. Yes and many a sick man's nature craves for that which would be his poison. The Lord Jesus denies to those who take His

yoke nothing but that which would be injurious to them. His is a blessed yoke because it is the yoke of righteousness, and it is the yoke of personal benefit.

Moreover, Christ's yoke is not exacting. If He assesses us with one hand, He more richly endows us with the other hand. He in His grace always gives to us of His bounty what He asks of us as our duty. Under one view of divine truth, faith is man's act. The Holy Ghost never believes for anybody. A sinner must believe himself. It is a personal act.

But yet in another phase of it, it is the Holy Spirit's work in the man—He gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. If then faith in Jesus be required, it is not a hard thing, because the Spirit works in men the very faith which Jesus seeks of them. If to repent of sin be thought difficult—how shall we get tears out of a rock?—the reply is, true repentance is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and when it is sought of the Lord, it is never denied.

Christ is exalted on high to give not only the pardon of sin, but to give the repentance which comes before the pardon. To give repentance and remission of sins is the very office of Christ. If then, the precepts should seem difficult, the difficulty is removed, because the virtues and graces which are a matter of precept are also a matter of promise. What is commanded in one Scripture is conceded in another as an absolute gift of God according to the covenant of His grace. It is an easy yoke, then, sinner.

Do you say, "I cannot believe"? Have you asked for faith? Is your heart hard? Have you asked to have it softened? If you cannot come to Christ with a broken hearts, come *for* broken hearts, for they are His gift. He will give you all—all that His Gospel demands, for He is Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher of our faith. It is an easy yoke then, since He gives what He requires.

That the yoke of Christ is easy, I might call to witness all those who have ever proved it. Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it. I think I have heard that Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister Mary at the coronation, and she remarked that it was very heavy, but someone standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to wear it herself. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy, but when a man comes to know Christ and to love Him, those very precepts become light and easy.

"I could not," says one, "be a Christian as I am, it would be very hurtful to me. I should have to give up much that I have learned to prize." Ah! but suppose you were made a new man in Christ Jesus, there would be nothing irksome at all about renouncing old habits.

Here is a raven, to tutor it into cleanly living, it must forego all carrion, it must feed upon these grains sweet and pure. The raven might pine and repine at this as a hardship, unless by some transmuting influence the raven were turned into a dove. Then it would be no hardship to forsake the carrion, which its new nature would loathe. Nor would it be grievous to feed upon the clean winnowed grain, for its appetite would crave it.

And O beloved, the life of the true Christian is not a life chafed and galled with vexatious prohibitions, because pursuits which, to the non-Christian heart are distasteful and repulsive, to the renewed heart are a matter of intense delight.

A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man when he dives into the sea shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight, because he is in the element and it entirely surrounds him. The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness, but when once those men are cast into the element of grace, then they bear ten times more and feel no weight, but are refreshed with joy unspeakable. Christ's yoke is easy, for the new heart rejoices in it.

The yoke of Christ is rendered easy by the bright example of Christ and by the blessed fellowship with Him to which His people are called. Christ Himself carried it. Have you never read in Grecian story—I think there are one or two cases to the point—how the Grecian soldiers on their long marches grew exceedingly weary, and wished that the war were closed. They felt so dispirited. But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself—and they saw him always sharing their

toil. If the road was rough, the monarch walked with them. If they were short of a draught of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong.

Oh! it is grand to the believer to feel that, if there be a trial or a difficulty in the Christian life, Christ has borne it, and Christ is with us, bearing it still.

Not like the scribes and Pharisees, who laid heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon men's shoulders, and they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers. Our Lord has taken the load Himself and carried it, and He now says to the disciples, "Take my yoke upon you—the very yoke I carried—and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: I have borne the trial which you have to bear and endured to the end, as you shall do through my grace."

There is one remarkable fact about the yoke of Christ which I should like to mention. All who have borne it have always had grace given equal to the weight of the burden. I have never yet discovered one cross-bearer among the children of God who ever expressed regret that he became a Christian and took upon himself the yoke. I have been familiar with death-beds. I have witnessed strange scenes, for the bony hand of death pulls back many curtains and plucks off many masks from faces that were accustomed to wear them.

One thing, however, I can solemnly say I have never seen. I have never seen a Christian weary of His Master's service. I have never heard from an aged pilgrim a word of complaint against Christ, or against His yoke. There have been a great many Christians beyond all suspicion of fanaticism, of whom none would suppose that they strove to act a part inconsistent with their true character, yet not one has had to regret that he served Christ.

You know the words so often quoted of him who regretted that he had not served his God with half the zeal that he had served his king, but I never remember, nor do any of you ever remember having heard of one who, in life's latest hour, bemoaned his allegiance to God, or bewailed the ardor with which he followed Christ. Surely, if remorse had ever begotten such a thought, someone would have been bold to utter it. And verily, verily, if such an incident had ever occurred, there would have been no lack of historians to record it.

Another thing I think tells strongly in favor of this yoke of Christ. The servants of Christ are always anxious to get their children into the same service. Often do I hear men say, "I don't want to bring my boy up in my trade. The work is dirty, the hours long, and the pay small." I have heard them say, "I should not like to see my boy in our office, there are so many temptations," and so on. Did you ever hear a pious man say, "I should not like my boy to be a Christian"? Did you ever hear a godly matron say, "I should deeply regret to see my daughter become a follower of Christ"? No, but what they have possessed for themselves they have longed to have for their children.

I remember well hearing my grandfather's earnest prayer for all his household. It always lay near his heart that his children and his children's children might fear the Lord. I have lively recollections of his devotions. My father, whose prayer you heard just now—how often have I heard him pray for his children. And I can truly say the prayer that is nearest to my heart is for my sons, that they may serve the Lord. There is nothing I desire so much beneath the skies.

Now if Christ's yoke were hard, we could not wish to bring our children under it. We have natural affections and common sense as well as you, and having tried Christ so long ourselves, that is our desire for our posterity. I have tried Him now (what shall I say?) these twenty years. Had I found Him a hard Master I would not beguile you or belie my own conscience. I speak the truth, there is no lord like Christ, and no service like Christ's. I would that every young man and every young woman here believed in His name and submitted to His authority, and that they would take upon themselves, through His grace, His easy peace-giving yoke.

III. If not, what then? **THOSE WHO REFUSE TO WEAR THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST WILL HAVE TO WEAR A WORSE ONE.**

"Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron."

Observe! Adam wore an easy yoke in paradise, he broke it. Himself and his posterity have had to wear yokes of iron ever since. Death has come into the world with all its train of woes. I need not enlarge, enough that it is a case in point. Whenever a child of God, a true child of God, under pressure of temptation, turns aside from the right path, he is always made to feel that after he has broken the yoke of wood, he must wear a yoke of iron.

John Bunyan's illustration will serve me well here. The two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, when they went on their way, came to a place where the road was full of flints that cut their feet, and there were thorns and briars in the way, and by and by one of them said, "Here is a meadow on the other side of the hedge, and if we were just to pass through the gap we might save a corner. It would be sure to come out in the way again, and so we should be certain to avoid the rough places."

Bunyan well describes how, when they got into By-path Meadow the night overtook them and the flood, and they wished to find the road again—longing for it, rough as it had been. But Giant Despair laid hold of them, took them to his dungeon, and beat them within an inch of their lives, and it was only by mighty grace that they escaped. Take care, Christian, take care! though you shall not utterly perish, you may often have to go with broken bones through a sin.

David—ah, you recollect his sin, his repentance, and his life of sorrow—how he went to his grave halting still, as a consequence, an entail of his crimes. Do not, therefore, shrink from Christian duty because it is onerous. Never, O Christian, turn aside from the straight road, the highway of rectitude, because it threatens you with shame or loss. That first loss will be vastly less than the after-losses you will incur by seeking to avoid it.

Jonah would resist the word of the Lord that came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh," but he had to endure the perils of a voyage, encounter the fury of the tempest, and at length to sink to the bottom of the sea, and yet to Nineveh after all he must go. If you shirk a duty you will be brought up to it yet, but it will be with bitter pain. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

The principle of our text is very applicable to all backsliders. We have known men that set out apparently on the road to heaven—made a profession of being Christians, but after awhile they tired and fainted, and walked no more with us. Christianity was to them a yoke, and they put it off. I wonder whether they have improved their condition. I believe not.

I will single out a person here—may his conscience single him out. When you lived in the country, every Sabbath you went with your wife and family to the house of God. Were you a Methodist then? Never mind, you were very earnest, whatever place it was you attended. And you and your little family were very happy too. But you came to London, and after a while the general idle habits of our London people in the morning came over you. You were content with one service a day. You did not seek church membership, nor cast yourself in the way of God's people.

By and by it was not one service a day you attended, it was none at all, or else you called it religion to go and hear the music and see the religious theatricals in certain great houses in London. I know not if you called that worshipping God when you were only whiling away the hour with sensual gratifications. And at last you gave up all pretence of being a Christian or of frequenting places of worship.

Now I will ask you a question. You have got rid of the yoke of wood, how about your shoulders now? Your Sundays, are they very pleasant? Your family, is it very happy? Your mind, is it very much at ease? Oh, no! I know while I am talking to you, you wish yourself back in the little village again listening to the minister's voice once more. For your Sundays are distasteful and comfortless, and your week days, when you think about your condition, are wretched and reproachful, and your children are not growing up in the way you could wish.

Ah, sir! I pray God to make that yoke of iron very heavy to you. Do you long to get rid of that and come back and take the yoke of wood again? God of His infinite mercy, bring you back if you are His child, or if you are not of His family may He put you among His children and teach you to walk worthily.

We have known those who have backslidden in another way. Here you are now. Perhaps you used to be a professor of religion, but the little shop was situated in a neighborhood where a good deal of trade was done on Sunday. You heard it said by the neighbors, "I do not know how it is you can shut up as you do." The wife did not like it, nor the husband either, it was however, done by slow degrees, and now it is always done, and you cannot both come together. There is only one can come, and the other must stop at home.

Well, you have given up Christ's yoke, and Sabbath keeping seems to be too hard a thing for you. Are you better off? Are you really better off? Are you happier? Are you really happier? Something in your soul answers my question. You know you have a yoke of iron now, instead of a yoke of wood. May God help you to break away from your present slavery, and may you become a true heir of heaven.

It may be, I have here before me, one who was led into backsliding by a very common occurrence. Young woman, I knew you once, when your face was radiant with happiness while we preached Christ, and sung the hymns of Zion, but you married, and your marriage was not in the Lord. An unbelieving husband was your choice. You thought the yoke of Christ was hard when we reminded you of the precept, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." You rejected the yoke of Christ. How have you found it since?

I have seen a great many such marriages, and I have only seen one—I *have* seen one, it is fair to say that, but I assert I never saw but one—in which I could get anything like an acknowledgement of happiness from the ill-assorted pair.

Here and there it has happened perhaps, that God has forgiven the fault, but not seldom it leads to alienation of heart, and to utter departure from the living God, and often too, to disappointment and heart-breaking, and to wretchedness such as I shall not attempt to describe. Those that break Christ's yoke and become backsliders, shall find an iron yoke given in its stead.

To take another class of illustrations. There are those in the world who will not have the yoke of Christ in the matter of religion—they prefer another. For instance, there are superstitious persons who are not satisfied with the Bible, they want tradition. They are not content with the teaching of the ancient church of Christ, as we find it in the Acts of the apostles, but they hanker after those modern upstart churches that call themselves catholic and apostolic, and amuse themselves by raking up the grotesque fashions of the middle ages.

What is the consequence? Do these perverts, who cast off the yoke of the true Christian religion, get an easier yoke? Ask them. Their penances and their mortifications, their fast days and their festivals, their communions, and their celebrations—oh, what do they get for them all? Is there one of them who can say he is saved?

It is usually one of their cardinal doctrines, that no man can know he is saved, so that the only position they get in this life, is to slave on with a dim hope and to die with a grim rite, and according to one faith to go—even if it were the best man in the church—to go to purgatory.

Ah, cheerless prospect! If I were a Roman Catholic, I should turn a heretic, in sheer desperation because I would rather go to heaven than go to purgatory.

I cannot see any advantage that is offered to a man, if he gets all he can get, it is not worth having. Who among you would slave his life away in voluntary humiliations, buoyed up with the cheering faith of purgatorial fires as the goal of your days? Where is the gain of it? And there is no church under heaven, except the true church of Christ, that says to men, "Believe, and live: lay hold on Christ, and you are saved."

We present to you in Christ's name the greatest boon beneath the sky, and other churches dare not pretend to offer it. They will only tell you that you may get into a state in which you may be saved perhaps, but they do not know quite certainly. It may be you shall fall away and perish after all, but as to an absolute certain salvation in perpetuity, received by an act of faith, they know not what it is. They put upon themselves a yoke of iron grievous to their necks.

And look at self-righteous men and women who try to work their own way to heaven. The Pharisees of old—what a slavery their life was! Any man who is seeking to be saved by his good works makes himself a slave. He must know in his conscience that his good works are imperfect, and therefore he has no title, no sure, clear title to heaven.

Only the man who takes Christ to be his wisdom, his righteousness, his justification, his redemption, his all in all—knows that he is saved. But he that getteth Christ hath all that God asks of him, he hath his sins punished in his Savior, he hath had the law fulfilled by his Savior, and he is thus saved. Those who will not have Christ, put upon their necks a horrible yoke. Oh, beware of superstition, beware of self-righteousness! These are iron yokes indeed.

But what remonstrance shall I address to the unbeliever, who says, “I shall believe nothing, I am a skeptic. I will not bow my neck to revelation”? Well, sir, you will be sure before long to bow your neck to some tremendous absurdity. If you can once get a skeptic to tell you what he does believe, you will generally find that his credulity is on a par with his infidelity. What he relishes, he feeds on without question, what he dislikes he rejects because somebody shrugged his shoulders at it.

I have sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of German neology. Thank God I have felt this is not the way of life, or else certainly I should never find it, though I had a doctor of divinity on either side to assist me. It is too hard and difficult for any intellects, except they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths, and they miss it I am afraid.

The men who do not believe in God believe that this world was not made at all, but grew. If you were to sow some mustard and cress in your garden, in the form of the initials of your boy, and it came up as A or B, and you took him into the garden and said, “Now, nobody ever sowed that seed, it grew there in that way,” you could not make him believe it. But these philosophical speculators believe that this big world, and sun, and moon, and stars, came forth without a creator. They can believe anything.

You cannot convince the simplest boy in the street that somehow or other he was developed from an oyster, or some creature inferior to that, and yet these profound thinkers bow themselves down to such a belief as this. Verily, it is fulfilled in these days as of old, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. He that will not believe the simple revelation of God will presently find himself committed to systematic misbeliefs, which distract reason, oppresses the heart, and trammel the conscience. He wears a yoke of iron instead of a yoke of wood.

Still giving but a word to each case, we have hearers who, when they listen to the Word, are haunted with reproach, but never softened with repentance because of their sins. They go on hardening their necks and persevering in their iniquities. Impenitent sinner, mark this word. The day will come when inasmuch as you have rejected the easy yoke of repentance, you will have to bear the iron yoke of remorse.

A man under remorse in this world is a dreadful sight. Horrified with the past and alarmed with the future, yet having knees so stubborn that they will not bow, and blood-shot eyes that will not weep. Because, alas! his heart is like to adamant that cannot feel.

Of all the pangs convinced and repentant sinners bear, there are none so dreadful as the gloomy torment of remorse. I could unfold scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, paint the visage, and repeat the expressions of men dying in fell despair, but I will spare you. God grant that you may never have to endure that foretaste of hell upon earth, for such it is.

And what shall I say to the lover of pleasure? There are those who say, “I shall not bear the yoke of Christ, I shall live in pleasure.” Pleasure, in some instances means lust, and gaiety means crime. Have you never seen the young man who was respectably brought up in his youth, after leading a life of pleasure shivering at your door in rags?

One I knew whom I had often clothed. I supposed that he was dead. But I saw him return loathsome in his filthiness, squalid and tremulous, he came begging yet again, stranger still to virtue and to shame. The poor soul still lives—a life more like death than life—a prodigal whom none can help because he does not return to himself, nor desire to return to his Father. London dens have in them many hapless

profligates that are terrible warnings that men who seek their own pleasure put upon themselves a yoke of iron.

Oh, what revelations the infirmaries of our hospitals, and the wards of our lunatic asylums might disclose of men who have played the wanton and rioted in sin, and have worse than a yoke of iron upon their necks now! Oh, if there should have come into this house some fallen woman, about whose neck there is that yoke of iron, that she rejected a mother's precepts and disdained a father's counsel—sister, that yoke of iron from your neck may yet be taken, but beware lest it grow heavier still!

There are those who would help you escape from your sin in the Christian church. Arise, and flee from this evil that has made you captive, for there is hope yet. The Christ of God is willing to receive the foulest of the foul. Persevere not in your criminal course, or that yoke of iron will grow heavier and heavier and heavier, and be riveted to you, till at last you shall perish in it—perish, and that forever.

All unholy persons who break the law of God, and break away from the Gospel's holiness, in the long run get a yoke of iron about their necks. There are those in this place, perhaps, who once used to sit with us at the Lord's table, having made a profession of religion, but they gave way to drink. I know that if they could break away from that habit now they would. If it could be done with a resolution they would do it at once, for somehow they love this house, and slink in still, and when they pass me in the streets, half-ashamed, they still remember him for whom they yet retain a love, and who retains a love for them, and would fain see them back again.

But ah! you drunkards, when you once fall into this sin, how seldom are you restored! May God help you! May the eternal God deliver you, for this, this iron yoke is often hard to break. Resolve now, and pray also in God's name that you may be free. Have done with the accursed thing. God can enable you to come clear of it. May He do so now!

Another form of the same evil not often spoken of, but quite as bad, is that of avarice. We have known those who professed to be Christians, who succeeded in business and from that time they grew greedy. The gold they had stuck to their fingers, burned into their flesh, yea, into their very souls and turned their hearts to steel. They have no pity now for the poor and little care for the church of God.

Ah, sirs, what an iron yoke avarice puts upon a man's neck! You see a man grown old still keep scraping, yearning still for more, afraid that he shall lose what he has, trembling in the night lest the burglars should make a forcible entrance, and fearing we know not what. His heart is in his iron safe, and is as hard as the iron of which it is made.

O God, forgive! for the covetous man can no more enter heaven than the drunkard. The covetous have no place in the kingdom of God. There is a mark set upon the covetous man. Covetousness is idolatry. It is a heavy burden—the burden of avarice.

Happy they who wear the yoke of Christ, for all their givings are a delight, and what they sacrifice is no loss to them, but becomes true storing—the laying up of treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts.

Enough of this. The general principle running through every case is that he who rejects the yoke of Christ bows his neck to something worse by far. Mark ye! The day cometh—I know not how soon—perhaps as here I stand and rudely talk of these mysterious things. Soon may this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain. Ere this service is over, the sight of the Son of Man may be seen in the clouds of heaven, and the trumpet may ring out loud as that of Sinai of old, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment. And you living sinners, come you also, for the great white throne is set."

And in that day the yoke of Christ will be a chain of gold about each believer's neck. To have served Christ will be our honor and our delight, but ah, the sin that once was pleasure—how it will turn to misery! How the rod of your joy will become a serpent and seek to devour you! How you will flee away from yourselves, and that which you courted and you loved, to ask the hills to hide you, and the rocks to engulf you, that you may not see the face of the Redeemer.

Come to Him now, ere yet that last tremendous day dawns. I lift Him up to you now. Whosoever looks to Christ shall live. Jesus the Son of God has died, and he that trusts Him shall not die. There is

life in a look at the crucified One. Pardon and peace come at once to the soul that trusts the Savior. May you now trust Him, ere you leave this house, and God shall have the glory of it, both now and evermore. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.