

THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS

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A SERMON
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“It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.”
Lamentations 3:27

YOKE-BEARING is not pleasant, but it is good. It is not every pleasant thing that is good, nor every good thing that is pleasant. Sometimes the goodness may be just in proportion to the unpleasantness.

Now, it is childish to be always craving for sweets. Those who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, should prefer the wholesome to the palatable. It ought to reconcile us to that which is unsavory when we are informed that it is good! A little child is not easily reconciled that way, because as yet he cannot think and judge. But the man of God ought to find it very easy to quiet every murmur and complaint as soon as he perceives that, though unpleasant, the thing is good.

Since, my dear friends, we are not very good judges ourselves of that which is good for us, anymore than our children are, and since we expect our little ones to leave the choice of their diet with us, will it not be wise of us to leave everything with our heavenly Father? We can judge what is pleasant, but we cannot discern that which is good for us, but HE can judge, and therefore it will be always well for us to leave all our affairs in His hands and say, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Since we are quite certain upon Scriptural authority that whatever the Lord sends to His people will work out for their benefit, we ought to be perfectly resigned to the Lord’s will. Nay, much more, we ought to be thankful for all His appointments even when they displease the flesh, being quite certain that His will is the best that can be, and that if we could see the end from the beginning it is exactly what we should choose if we were as wise and good as our heavenly Father is. Our shoulders bow themselves with gladness to the burden which Jesus declares to be profitable to us, this assurance from His lips makes His yoke easy to bear.

Our text tells us of something which, though not very comfortable, is good—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” The illustration is drawn from cattle. The bullocks have to bear the yoke. They go in pairs and the yoke is borne upon their shoulders. The yoke is somewhat burdensome. If the bullock is not broken-in when it is young it will never make a good ploughing ox. It will be fretted and troubled with the labor it will have to do. It will be very hard work to drive it and the husbandman will accomplish but little ploughing.

It is good for the bullock to be brought into subjection while it is young, and so it is with all sorts of animals, the horse must be broken while he is a colt. And if a certain period of that horse’s life is allowed to pass over without its being under the trainer’s hand, it will never make a thoroughly useful horse.

If you want to train a dog you must take him while he is young and teach him his work. That is the metaphor. It is just so with men. It is good for us that we be broken-in while we are yet young, and learn to bear the yoke in our youth.

If you take the text naturally as uttering a truth of ordinary life, it is still worth considering. Even apart from the grace of God and apart from religion, it is a great blessing for a man to bear the yoke in his youth! That is to say, first, *it is good for us when we are young to learn obedience*. It is half the making of a man to be placed under rule and taught to bear restraint.

When young people grow older they will have to be very much a law unto themselves, there may be no father living to warn them lovingly, and no mother to guide them gently. Young people will be older people and govern themselves, and no one is fit to do that till he has learned to be obedient. The proverb is, “boys will be boys,” but I do not think so—they will be men if we let them have time, and unless they learn self-restraint and habits of obedience while they are boys, they are not likely to make good men.

He who cannot obey is not fit to rule, he who never learned to submit will make a tyrant when he obtains power.

It is good that every child should be broken in, delivered from his foolish self-will, and made to feel that he has superiors, masters, and governors, and then, when it shall come to his turn to be a leader and a master he will have the more kindly fellow-feeling to those who are under him. Be you sure of this, that if he does not learn the drill of obedience he will never be a good soldier in the battle of life.

It is good for young people to bear the yoke too, in the sense of giving themselves in their early days to acquire knowledge. If we do not learn when we are young, when shall we learn? Some who have begun to study late in life, have yet achieved a good deal, but it has been with much difficulty. If you do not use the machinery of the mind in youth, it gets rusty. But if it is used from the very first, and kept continually in action and well oiled, it will go on easily throughout the whole of life.

Our early days are favorable to the acquirement of knowledge, and every lad that is an apprentice should make the best of his apprenticeship, he will never make much of a journeyman if he does not. Every man that is starting in life, while he is yet young, should do all that he possibly can to acquire a full equipment, for if he does not he will know the absence of it sooner or later.

If a man starts upon life's voyage and has left his anchor at home, or forgotten his stores, he will find out his deficiencies when he gets to sea. And when the storm begins to howl through the cordage he will wish that he had listened to the dictates of prudence, and had been better prepared for life's perilous voyage.

It is good for young people too—we are now talking about the natural meaning of the passage—*good for them that they should encounter difficulties and troubles when they begin life.* The silver spoon in the mouth with which some people are born is very apt to choke them. There are hundreds of people who have never been able to speak out because of that dreadful silver spoon. It is not every man that is the richer in the long run, even in mere gold and silver, for having commenced with capital.

I believe you will generally find that the rich men who have been “self-made,” as they call it, came to London with a half-crown in their pockets. I have noticed that thirty pence is about the amount they leave home with. And that half-crown, neither less nor more, becomes the nest egg of a fortune. Young men who begin with thousands of pounds often end with nothing at all. It is good for a man that he should have a rough battle when life begins, that he should not be lapped in dainty ease, and find everything arranged according to his will, he will never develop his muscle, he will never make a man, unless there is hard work for him to do.

Those long hours, that stern thinking, those weary bones, and all that, of which young people nowadays are very apt to complain, though they do not work half as hard as their fathers, nor above a tenth as hard as their grandfathers—all these things, within reason and measure help to make men, and I only hope that the easier times, which are now happily in fashion, may not breed a softer and a less manly nature among our young men.

It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke of labor, trial, and difficulty in his youth, and if we could lift the yoke from every weary shoulder it would not be wise to do so. Many a man who has succeeded in life is very thankful to God that he had in his early years to bear a little poverty, and to work hard and toil, for he never would have come to be what he is if it had not been for the strengthening and educating influence of trial.

It is not, however, my business to preach about these matters at any length. I am not a moral lecturer, but a minister of the Gospel. I have fulfilled a duty when I have given the first meaning to the text, and now I shall use it for nobler ends.

I. First of all, IT IS GOOD TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG.

It is good for a man to bear Christ's yoke in his youth.

I shall not ask you to pardon me if I here speak as one who has tried and proved it. Surely I may do so without egotism, for it is not my own honor, but God's, that I shall speak of. What the Lord has wrought in me, of that I will speak.

At fifteen years of age I was brought to know the Lord and to confess Him, and I can therefore speak as one who bore the yoke in his youth. And young people, if I have never to address you again, I should like to say to you, it has been good for me. Ah, how good I cannot tell you, but so good that I earnestly wish that every one of you would bear my Master's yoke in his youth, I could not wish you a greater blessing.

For, see, first, the man whose heart is conquered by divine grace early *is made happy soon.* That is a blessed prayer in the psalm, “O satisfy us *early* with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our

days.” Very few people, if they understood it, would wish to postpone happiness. Young hearts generally ask to be happy *now*. To have sin forgiven is to be unloaded *now* of that which is the prime cause of sorrow. To receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith is to be clothed with peace *now*. To be reconciled to God is to have a spring of consolation within your soul *now*. To know yourself to be God’s child is to have the greatest joy out of heaven and to have it *now*. Who would wish to postpone it?

Young Christians may die, but it is of small consequence if they do, for being early in Christ, they will be early in heaven. Who would not wish to be safe as soon as possible? Who desires to tarry in the land of peril, where a point of time, a moment’s space, may shut you up in hell? To be early secured from the wrath to come—early endued with a sense of security in Jesus Christ—why surely it does not want many words to prove that this is good!

Besides, while early piety brings early happiness, let it never be forgotten that *it saves from a thousand snares*. There are things which a man knows, who has lived long in sin, which he wishes he could forget! God’s grace rinses your mouth after you have been eating the forbidden fruit, but the flavor is very apt to linger and to return. Songs which are libels upon God and upon decency, once heard, will attack you in the middle of a prayer, and words which, if you could forget them, you might be willing to lose your memory for that purpose, will invade your most hallowed seasons.

It is a great mercy that if a man be seventy or eighty years of age, yet if he shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved! Eleventh hour mercies are very sweet. But what a double privilege it is to be set to work in the vineyard while yet the dew is on the leaves, and so to be kept from the idleness and the wickedness of the market place in which others loiter so long.

It is good for a man to bear Christ’s yoke in his youth because *it saves him from having those shoulders galled with the devil’s yoke*. It preserves him from the fetters of that pitiful slavery into which so many are brought by habits long acquired and deeply seated. Sins long indulged grow to the shoulders, and to remove them is like tearing away one’s flesh. Be thankful, young people, that the Savior is ready to receive you while you are yet young, and that He gives you the promise, “They that seek me early shall find me.” Happy they who entertain the Redeemer in the morning and so shut out the evil spirit all day long.

There is this goodness about it, again, that *it gives you longer time in which to serve God*. If I were taken into the service of one whom I loved, I should like to do him a long day’s work. If I knew that I could only work for him one day, I should strive to begin as soon as the grey light of dawn permitted me to see, and I would continue at work far into the evening, cheerfully active, so long as a glimmer remained.

If you are converted late in life you can only give to our Lord Jesus the shades of evening. Blessed be His name, He will accept eventide service. But still, how much better to be able to serve the Lord from your youth up, to give Him those bright days while the birds are singing in the soul, when the sun is unclouded, and the shadows are not falling. And then to give Him the long evening, when at eventide He makes it light and causes the infirmities of age to display His power and His fidelity. I think I know of no grander sight than that of a grey-haired man who has served the Lord Jesus from his youth up.

There is this goodness about it yet further, that *it enables one to be well established in divine things*. “They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” A tree transplanted takes a certain time to root, but when it becomes well established it produces abundant fruit. There must be time for striking root in divine things.

Everything in the kingdom of grace is not to be learned in ten minutes. I bless God that a man who has believed in Jesus only one second is a saved man, but he is not an instructed man, he is not an established man. He is not trained for battle, nor tutored for labor. These things take time. When we are converted we go to school to Christ, we sit at His feet and learn of Him.

Now, who is the best scholar? All other things being equal, I should expect to find the best scholars in school to be those who come early. Eleven o’clock scholars do not learn much. Evening scholars, with a good master and great diligence, may pick up something, but scarcely so much as those who have been at the school all day.

Oh, how blessed it is to begin to know Christ very early because then you can go on comprehending with all saints the heights and depths of that which surpasseth knowledge. No fear that you will ever exhaust this knowledge. It is so infinitely great and blessed, that if we lived seven thousand years in the world, there would still be more to know of Christ, and we should still have to say, “Oh, the depths.”

We need not be afraid, therefore, that if we are converted when we are ten, or fifteen, or twenty years of age, we shall live to wear out the freshness of religion. Ah, no, we shall love it more and understand it better, and by God's grace practice it more fully as the years roll over us. Hence it is good to begin soon.

And then, let me say, *it gives such confidence in after life to have given your heart to Jesus young.*

I am glad to see some boys and girls here tonight. Now, my dear children, God may spare you to become old men and old women, and when your hair is grey and you are getting feeble, and you know that you will soon die, it will be very delightful to be able to say, "O Lord, I have known thee from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not." There will be much force in the plea, for if we have a faithful servant, we do not cast him off when he grows old.

"Ah," you say, "he cannot do much now. The old man is getting very feeble, he cannot see or hear as he used to do, and he is slow in his movements. But then, you see, the good old fellow has been in our family ever since he was a boy, and you do not think we are going to turn him off now?"

No, the Lord will not cast off His old servants. He will not say to them "I have had the best of you. I have had your young days, and I have had your middle life, but now you may go begging and take care of yourself." No, that is how the Amalekite or the Ishmaelite might talk, but the God of Israel never forsakes His people. He says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made; and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

O, you who have given yourselves to Jesus through His rich and sovereign grace while you are young, I know you feel it a sweet plea to urge with God—"Now, Lord, forsake me not." So, then, young people, if you would lay by a precious treasure of consolation when those that look out of the windows are darkened, if you would have strength for the time of weakness, if you would have comfort for the day when the mourners go about the streets, if, above all, you would be supported when you are going to your long home, yield yourselves to Jesus now. Oh, that this very night you may bow your shoulders to the easy yoke of the meek and lowly Savior. So shall you find rest unto your souls.

II. I shall now give another meaning of the text. May the Holy Spirit bless it. Secondly, IT IS GOOD FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY BEAR THE YOKE OF JESUS.

What do we mean by that?

A good number of you have been lately converted, and to you I speak most earnestly. It will be for your good as long as ever you live to render to Jesus *complete obedience at the very first*. Some Christians seem to me to start to Canaan all in a muddle. They do not begin their pilgrimage in the right pilgrim fashion. Every young Christian when he is converted should take time to consider, and should say to himself, "What am I to do? What is the *duty* of a Christian?" He should also devoutly say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, show me what thou wouldest have me to do," and wait upon the Holy Ghost for guidance.

Two young lads were not long ago converted to God. One of them attended here, the other at another place of worship. They talked to each other about what was the right way of confessing Jesus Christ. They did not quite know, but they meant to find out. They borrowed the keys of a neighboring independent chapel, and went inside and spent some hours day after day reading together the New Testament, and turning to every passage which refers to baptism. The result was that they both of them came and were baptized in this place.

I wish that all Christians in commencing would look at that ordinance, and at every other point in dispute, and see what is God's mind about it. Search the Scriptures and see for yourselves. Do not say, "I have always been with the Episcopalians, and therefore I ought to do as they do." Or "I have always been with the Baptists," or "with the Wesleyans." My dear friends, these people cannot make rules for us. Here is our guide—this Bible. If I want to go by the railway, I use Bradshaw, and do not trust to hearsay. And if I want to go to heaven I must follow the Bible.

There is another book which people will ask you to attend to. Well, we will say nothing against that book, only it is not *the* book. *The* book is this volume, the blessed Bible. You should begin by feeling, "My Lord has saved me. I am His servant, and I mean at once to take His yoke upon me. I will, as far as ever I can, do what He would have me do. There are some sins into which I shall most likely fall. Watch as I may, I shall sometimes make a slip, but here are some things which I can be right about, and I will take care that I am right about them."

Now, if you young people begin conscientiously studying the Word, and desiring in everything to put your feet down where Christ put His feet, I am sure it will be good for you. You will grow up to be healthy Christians, and men of no ordinary stature. But if you do not begin with searching the Word, but take your religion at second-hand from other people, and do what you see other people do without searching, why, you will lack that noble independence of mind, and courage of spirit, and at the same time that complete submission to Christ, which make up the main elements of a noble-minded Christian.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, in the next place, namely, by *attaining clear instruction in divine truth*. We ought to go to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of Him, not merely about ordinances and actions, but about what to think and what to believe. Oh, how I wish that every one of us had begun, with regard to our doctrinal sentiments, by presenting our minds to Christ like a sheet of clean paper for His Holy Spirit to write the truth thereon. Alas, we begin with many a line upon us written by the pen of prejudice.

Dear friend, if you are converted to God, you are now to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn everything from Him—not to take your views to Him. Those are common expressions, “my views,” and “my opinions,” and “I am of such a persuasion.” Beloved, be persuaded by Christ, for that is the only persuasion worth following. Take your *views* from Him. No other views of eternal and heavenly things are worth having.

“Oh,” says one, “but then they might not happen to be *your* views.” Just so and I do not ask you to take my views. On the other hand I charge you before God never to believe anything because I say it, but to hearken only to my Master, and yield your faith only to the infallible book. We urge this upon you because even if you believe the truth because we say it, you have not believed it in the right way.

Truth is to be received because it is *true*, and because Jesus Christ’s authority proves it *to you* to be true, not because any poor mortal who happens to preach is supposed to possess authority to decide such questions. We have no authority to assert anything to be truth upon our own *ipse dixit*. We are simply the trumpets at the lips of Christ when we speak with power. And sometimes, alas, we blow our own trumpets instead of leaving Jesus Christ to blow through us, and then we are worse than useless.

I charge you bear the yoke in your youth by studying hard to know what is the way, and the truth, and the life, from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself, being taught of the Spirit of God. It is good for you to do this.

It is good for young converts also to bear the yoke by beginning to serve Jesus Christ early. I like to see the mother when she brings her little one to the house of God put a penny into its hand, and teach it early to contribute to the cause of Christ. And when people are converted there is nothing like their having something to do very soon. Not that they are to attempt to do the major things which belong to the more advanced and instructed, for, concerning some of these, we should apply the rule, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

But there is work for every believer to do in Christ’s vineyard. There is work for children, there is work for young men, work for young women, and it is good to begin early. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was so pleased with the widow’s mite, is very pleased with a child’s love to Him. We big people are very apt to think, “What can a little girl do for Jesus?” Oh, but if that little girl does not do something for Jesus now that she is saved, she will very likely grow up to be an idle Christian, and not serve God in after years as she should.

I like to see the little trees which they put into our gardens, you know, the little pyramids, and other dwarf trees. I like to see them even from the first bear just a little fruit. I think, sometimes, that pears, when there are only one or two on the tree, are far finer in flavor than those on the big tree, which too often have lost in quality what they have gained in quantity. That which is done for Jesus Christ by young Christians, by weak Christians, by timid Christians, often has a very delicate flavor about it, precious to the taste of Jesus. It is good to begin serving Him in our youth.

“Ah,” says one, “I shall begin when I can preach.” Will you? You had better begin writing a letter to that young friend with whom you went to school. You had better begin by dropping a tract down an area, or by trying to speak to some young person of your own age. Pride will prompt you to wish to be great, but love to Jesus will teach you that the small things are acceptable with Him. It is good for young men—good for young women—that as soon as they are converted to God they should bear the yoke of service.

It is also good that when we begin to serve God we should bear the yoke in another sense, namely, *by finding difficulties*. If it were in my power to make the way of serving Christ very easy to every young Christian here, I would not do it. If it were possible to make all Sunday school work pleasant, I would not do it. If it were possible to make standing up in the open air to preach a very easy thing, I would not make it so. It is good for you that you bear the yoke.

It is good that your service should involve self-denial, and try your patience. It is good for you that the girls should not be very orderly, and that the boys should not be very teachable when you get them in the class. It is good for you that the crowd should not stand still and listen very meekly to you, and that infidels should put ugly questions to you when you are preaching in the street.

It is good, I know, for the young minister to encounter curious church members, and even to meet with an adversary who means to overthrow him. It is a good thing for a true worker for the devil to labor to put him down, because if God has put him up, he cannot be put down, but the attempt to overthrow him will do him good, develop his spiritual muscle, and bring out the powers of his mind.

A very easy path would not be profitable to us. Consider David after Samuel had put the oil on his head, and anointed him to be the future king of Judah. It would have been a very bad thing for him to have waited in inglorious ease and slumbered away the interval. But take David and send him into the wilderness to keep the sheep. Bring him to Saul's court, and let Saul throw a javelin at him, send him to fight with Goliath, banish him afterwards to the tracks of the wild goats, and compel him to live in the dens and caves and make him fight for his life, and by this process you will educate a hero, fit to rule Israel.

He comes to the throne no longer a youth and ruddy, but a man of war from his youth up, and he is, therefore, ready to smite the Philistines or the children of Ammon as the champion of the Lord of hosts. It is good, then, to bear the yoke in the sense of undertaking service for Jesus and finding difficulty in it.

And it is good, yet further. *It is good to meet with persecution in your youth*. If it were possible to take every young Christian and put him into a pious family and not let him go into the world at all, but always keep him in his mother's lap—if it were possible to take every working man and guarantee that he should only work in a shop where they sing psalms from morning to night, where nobody ever swears, where nobody ever utters a word of chaff against him—why, I say, if it were possible to do this, I do not know that it would be wise to do it.

To keep people out of temptation is exceedingly proper, and none of us have any right to put a temptation in another's way. But it is good for us to be tempted sometimes, otherwise we should not know the real condition of our hearts, and might be rotting with inward pride while blooming with outward morality. Temptation lets us know how weak we are and drives us to our knees. It tests our faith and tries our love, and lets us see whether our graces are genuine or not.

When religion puts on her silver slippers and walks out with her golden earrings, everybody is quite content to go with her, but the honest, hearty Christian will follow Jesus Christ's truth when she goes barefoot through the mire and through the slough, and when her garments are bespattered by unholy hands. Herein is the trial of the true, and the unmasking of the deceitful. It would not be good for us to be kept from persecution, and slander, and trial. It is good for a man that he bear this yoke in his youth.

A Christian is a hardy plant. Many years ago a larch was brought to England. The gentleman who brought it put it in his hothouse, but it did not develop in a healthy manner. It was a spindly thing, and therefore the gardener, feeling that he could not make anything of it, took it up and threw it upon the dunghill. There it grew into a splendid tree, for it had found a temperature suitable to its nature. The tree was meant to grow near the snow. It loves cold winds and rough weather, and they had been sweating it to death in a hothouse.

So it is with true Christianity. It seldom flourishes so well in the midst of ease and luxury as it does in great tribulation. Christians are often all the stronger and better because they happen to be cast where they have no Christian companions, or kindly encouragements. As liberty usually favors the hardy mountaineers whose rugged hills have made them brave and hardy, so does abounding grace, as a rule, visit those who endure the great fight of affliction, and through much tribulation inherit the kingdom.

Once more, I believe it is good for young Christians to *experience much soul-trouble*. My early days of thoughtfulness were days of bitterness. Before I found a Savior, I was ploughed with the great subsoil plough of terrible convictions. Month after month I sought but found no hope. I learned the plague of my

heart, the desperate evil of my nature, and at this moment I have reason to thank God for that long wintry season. I am sure it was good to my soul.

As a general rule there is a period of darkness somewhere or other in the Christian life, if you have it at first it is probable you will not endure it again, but if you do not have it at first it is just as likely you will pass through the cloud at some other time. It is well to have it over. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

Some friends seem to have found a patent way of going to heaven. If their way is the right one I am sure I am very much delighted, but I am rather dubious, for I meet with those who have tried the high-level railroad, and are greatly discouraged because the train does not run so smoothly as they expected. They have been living a whole fortnight—well, not *quite* without sin—but very near it. They have triumphed and conquered altogether, and gone up in a balloon for a fortnight. Of course they have to come down again—and some come with an awful fall.

The best of them come and say, "Dear pastor, I am afraid I am not a child of God. I feel so wretched, and yet I feel so happy and holy." I have said, "Yes, you see you went up, and so you had to come down. If you had *kept* down you would not have had to *come* down." That going up in a balloon to the stars frightens me about some young people. I wish they would continue humbly to feel that they are nothing and nobody, and that Christ is everything. It is much better on the whole that a man should be timid and trembling than that he should early in life become very confident.

"Blessed is the man that feareth always" is a Scriptural text—not the slavish fear, nor yet a fear that doubts God, but still a fear. There is a deal of difference between doubting God and doubting yourself. You may have as much as you like of the last till you even get to self-despair, but there is no reason whatever why you should doubt the Lord.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," to be made to feel the weight of sin, and the chastening hand of God, and to be left to cry out in the dark and say, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." These ordeals are of essential service to the newborn believer, and prepare him alike for the joys and the sorrows of his spiritual career.

III. I am going to finish with this last head. Practically, brothers and sisters, WE ARE ALL OF US IN OUR YOUTH.

I see some grey heads and bald heads here, and yet they belong to persons in their minority. My dear brother, though you are seventy and more, yet you have not come of age yet in the heavenly kingdom, for if you were of age you would have your estates. None of us will come of age till we enter heaven. We are still under tutors and governors, because we are even now as little children. We have not come to that period in which we are fit for all the joys of heaven, for if we were we should be taken home to our Father's house to enjoy our inheritance at once. We are still in our youth.

Well, it is good for us at this present that we should bear the yoke and continue to bear it. It is good, my dear brothers, that we who have gone some distance on the road to heaven should still have something to bear, because it enables us to honor Christ still. If we do not suffer with Him, how can we have fellowship with Him? If we have no crosses to carry, how can we commune with our Lord, the chief Cross-bearer? Let us be glad that we are not spared tribulation, that we are not screened from affliction, but are permitted to glorify God by patience, by resignation, and by unshattering faith.

Do not ask the Lord that you may have no trouble, but rather remember you have only a little while in which you can be patient—only a little while in which you can be a cross-bearer, and therefore it behooves you to use each moment well. A few more revolving suns and you will be where there is no more cross to carry, no sorrow to bear, and therefore, where there is no room for patience, and no opportunity of being acquiescent in the divine will. Be content to bear the yoke now, for it is but a little while and this honor will be no longer yours.

It is good for us all to bear the yoke too, because thus *old Adam is kept in check*. A wonderfully vivacious thing is that old Adam. He has been reported to be dead a good many times, but to my certain knowledge he is very brisk still.

When we are in trouble, proud old Adam often seems to be quiet, and does not so well succeed in keeping us from prayer, and consequently, in time of trouble, we often enjoy our very sweetest seasons of devotion. By the Lord's goodness we escape the trial, but alas, old Adam soon lifts up his proud head again. He says, "Ah, you are a favorite of heaven, your mountain standeth firm. Your affliction has been sanctified to you, and you have grown in grace very wonderfully. The fact is, you are a very fine

fellow.” Yes, that is old Adam’s way, and whenever he sees an opportunity he will return to his old game of flattery. Whenever you are tempted to be vain, say to yourself, “I know you, old Adam. I know you, and will not yield to your crafty devices.”

What happens when we become self-satisfied? Why, the yoke returns upon our shoulders heavily again. We fall into another trouble, and then old Adam is up in the stirrups again, and begins to grumble and rebel. The flesh begins proudly to despair, whereas a little while before it was boasting. Trials, in the hands of the Spirit, are a great help to overcome corruptions. It is a very hard matter for a man to be rich and prospering in this world, to be at ease and have a long stretch of health, and to have everything go exactly as he likes, and yet to be a Christian. When the road is very smooth many fall, but when the way is rough there is good grip for the feet, and we are not so likely to stumble.

When trials come, they whip us home to our heavenly Father. Sheep do not stray so much when the black dog is after them, his barkings make them run to the shepherd. Affliction is the black dog of the Good Shepherd to fetch us back to Him, otherwise we should wander to our ruin. We are not better than David, and we may honestly confess as he did, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.” Therefore it is good for us spiritually young people, even though old as to the flesh, that we should bear the yoke while we are still in our youth.

Besides, dear friends, it makes you *so helpful to others* to have known affliction. I do not see how we can sympathize if we are never tried ourselves. I know a beloved brother who is perhaps fifty years of age, who never had a day’s sickness, and he told me he scarcely knew what physical pain was except when a heavy person trod on his toes. Well now, he is a good brother, but when he tries to sympathize, it is like an elephant picking up a pin, or Hercules with a distaff. He does do it, but it is a thing to be wondered at. If you tell him that you feel very low in spirits, he looks at you and tries to say very kind things, but he does not understand your despondency.

Now, it would be a great pity for a Christian minister to be lacking in the power to sympathize—would it not? Oh, thank God for troubles, because they make the heart tender, and they teach the lips the art of consolation. You can be a Boanerges without trouble, but you never can be a Barnabas. You may be a son of thunder, but you will never be a son of consolation. As we wish to serve others, let us thank God that He qualifies us to do so by making us bear the yoke in our youth.

Once more, is it not good to bear the yoke while we are here, because *it will make heaven all the sweeter*? Oh, how sweet heaven will be to that bedridden woman who has lain these twenty years upon her weary couch, and scarcely had a night’s unbroken rest! What rest heaven will be to her!

I know a good man within two miles of this place who has laid eighteen years without moving. I do not know a happier man than he is. It is a treat to see him, but still what a change it will be, from that bed from which he cannot rise, to stand on the sea of glass and forever wave the palm branch, and draw forth music from the celestial harp. What a transformation!

How great the change for a poor Christian woman dying in a workhouse, to be carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom! What a change for the martyr standing at the stake burning slowly to death, and then rising to behold the glory of his Lord! What a change for you, dear old friend, with all those aches and pains about you, which make you feel uneasy even while you are sitting here!

Ah, Greybeard, you will be young soon. There will be no wrinkles on your brow. You will not require those spectacles. You will not need that staff to lean upon, you will be as strong as the youngest here.

As you stand before the throne of God, you will scarcely know yourself to be the same old woman you used to be, or the same sickly man you were a little while ago. You will be stripped of the house of clay, and your young soul will leap up from the old body and be present with the Lord. And then the grave will be a fining pot in which the dross of the flesh will be consumed. And by and by your body will rise, no longer old and haggard and worn, but full of beauty, like your Master’s glorious body. This should give joy to you at all times, it must be good for you to bear the yoke, seeing heaven will by that means be made more fully heaven to you when once you reach its everlasting rest.

*“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;
So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LAMENTATIONS 5

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—750, 748

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.