

YOKE

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Talk about YOKE and what it is

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

CONTEXT:

Jesus pronounced condemnation against 3 Jewish cities in which great miracles done
Korazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
Accountable but didn't respond in faith
By contrast 3 terribly wicked Gentile cities would have repented if they say same thing
Tyre, Sidon, Sodom

Based on this Jesus challenges listeners to turn to Him in faith (unlike Jewish cities)
Must come to Him in CHILDLIKE FAITH
Only way to come to, know Jesus and God

Therefore Jesus calls all those who are weary and burdened to come to Him.
Bring sin & its consequences to Him

Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Take HIS yoke, which is easier and lighter than yoke they are now carrying
Only way to find rest from burdens of sin and life
Serving self, sin, world, Satan is burdensome defeating
Serving God is light and easy for He is gentle humble
Pharisees, Satan, flesh, sin hard taskmasters

YOKE – DAILY SERVANTHOOD

Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The cross is the great symbol of Christianity. On steeples atop churches, covers of hymnals, lids for communion ware and lapel pins on Sunday jackets, it stands an awesome reminder of all that Jesus suffered. Jesus spoke of the cross as a symbol of Christian dedication. **"Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"** (Mark 8:34).

But Jesus also used another symbol for Christian commitment. **"Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me...My yoke is easy and My burden is light"** (Matt 11:29-30). The yoke is a wooden harness to carry a weight or to pull a load. Yokes are not usually painted on church buildings, or printed on the covers of Bibles, or worn as ornaments on neckchains. Maybe they should be.

The yoke as much as the cross is a symbol of commitment to Jesus Christ.

Paul W. Powell, in The Complete Disciple elaborates:

"The cross and the yoke symbolize for us the two different aspects of commitment. The cross is an instrument of death; the yoke is an implement of toil.

The cross is the symbol of sacrifice; the yoke is the symbol of service.

The cross suggests blood; the yoke suggests sweat ...to be committed to Jesus Christ means that we are ready for either the yoke or the cross."

When think of the baby remember the MAN He was to become
Reason for the manger was the cross

INCARNATION – Phil 2, emptied self of everything

Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me,

Although the word repentance is not specifically used here, that is what our Lord is calling for here. "**Come unto Me**" demands a complete turn around, a complete change of mind.

This invitation is for those who feel they are overpowered and burdened with sin, they have failed any entrance into the kingdom by their own works. They are lost!

This invitation applies only to those who are at the end of their resources--desperate to turn from self and sin unto their Savior.

This is not an invitation to those who have only a legal repentance, those who are only fleeing the consequences of sin, but still love sin.

all you who are weary and burdened,

This word "**WEARY**" in the Greek is "Kopiao (kop-ee-ah'-o). It means "To feel fatigue, by implication to work hard: to bestow labour, toil, to become wearied." It signifies labouring to the point of sweat and exhaustion.

(hoi kopiōntes, "those tired from hard toil")

Jesus' reference to labour in our text teaches how He brings His chosen ones to see the futility of attempting to please God in their own human efforts.

weary in their search for truth--one who has despaired of trying to earn salvation.
Live life on own, defeat sin, Satan, flesh, world

The term "**BURDENED**" brings to mind the heavy burdens
(pephortismenoi, "those loaded down"; cf. phortion, "load," in Matt. 11:30)

imposed under the law by the Pharisees.

MAT 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The internal call of the gospel comes to those who are desperately in need of relief from the crushing load of a sin-laden, guilt-ridden conscience.

FELLOWSHIP: "**ALL YOU** that labor." We are not alone in Christ, but serving alongside those of like precious faith. Paul spoke of his "loyal yokefellow." A yoke harnesses two animals together so as to pull a load neither one could pull alone. "Bear ye one another's burdens."

As we follow Christ, let us take up our yoke as well as our cross, "serving the Lord."

and I will give you rest.

"Rest," not rest in sin, not rest from trouble. It is rest from sin -- its guilt, misery, power. It is rest in trouble.

Have you ever tried to comfort a troubled heart? Beyond your power. It is the prerogative of Him who made the soul to give it rest. There is more power in Him to comfort than in the world to disquiet.

29 Take

It was also a symbol of **submission**. It was used also of a student being in submission to his teacher and learning from him. Ancient Jewish writing states: "Put your neck under the yoke and let your soul receive instruction." And this seems to be what Jesus had in mind here when He states to take His yoke and learn from Him. A yoke symbolizes **obedience** and Christian obedience includes learning from Christ.

VOLUNTARY, up to us to take yoke, not forced on us!

DISCIPLESHIP different than MEMBERSHIP

my

COMPANIONSHIP: "My yoke"

Not OUR yoke, one of our making

To James & John – "drink from the cup I drink from..."

in this sense the phrase is employed. by Christ in Matt 11:29 f. "My yoke" here means "the service of God as I teach it" (the common interpretation, "the sorrows that I bear," is utterly irrelevant) and the emphasis is on "my." The contrast is not between "yoke" and "no yoke," but between "my teaching" (light yoke) and "the current scribal teaching"; (heavy yoke).

NOT yoke of legalism, do's and don't (Pharisees yoke)

We become weary and heavy-laden from that type of yoke. The weariness that Jesus talking of here refers to our utter exhaustion from **trying to do everything ourselves**; it is working ourselves to total exhaustion, to the point where we cannot do one more thing. It is being utterly bone tired. It is to the point where we are mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually worn out, there is nothing left in us to do anything. We are wearied in trying on our own to find and please God by our own resources; we are exhausted in trying to find divine truth through human reasoning and human wisdom; we have exhausted ourselves in trying to earn salvation by our own power; and we have come to despair of ever being able to achieving God's standard of righteousness by our own efforts.

Apply to Christmas

YOKE JESUS BORE: Jesus born a man, incarnation, took on yoke of humanity, our example
Birth, Life – take on yoke of human being

YOKE JESUS GIVES: sacrifice self, put Him first, not live for self

yoke

A **yoke** was made of wood, hand-hewn to fit the neck and shoulders of the particular animal that was to wear it in order to prevent chafing. For obvious reasons, the term was widely used in the ancient world as a metaphor for submission. The yoke was part of the harness used to pull a cart, plow, or mill beam and was the means by which the animal's master kept it under control and guided it in useful work. A student was often spoken of as being under the yoke of his teacher, and an ancient Jewish writing contains the advice: "Put your neck under the yoke and let your soul receive instruction."

That is the particular meaning Jesus seems to have had in mind here, because He adds, and learn from Me. Manthan (**disciple**, or learner) and reinforces the truth that Christ's disciples are His submissive learners. They submit to Christ's lordship for many reasons, among the most important of which is to be taught by Him through His Word. A yoke symbolizes obedience, and Christian obedience includes learning from Christ.

The power of salvation is entirely of grace and nothing of works. An unbeliever has neither the understanding nor the ability to save himself, just as a babe has neither the understanding nor the ability to help itself. But although good works do not produce salvation, salvation does produce good works. Believers are, in fact, "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

But because Jesus is gentle and humble in heart, He gives rest, not weariness, to the souls of those who submit to Him and do His work. His yoke is easy, and His load is light. His burden is not like that of Pharaoh, who bitterly oppressed the children of Israel, or like that of the scribes and Pharisees, who burdened the Jews of Jesus' day with a grievous legalism.

SERVING: yoke – servant role, menial, hard, physical, tiring

Unappreciated, unrewarded work

Real freedom only comes in serving/servanthood

Daily life attitude

YOKE – DAILY SERVANTHOOD

JESUS: becoming a man daily taking yoke of servitude for us

US: when live daily life and act Christlike

upon you

voluntarily put yoke on SELF

and learn from me,

Jesus' invitation did not end there. It was not our twentieth century appeal in all its variations, i.e., "Accept Christ" or "Ask Jesus into your heart," or "Make a decision for Christ."

It was a call to surrender to the Lordship of Christ! He went on to say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus' hearers well understood that the yoke was a symbol of submission and service. Those who are unwilling to take on His yoke cannot enter into the saving rest He offers.

OBEDIENCE: "And learn of me." The yoke suggests submission to a master who must be obeyed. Blessed is the man who "heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them."

for I am gentle and humble in heart,

REASON we are to take His yoke

Our Saviour's **humility**: --

I. Humility towards God the Father was exhibited in several ways. In not exceeding the bounds of His commission; in obedience and forbearance; He did not employ His illuminating Spirit in the task of refuting error. Humble in the manifestation of His power. How has His humility been imitated by us? True we have no supernatural gifts to exert with humility; but those we have do we so use?

II. Humility is exhibited in His intercourse with mankind. Look at the choice He made of disciples. He told the centurion he would go to his house. Let us not suppose that His humility was allied to weakness or timidity. It was a humility manfully arrayed against vice and pride. It did not stoop nor waver. It did not flatter. It was associated with courage. We need this humility, just estimate of self; only to respect what is true and good, not mere outward show.

and you will find rest for your souls.

Notice He didn't say: "Throw off all yokes." He said: "Take My yoke."

NOT REST because NO yoke in life

BUT REST because have HIS yoke

Many want NO yoke – impossible!

ALL carry some yoke: own, world, sin, Satan, flesh, God

30 For my yoke is easy

The yoke is called "easy" but a better translation would be: "kindly." It's a good yoke – a yoke designed to help and aid – both ourselves as we wear it, and others as we work it for Christ.

"light" "easy"

Only way to find light/easy is taking up HIS yoke!

Satan, world's yoke = bondage, crushing

and my burden is light."

LIGHTENING –lighten load, make work easier, distributes load over Strongest part of body (back and legs) instead of weaker arms Help accomplish what must be done

SERVICE: "My burden is light." Compared to the burden of sin, the yoke of the Lord is easy. But the very idea of a yoke is that of pulling a load, of work, of service. Christians are to be ministers-servants. "Work for the night is coming."

Christ will never oppress us or give us a **burden too heavy** to carry. His yoke has nothing to do with the demands of works or law, much less those of human tradition. The Christian's work of obedience to Christ is joyful and happy. "For," as John explains, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

Submission to Jesus Christ brings the greatest liberation a person can experience--actually the only true liberation he can experience, because only through Christ is he freed to become what God created him to be.

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CONCLUSION

A teacher read to her class the text, "My yoke is easy."

"Who can tell me what a yoke is?" she asked.

A boy said, "A yoke is something they put on the necks of animals."

Then the teacher asked, "What is the yoke God puts on us?"

A little girl said, "It is God putting His arms around our necks."

CROSS

CROSS – DIE TO SELF

Matt 16:24-28 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross ('daily' Luke 9) and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Matt 16:24-28 Then Jesus said to his disciples,

MATTHEW 11 – LIVE FOR ME

Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

YOKE – carry burdens

Distribute weight so easier to carry, load to bear

IN CARNATION (Christmas) – Jesus became a man, taking yoke of humanity

“EASY” ... “LIGHT”

burden from self, sin, world, flesh, Satan, etc., -

HEAVY

Living for Jesus – LIGHT

Because He is gentle and humble

CROSS: Death

YOKE: Toil

CROSS: sacrifice

YOKE: service

CROSS: Blood

YOKE: Sweat

YOKE: LIVE for Jesus

CROSS: DIE for Jesus

MATTHEW 16 – DIE FOR ME

Jesus warns disciples about PHARISEES hypocrisy, ‘little’ sins that grow

Works for salvation, pride, etc – reject Jesus

Jesus asks – who do you think I am? Have they misled you?

Peter: “You are the Christ, Messiah, the Son of the living God!

Jesus warned them he would be crucified but come back to life

Peter said never! Wouldn’t allow it!

Jesus: Get behind me, Satan!

Then Jesus taught them what it meant to follow Him!

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"If anyone would come after me,

Secondly, Jesus never calls upon men to do or face anything that He was not prepared to do & face Himself. Jesus was not the kind of leader who sat remote & played with the lives of men like expendable pawns. What He asks us to face, He has already faced. Jesus has a right to call on us to take up a cross, for He, Himself, first bore one for us.

he must deny himself

When Jesus speaks of self-denial, he is not merely speaking of denying oneself a pleasure or comfort in life; on the contrary, it goes much deeper than that. Jesus is telling us that we can no longer be the center of our lives.

Martin Luther, "A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing."

NOT same as losing one's value as a person, poor self image, being down on self

First, "If any man [anyone] would come after me, let him deny himself..." Notice that he does not say, "**Let him hate himself.**" He is not asking us to deny our basic humanity, our personhood.

The word "**deny**" means to "disavow any connection with something, to state that you are not connected in any way with whatever is in view." Interestingly enough, it is the very word used to refer to Peter's denial of Jesus a little later on. As he was standing in the courtyard of the high priest, warming himself at a fire, a little maiden asked him, "Do you know this man?" {cf, Mark 14:66-72}. Peter denied that he had any connection with Jesus, said he did not know him, and affirmed his disavowal with oaths and curses. Thus he denied his Lord. This is exactly the word Jesus chooses when he tells us that, if we are going to come after him, we must first deny ourselves.

It is important also to understand that he does not mean what we usually mean by "**self-denial.**" By this we usually mean that we are giving up something. Many people feel it is only right to deny themselves something during Lent, to give up various bad habits, like wearing overshoes in bed. But Jesus is not talking about this kind of "self-denial." He is never concerned about what we do so much as with what we are. Therefore he is not talking about giving up luxuries, or even necessities, but about denying self, which is entirely different.

Denying self means that we repudiate our natural feelings about ourselves, i.e., our right to ourselves, our right to run our own lives. We are to deny that we own ourselves. We do not have the final right to decide what we are going to do, or where we are going to go. When it is stated in those terms, people sense immediately that Jesus is saying something very fundamental. It strikes right at the heart of our very existence, because the one thing that we, as human beings, value and covet and protect above anything else is the right to make ultimate decisions for ourselves. We refuse to be under anything or anybody, but reserve the right to make the final decisions of our lives. This is what Jesus is talking about. He is not talking about giving up this or that, but about giving up our selves.

Carved on the wall of the PBC auditorium is a verse taken from Paul's writings in First Corinthians, which says the same thing Jesus is saying: **"You are not your own; you are bought with a price,"** {cf, 1 Cor 6:19b-20a}. If you are going to follow Jesus, you no longer own yourself. He has ultimate rights; he has Lordship of your life. So you no longer belong to yourself; he must make those final decisions when the great issues of your life hang in the balance. This is what Jesus means by, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself" -- deny our self-trust, deny our self-sufficiency, deny our feeling that we are able to handle life by ourselves and run everything to suit ourselves.

Some years ago I read an article entitled, *The Art of Being A Big Shot*, written by a friend of mine, a very prominent Christian businessman, named Howard Butt. Among many other good things he said, were these words which I quote because they are so illustrative of what our Lord means here:

It is my pride that makes me independent of God. It's appealing to me to feel that I am the master of my fate, that I run my own life, call my own shots, go it alone. But, that feeling is my basic dishonesty. I can't go it alone. I have to get help from other people, and I can't ultimately rely on myself. I'm dependent on God for my very next breath. It is dishonest of me to pretend that I'm anything but a man -- small, weak, and limited. So, living independent of God is self-delusion. It is not just a matter of pride being an unfortunate little trait, and humility being an attractive little virtue; it's my inner psychological integrity that's at stake. When I am conceited, I am lying to myself about what I am. I am pretending to be God, and not man. My pride is the idolatrous worship of myself. And that is the national religion of Hell!

and take up his cross

The second step immediately follows: "Let him deny himself, and **take up his cross...**" What does "take up his cross" mean?

Well, I am sure these words, falling on the disciples' ears, were almost totally incomprehensible to them.

CROSS = suffering, torture, humiliation, death – end of life as know it

TAKE UP – volunteer for a cross?!?!?!?!?!?

SUFFERINGS ALL FACE

HARD: life hard for all

Problems with children, in marriage, with others

Health

Finance

Loss of loved one

Difficulties at work

Car problems

YOKE – DAILY SERVANTHOOD

HARDER – when live daily life and act Christlike

Criticism for standards

Oppose homosexuality, abortion, etc

Lose money for honesty

Mockery

Humbly serve others

Forgive others
Commit to fight temptations
Faithful despite opposition
Faithful mate, parent despite being hurt
Loss of job for standards
Loss of promotion for standards
Commitment to witness, give \$, share TTT
Loneliness instead of wrong companions
Unanswered prayer for “suffering for all” things yet stay faithful

CROSS

HARDEST YET – when die to self, be Christlike

Anything under yoke yet to much higher extent – deny self, die to self, live for Him
VOLUNTARILY TURNING BACK ON LIFE AS KNOW IT
Be Christlike!

Well, **the cross represents death**. Anyone who hangs on one, dies. Paul said that he died daily. By that, he meant that he made a conscious effort everyday, (knowing that his sin nature was strong and would call him away to comfort and self-seeking if he listened), he made a conscious effort to reckon himself as having been crucified with Christ, and therefore dead to that maniacal voice, and so doing, he daily walked in the power of a heavenly life with the risen Christ.

The cross represents death. So then why does Jesus exhort us to carry it daily? What does it symbolize in our daily life?

Death to ourselves. Death to self-service and our quest for earthly gain, recognition, respect. The one who has picked up a cross and headed out, has left all things behind. Nothing of the old life is important any more. He may still have a love for the good things, but what good would those things retain if he spurned the cross to go back to them? Or in the words of Jesus, “What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

John 15:18-20

***“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.*”**

Matthew 5:11-12

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

You can see how radical this approach to life is, how different it is from the way the world around would tell us to act. The world says, “Escape. Avoid the situation. Or, if you can't avoid it, then strike back. Get angry, get even, offend in turn. Get upset about it.” But the word of Jesus is, “If you're going to be my disciple, deny yourself, and take up your cross.”

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE – be Christlike...

CROSS – Jesus giving up own agenda to do God's will

Apply to Christmas

YOKE: Jesus born a man, incarnation, took on yoke of humanity, our example

Birth, Life – take on yoke of human being

CROSS: whole purpose of coming was for cross

Even name 'Jesus' forshadows cross

Death – cross = death

I. CROSS-BEARING IS ALWAYS VOLUNTARY

Taking it up is something we do, not something is done to us.

First of all, Jesus tells us that "taking up our cross" is something that we do voluntarily. Jesus calls us, & challenges us, but it is our decision. Taking up our cross & following Jesus is always voluntary.

I am afraid that generally we are pretty careless in the way that we talk about "cross-bearing."

CROSS-BEARING NOT: rebellious child, bad back, diabetes, termites in house

Not "That's the cross I have to bear"

YOKE: When live for Jesus, put His agenda first

CROSS: step further, give up life as want it for self to serve Him

II. CROSS-BEARING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

A. So, cross-bearing is not an accident that happens to us, or something unavoidable that we must face. Cross bearing is an act of love that we freely choose. It is a task that we undertake, a price that we pay, out of love.

For Jesus it meant going to a cross to die because He loved us so much He could do nothing else.

US: do it out of love for Jesus and what He did for us

You want to read a description of what it means to carry a cross? Turn over to **I Corinthians 13**. Listen as I begin reading in vs. 4, & I want to change the word "love" & put the word "cross-bearer" in its place.

"A cross-bearer is patient.

A cross-bearer is kind.

A cross-bearer does not envy.

A cross-bearer does not boast.

A cross-bearer is not arrogant or rude.

A cross-bearer is not self-seeking.

A cross-bearer is not easily angered, nor keeps records of wrongs.

A cross-bearer does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

A cross-bearer always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

III. CROSS-BEARING IS HARD

This is not always a very appealing course, is it? I am sure that it must have struck these disciples and the multitude with very solemn and serious impact. In fact, John tells us that at this point many turned and went back, and followed him no more, because these words seemed to them harsh and demanding. We can always be grateful that our Lord never has invited any to come after him without letting them know what would be involved. He told them straight from the shoulder what they would be getting into. And he does this with us. He is not interested in anybody's becoming a Christian, or attempting to live as a Christian, on false terms. He wants us to understand that this is going to shatter us, change us, make us into a different kind of people. It is bound to. If it has any meaning in our lives at all, it is going to revolutionize us utterly, right to the very basic core of our being. He makes this very clear, right from the start.

the songwriter who wrote, *'I want a cross with a pillow and a hill with a view.'*

Now it is not hard to understand that people have always had trouble with that. Whenever the message of the cross has been preached people have always objected to it. "Now wait a minute. That is hard. I can't do that."

Jesus talked about His impending death on a cross & His apostles balked at that. They tried to keep Him from going to Jerusalem. They said, "We want you to live on with us. We don't want you to die." When He did die on the cross they hid behind locked doors, fearful of what might happen next.

DEGRADING

A few years later, when Paul wrote about the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 he said, ***"Jews demand miraculous signs & Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews & foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews & Greeks, Christ the power of God & the wisdom of God."***

Then to the Greeks the idea of a cross was foolbishness. It really was. They were a civilization of philosophers - Plato & Aristotle. They carefully thought things through, analyzing everything, trying to come to logical conclusions.

But into their very logical world came the message of Jesus that turned everything up-side down. Jesus said,

"If you want peace, love your enemies.
If you want success, learn to sacrifice.
If you want to be a master, learn to be a servant."

They listened to that & said, "That doesn't make sense. That's just not logical. It will never work."

Speaking to a group of college students, a missionary told of his experiences on a foreign field. He said that a day never went by that he wasn't jeered as he preached the gospel on street corners. During religious holidays and festivals, vendors would be out selling religious artifacts and crosses. Hawking their wares, they would cry out, "Crosses! Cheap crosses for sale!" The missionary then challenged the students: "What about your cross? Is the cross you bear for the sake of our Lord only a cheap Cross?"

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross"

(‘daily’ Luke 9)

In the original Greek, these steps are stated in the present, continuous tense. That means, "**Keep on** denying yourself, keep on taking up your cross, keep on following me." This is not the decision of a moment, but a program for a lifetime, to be repeated again and again, whenever we fall into circumstances which make these choices necessary. This is what it means to be a disciple. Discipleship is denying your right to yourself, and taking up the cross, accepting these incidents and circumstances which expose our pride and conceit, welcoming them, and then following him, doing what he says to do, looking to him for the power.

EASY on Sunday morning, after great time of worship, response to something wonderful
HARD day after day, when in pain and God seems far away, difficult times

and follow me.

JESUS TO DISCIPLES: "Follow me"

Where was He going, where was His life leading? TO CROSS
LIFE LAID DOWN in service to God and others

When Jesus tells the disciples to take up their cross, they knew that it meant one thing – it meant that they were called to die.

If you saw someone leaving your town surrounded by Roman soldiers and they were carrying a cross, you knew that they were not coming back – it was a one way trip.

What He was calling them (us) to do as well!

When Jesus said in Luke 9:23 "...and **follow Me**" He had a very specific place in mind. He only carried the cross to one place. The top of Golgotha.

We talk about mountain top experiences; where we have been in prayer and in our devotional study of the Word, and have come away blessed and refreshed, and these are good. But Jesus calls us DAILY, to a different kind of mountain top experience; the kind only found at Golgotha's crest.

Zinzendorf owed much of his religious fervor to the casual sight of a picture of the crucifixion, with this simple inscription at the bottom, "All this for thee; how much for me!"

Jesus never sought to lure men to Him by the offer of an easy way. He came not to make life easy, but to make men great.

In the early days of WW2, when Winston Churchill took over the leadership of England, all that he offered his people was "blood, sweat & tears."

Then the third step is, "**Follow me.**" This really means, "**Obey me.**" Is it not remarkable that it takes us so long to understand that if disobedience is the name of the game before we are Christians, then certainly obedience is the name of the game after we become Christians. It must be. I am amazed at people who say that they are Christians, but then blatantly, and even pridefully, acknowledge that they do not follow the Lord, do not do what he says.

When we are called to take up the cross, called to death
When Jesus finally arrives at Galgotha, the place of the skull, his long walk with the cross, (with Simon of Cyrene's help) comes to its inevitable conclusion.

When Jesus invites us to take up our cross, he is asking us to sign our own death warrant. When the early Christians were threatened with death by the authorities, they were able to respond by saying, "well, I brought my own cross." There is a great freedom in taking up the cross, because there is little that can be taken from us.

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

If put self first lose everything when die – this world gone, no reward in next
Grasp onto what we want for self, trust in self, "What's in it for me?"
If put Jesus first, before self (die to self) – give self away for Jesus and Gospel
then satisfaction in this life, reward next
Life complete, rich, meaningful, significant

OPPOSITE of world's way of defining, finding success
Die to Live
Give to get
Sacrifice to attain

Paul says, "*I count not my life dear unto myself,*" {cf, Acts 20:24 KJV}.
I have been crucified with Christ..."

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?

Jesus not only asks this question, but he also points out that there is no way we can cheat. He says that not only is it worth it to gamble, but also that it is impossible to deceive:

Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Nothing temporal in this world relates in value to eternal blessings and riches from God

He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. (Jim Elliott)

Matt 16:24-28 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross ('daily' Luke 9) and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

CONCLUSION

BOTH YOKE & CROSS

Voluntary, not forced

Commanded by Jesus. Not option for followers

Unappealing – flesh rebels

Visible – others can see ‘difference’ in our lives

Painful – cross = nails

Yoke = cut, formed wood to do its work

Personal – custom-made for us, different, just right, carry

Beneficial – our loss if not do it

Yoke/Cross NOW = CROWN later!!!