

THE WILL OF GOD, Week 7

Taking the Lord's Yoke (the Father's Will) upon Us and Learning from Him to Find Rest for Our Souls

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26, 31; 2:1-2; Matt. 11:28-30; Exo. 31:12-17; Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1

Genesis 1:26	And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
Genesis 1:31	And God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
Genesis 2:1	Thus the heavens and the earth and all their host were finished.
Genesis 2:2	And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.
Matthew 11:28	Come to Me all who toil and are burdened , and I will give you rest .
Matthew 11:29	Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me , for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
Matthew 11:30	For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
Exodus 31:12	And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
Exodus 31:13	Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, You shall surely keep My Sabbaths ; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am Jehovah who sanctifies you.
Exodus 31:14	Therefore you shall keep the Sabbath , for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.
Exodus 31:15	Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to Jehovah; whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death.
Exodus 31:16	Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath , to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.
Exodus 31:17	It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.
Isaiah 1:1	The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings of Judah:
Isaiah 2:1	The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:
Isaiah 13:1	The burden concerning Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw:
Isaiah 15:1	The burden concerning Moab: Indeed in a night it is devastated — Ar of Moab is cut off. Indeed in a night it is devastated — Kir of Moab is cut off.

The Way

Taking the Heavenly King's Yoke

In verses 29 and 30 we have the way to rest: *"Take My yoke on you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is pleasant and My burden is light."* The Lord's yoke is to take the will of the Father. It is not to be regulated or controlled by any obligations of the law or religion, nor to be enslaved by any work, but to be **constrained by the will of the Father**. The Lord lived such a life, **caring for nothing but the will of His Father** (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). **He submitted Himself fully to the Father's will** (26:39, 42). Hence, He asks us to learn from Him. God's will is our yoke. Thus, we are not free to do as we please; rather, we are yoked. Young people, do not think that you are so free or liberated. In the Lord's recovery we all have been yoked. How good it is to be yoked! **The Lord's yoke is pleasant and His burden is light. The Lord's yoke is the Father's will, and His burden is the work to carry out the Father's will.** Such a yoke is pleasant, not bitter, and such a burden is light, not heavy. The Greek word rendered "pleasant" signifies fit for use; hence, good, kindly, mild, gentle, easy, pleasant, in contrast to what is hard, harsh, sharp, and bitter.

Learning from Him

In verse 29 the Lord tells us to **learn from Him**. He is meek and lowly in heart. To be meek means not to resist any opposition, and to be lowly means not to esteem oneself highly. In all the opposition the Lord was meek, and in all the rejection He was lowly in heart. **He submitted Himself fully to the will of His Father**, not wanting to do anything for Himself nor expecting to gain something for Himself. Hence, regardless of the situation, He had rest in His heart. **He was fully satisfied with His Father's will.**

The Lord said that if we take His yoke upon us and learn from Him, we shall find rest to our souls. The rest we find by taking the Lord's yoke and learning from Him is for our souls. It is an inward rest; it is not anything merely outward in nature.

If we are opposed as we minister, and we resist, we shall not have peace. But if instead of resisting we submit to the will of the Father, testifying that the opposition is of the Father, we shall have rest in our souls. John the Baptist did not regard his imprisonment as of the Father; therefore, he was not at rest. If he had realized that his imprisonment was due to the Father's will, he would have been at rest, even in prison. Christ, the heavenly King, always submitted to the Father's will, taking God's will as His portion and not resisting anything. Hence, He was always at rest. We must learn of Him and also take this view. If we do, we shall have rest in our souls.

(Life-Study of Matthew, chapter 31, section 7)

Day 1 & Day 2

I. **“Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”—Matt. 11:28-30:**

- A. To **toil** here refers not only to the toil of striving to keep the commandments of the law and religious regulations but also to the toil of struggling to be successful in any work; **whoever toils thus is always heavily burdened**.
- B. After the Lord **extolled** the Father, acknowledging the Father’s way and declaring the divine economy (vv. 25-27), **He called this kind of people to come to Him for rest**.
- C. **Rest** refers not only to being **set free from the toil and burden** under the law or religion or under any work or responsibility, but also to **perfect peace and full satisfaction**.
- D. **To take the Lord’s yoke** is to take the will of the Father; it is not to be regulated or controlled by any obligation of the law or religion or to be enslaved by any work, but **to be constrained by the will of the Father**.
- E. The Lord lived such a life, **caring for nothing but the will of His Father** (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38); He **submitted** Himself fully to the Father’s will (Matt. 26:39-46); hence, He asks us to learn from Him:
 - 1. The believers **copy the Lord in their spirit by taking His yoke—God’s will—** and **toiling for God’s economy** according to His model—11:29a; 1 Pet. 2:21.
 - 2. The Lord, who was **submissive** and **obedient** to the Father throughout His life, has given us His life of submission and obedience—Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 5:7-9.
 - 3. **Christ** was the first **God-man**, and we are the many **God-men**; we have to learn of Him in His **absolute submission** to God and His **utmost satisfaction** with God.
 - 4. God is doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ that we may be able to do His will (13:20-21); **God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure** (Phil. 2:13).
- F. To be **meek**, or **gentle**, means **not to resist opposition**, and to be **lowly** means **not to have self-esteem**; throughout all the opposition the Lord was meek, and throughout all the rejection He was lowly in heart.
- G. **He submitted Himself fully to the will of His Father**, not wanting to do anything for Himself or expecting to gain something for Himself; hence, regardless of the situation He had rest in His heart; He was fully satisfied with the Father’s will.
- H. The **rest** that we find by taking the Lord’s yoke and learning from Him is for our souls; **it is an inward rest**; it is not anything merely outward in nature.
- I. We learn from the Lord according to His example, not by our natural life but **by Him as our life in resurrection**—Eph. 4:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:21.
- J. The **Lord’s yoke is the Father’s will**, and His burden is the work of carrying out the Father’s will; such a yoke is easy, not bitter, and such a burden is light, not heavy.
- K. The Greek word for easy means “fit for use”; hence, good, kind, mild, gentle, easy, pleasant—in contrast to hard, harsh, sharp, bitter.
- L. If we take the Lord’s yoke (the Father’s will) upon us and learn from Him, we will find rest for our souls; the yoke of God’s economy is like this; **everything in God’s economy is not a heavy burden but an enjoyment**.

Day 3

II. **In Exodus 31:12-17, after a long record concerning the building up of God’s dwelling place, there is a repetition of the commandment to keep the Sabbath; according to Colossians 2:16-17, Christ is the reality of the Sabbath rest; He is our completion, rest, quietness, and full satisfaction—Heb. 4:7-9; Isa. 30:15a:**

- A. The fact that the insertion concerning the **Sabbath follows the charge for the building work** of the tabernacle indicates that the Lord was telling the builders, the workers, to **learn how to rest with Him as they worked for Him**.
- B. If we only know how to work for the Lord but do not know how to rest with Him, **we are acting contrary to the divine principle**:
 - 1. **God rested on the seventh day because He had finished His work and was satisfied**; God’s glory was manifested because man had His image, and His authority was about to be exercised for the subduing of His enemy, Satan; **as long as man expresses God and deals with God’s enemy, God is satisfied and can rest**—Gen. 1:26, 31; 2:1-2.
 - 2. Later, the seventh day was commemorated as the Sabbath (Exo. 20:8-11); God’s seventh day was man’s first day.
 - 3. **God had prepared everything for man’s enjoyment**; after man was created, he did not join in God’s work; **he entered into God’s rest**.
 - 4. Man was created not to work first but to be satisfied with God and rest with God (cf. Matt. 11:28-30); the **Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath** (Mark 2:27).
- C. Exodus 31:17 says, “In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day **He rested and was refreshed**”:
 - 1. The **Sabbath** was not only a **rest** to God but also a **refreshment** to Him.
 - 2. God rested after His work of creation was completed; He looked upon His handiwork, at the heavens, the earth, and all the living things, especially at man, and said, “Very good!” (Gen. 1:31).
 - 3. **God was refreshed with man**; God created man in His own image with a spirit so that man could have fellowship with Him; man, therefore, was God’s refreshment—v. 26; 2:7; cf. John 4:31-34.
 - 4. God was a “bachelor” before He created mankind (cf. Gen. 2:18, 22); He wanted man to **receive Him, love Him, be filled with Him, and express Him to become His wife** (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25); in eternity future God will have a wife, the New Jerusalem, which is called the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9-10).
 - 5. **Man was like a refreshing drink to quench God’s thirst and satisfy Him**; when God ended His work and began to rest, He had man as His **companion**.
 - 6. To God, the seventh day was a day of rest and refreshment; however, to man, God’s companion, the day of rest and refreshment was the first day; **man’s first day was a day of enjoyment**.

- D. It is a **divine principle** that God does not ask us to work until we have had enjoyment; **after a full enjoyment with Him and of Him, we may work together with Him**:
1. If we do not know how to have enjoyment with God, how to enjoy God Himself, and how to be filled with God, we will not know how to work with Him and be one with Him in His divine work; **man enjoys what God has accomplished in His work**.
 2. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the **Spirit**, which means that **they were filled with the enjoyment of the Lord; because they were filled with the Spirit**, others thought that they were drunk with wine—Acts 2:4a, 12-13.
 3. Actually, they were filled with the enjoyment of the heavenly wine; **only after they were filled with this enjoyment did they begin to work with God in oneness with Him**; Pentecost was the first day of the eighth week; therefore, concerning the day of Pentecost, we see the principle of the first day.
 4. With **God** it is a matter of **working and resting**; with **man** it is a matter of **resting and working**.

Day 4

- E. In doing God's divine work to build the church, typified by the work to build the tabernacle, we must bear a sign to indicate that **we are God's people** and that **we need Him**; then we will be able to work not only for God but also with God by being one with God; He will be our strength to work and our energy to labor:
1. We are God's people, and we should bear a sign that **we need Him to be our enjoyment, strength, energy, and everything** so that we may be able to work for Him **to honor and glorify Him**.
 2. The **Sabbath** means that before we work for God, **we need to enjoy God and be filled with Him**; Peter preached the gospel by the **infilling God**, the **infilling Spirit**; therefore, Peter had a sign that he was God's co-worker, and his gospel preaching was an honor and glory to God—v. 14.
 3. As **God's people**, we must **bear a sign** that we **rest with God, enjoy God, and are filled up with God first**, and then we work with the very One who fills us; furthermore, we not only work with God but also **work as those who are one with God**.
 4. In our speaking to God's people, we must always seek to bear a sign that **our Lord is our strength, our energy, and our everything** for ministering the word—2 Cor. 13:3; Acts 6:4.
- F. Keeping the Sabbath is also an **eternal agreement, or covenant**, that assures God that we will be one with Him by first enjoying Him and being filled with Him and then by working for Him, with Him, and in oneness with Him—Exo. 31:16:
1. It is a serious matter to work for the Lord by ourselves without taking Him in and enjoying Him by drinking and eating Him—cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; John 6:57.
 2. As Peter was speaking on the day of Pentecost, he was **inwardly partaking of Jesus, drinking and eating Him**.
- G. The Sabbath is also a matter of **sanctification** (Exo. 31:13); when we enjoy the Lord and then work with Him, for Him, and by being one with Him, **spontaneously we are sanctified, separated unto God from everything that is common and saturated with God to replace everything that is fleshly and natural**.
- H. In the church life we may do many things **without** first enjoying the Lord and without serving the Lord by being one with the Lord; that kind of service **results in spiritual death and the loss of the fellowship in the Body** (vv. 14-15).
- I. Everything related to God's dwelling place leads us to one matter—to the **Sabbath with its rest and refreshment of the Lord**; in the church life we are in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle leads us to rest, to the enjoyment of God's purpose and of what He has done!

Day 5

III. The **Lord's yoke** (the Father's will) is **easy**, and His **burden** (the work to carry out the Father's will) is **light**; we must always serve with a burden from the Lord:

- A. An **open spirit to God** is the condition for receiving burdens from God; we must learn to **receive burdens** and **release burdens** through **prayer** in our **intimate fellowship** with the Lord—Luke 1:53; Psa. 27:4; Isa. 59:16; Col. 4:2.
- B. The revelations that the prophets received were the burdens that they received; **without** burden, there is no ministry of the word, no prophesying, for the building up of the church—Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1; Zech. 12:1; Mal. 1:1; Acts 6:4; 1 Cor. 14:4b:
1. **Our burden** is to **release God's revelation to man**, and God's revelation is **released through the words of revelation that God gives to us**—2:11-16.
 2. When we minister the word of God, **our concern must be whether we have God's speaking**, not the topic of our speaking; in order to have God's speaking, **the one who ministers the word must have a burden**—Mal. 2:7.
 3. Those who minister the word must **bear** people's condition before God, **sense** their condition, and **know** what God wants to speak—Exo. 28:29-30.

Day 6

- C. The **greatest problem** in the administration of the church and in the ministry of the word is **not having a burden from the Lord**:
1. Without a burden, all our activity will be dead and ineffective; **with a burden, we will be living and flourishing**.
 2. **Having a burden deals with us the most**; if there is a burden, the self decreases and is dealt with, because there are things that our burden will not allow us to do, and there are areas that will require our being dealt with before we can release our burden.
 3. If we serve according to **obligation instead of serving with a burden**, such service will cause us to lose the Lord's presence—cf. Deut. 4:25.
 4. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an **obligation, our service has already degraded**—Mal. 3:14 and footnote 1.
 5. The **building work** of the tabernacle and all its furniture (typifying the work of the Lord to build up the church) should **begin with the enjoyment of God and continue in intervals with the refreshment by enjoying God**; this will indicate that we do not work for God by our own strength but **by the enjoyment of Him and by being one with Him**; this is to keep the principle of the Sabbath with Christ as the inner rest in our spirit.

Problems in the Administration of the Church and the Ministry of the Word

The First Problem—Not Having a Burden

The greatest problem in the administration of the church and the ministry of the word is **not having a burden** or, we can say, **not receiving a burden or not paying attention to a burden**. It is possible for elders to administrate the church without a burden. Those who minister the word may also do so without a burden. The discharge of our burden when we minister the word does not depend on how well we speak. If our only desire is to speak well in order to touch people, our speaking will be without a burden. Likewise, an ability to administrate the church does not discharge one's burden. **It is not a matter of how well we can administrate but whether our administration is effective and can touch people.**

For example, when people come to a meeting, there may be the need to release the word. We must seek the Lord concerning what we speak and concerning the issue of our speaking. It is not a matter of how well we speak, the logistics of our presentation, or whether the saints are touched; rather, **it is a matter of what will be produced in the saints**. If some are not yet saved, we should receive a burden to bear their souls by the Lord's grace in order to sow the seed of salvation into them when we release the word. Our burden is salvation, not the release of a dynamic word. If they are saved but do not love the Lord, our burden should be for them to love the Lord. If they love the Lord but are not willing to give themselves to the Lord and receive His dealing, our burden should be for them to willingly give themselves to the Lord and be dealt with by Him. This is the ministry of the word with a burden.

Otherwise, our Lord's Day message meeting may easily fall into the condition of the so-called Sunday service. Every week someone is assigned to release a message in order to maintain the meeting. After the meeting, everyone goes home, eats lunch, rests, and returns in the evening for the bread-breaking meeting. This is a Sunday service. In this situation **those who minister the word must receive a burden**. We need to know the condition of those who come to listen to a message. They might not have any feeling concerning their own condition, but we need to be clear and full of feeling concerning their condition. They may be able to sit and listen peacefully week after week, but we cannot speak peacefully week after week. We need to receive the burden to "disturb" and "trouble" them so that even if they come to the meeting peacefully, they will be inwardly disturbed when they leave.

If we are not concerned that our speaking does not produce any effect in those who listen, we do not have a burden. This situation indicates that those who speak and those who listen are in a routine. This is the condition of degraded Christianity where the congregation routinely listens to the pastor, and the pastor routinely preaches to the congregation year after year. This should not be our practice. **The ministry of the word should enlighten those who hear**. When we minister the word every Lord's Day, we should "trouble" people to the extent that they have no peace. This is what it means to have a burden.

If the listeners are lukewarm, even though they may listen peacefully, those who minister the word should not be at peace. They should go before the Lord, and let Him take away their peace, even to the point of losing sleep and not eating until they receive a burden from the Lord. Then their speaking will enable the Holy Spirit to work in the listeners. **Only this kind of speaking is the speaking of God**. Brothers who minister the word must have a burden, not merely doctrines, logic, and examples. Ministering the word in this way is intolerable; it is an offense to God, and it is a sin in His eyes.

Receiving the Burden to Speak God's Word in the Ministry of the Word

In Isaiah 13:1 the Chinese Union Version says that the prophets received inspiration when they spoke for God. The Hebrew word for inspiration, however, means "burden." Man needs to receive a burden. We cannot neglect this responsibility and think that God has not given us a burden. The Epistles of Paul clearly show that he received burdens. When someone in the church in Corinth committed the sin of fornication, Paul did not simply condemn the sin or stop praying for the one who sinned. **He received a burden from God to bear a responsibility and commission for the church** (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Paul did not preach doctrines in his Epistles; instead, he was burdened to fellowship concerning certain matters, so he was able to touch people's feelings.

There is a danger that the ministry of the word in the church in Taipei may become the same as the preaching of sermons in Sunday services. When we minister the word of God, **our concern should be whether we have God's speaking**, not the topic of our speaking. **In order to have God's speaking, the one who ministers the word must have a burden**. People may have a negative reaction or be stirred up when they hear a message that is spoken with a burden, but they cannot deny that it is God's speaking. This kind of message can help people and solve their problems. A message that sounds nice but is void of God's speaking cannot touch people, turn them inwardly, or satisfy those who are hungry and thirsty, because they are not the words that God wants to speak even if they are from the Bible.

Therefore, speaking should not be easy or cheap. We cannot speak simply because we have prepared a message. One who ministers the word should bear people's condition before God. **He bears the responsibility of knowing their needs**. He needs to sense their condition and know what God wants to speak. The help we have received from training cannot replace the burden that is within us. The danger is that the burden has been replaced so that we are short of revelation and spiritual burden.

Serving with a Burden

We have a good order in our service, but we are lacking in burden. **Having a burden means that we have a goal that we must reach**. If we have not reached our goal or are unable to produce the expected result, we should be concerned. If we are able to serve, even though there is no result, we do not have a burden. This attitude indicates a lack of burden. **Our speaking should never fall into this. Hence, the brothers who minister the word must bear a heavy burden before the Lord, having no peace to rest or eat and even troubling others so that they also have no peace**. This can be compared to the city of Jerusalem having no peace when the Lord Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1-18). Those who speak for the Lord must have a feeling to trouble the saints to the point that they have no peace inwardly. When they have no peace, we can have peace. The saints cannot love the world and love the Lord. They must not be lukewarm. Those who serve the Lord need to have this kind of burden.

Many serve as employees in a big company. They work a fixed number of hours every day and simply do the tasks that are assigned to them. They do not make big mistakes and are not concerned whether the company makes a profit. They are employees without a burden; they serve without a burden. If we make no profit on the first day of our business, we should be concerned about our livelihood. If the serving brothers, whether they serve in the children's work or the young people's work, have this kind of consciousness, they will succeed. Complaining that we fail because we are weak shows that we lack a burden. Every serving one must be burdened to the extent that he feels responsible if the work does not succeed. He should be like a businessman who thinks of his business even in his sleep. (*The Administration of the Church and the Ministry of the Word, chapter 2, section 1-3*)