

The Three Exchanges

by Horatius Bonar

Jesus offers to exchange our burdens and teaching for his own, bringing rest and peace to our souls.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Exchanges in Christ", "Rest for the Soul"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's exchanges in the lives of believers, focusing on the invitation to take on His yoke, burden, and teaching. He explains that the yoke of Christ is easy and pleasant, contrasting it with the heavy yokes of sin and legalism that cause unrest. Bonar highlights that Christ offers a light burden that uplifts rather than weighs down, and His teaching is rooted in love, providing true peace and rest for the soul. By accepting these exchanges, believers can experience a profound change in their spiritual lives, moving from bondage to freedom. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a complete surrender to Jesus as the true teacher who brings rest and healing.

Transcript

"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."--Matthew 11:29.

The previous verse contains the Lord's promise of rest; free, large, immediate, universal. The present verse is added to shew the way in which He carries out that promise.

Three things are implied as producing the unrest of man: the kind of yoke, the kind of burden, and the kind of teaching. He has had a yoke of a most galling kind, a burden intolerably heavy, and teaching which has made these unspeakably worse. From these three sources of weariness the Lord proposes to deliver. Not simply by loosing the yoke, and removing the burden, and condemning the false teaching, but by substituting others in their place; a yoke of his own, a burden of his own, teaching of his own.

The figure of the "yoke" is taken from the agricultural apparatus fastened round the neck and shoulders of the animals used in plowing, which, in the east, is very cumbersome and painful, subjecting them to great restraint, bending them down, and preventing their eating, as well as their free motion, in any direction. Eastern harness is both clumsy and cruel. In Leviticus 26:13 it is used for the bondage of Egypt, "I have broken the band of your yoke, and made you to go upright." In Deuteronomy 28:48 we have reference to the Roman yoke, "He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck." Other allusions of this kind are frequent, and we may notice that God, in speaking of his love to Israel, says, "I was to them as they that take off the

yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them." In the passage before us we may take the "yoke" as referring to the yoke of sin, and the yoke of the Pharisees, which was more grievous to the spirit and conscience than the yoke of Egypt, or Assyria, or Rome, was to the body or the outward estate.

The word "burden" refers sometimes to the load upon a "beast of burden," and sometimes to the freight of a ship, or the weight upon the shoulders of a carrier. See Isaiah 46:1 where the innumerable idols of Babylon are predicted as being carried off by the conqueror; "Their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy laden, they are a burden to the weary beast." It was with heavier burdens that the Pharisees loaded the shoulders of their followers (Matthew 23:4, Luke 11:46).

The expression, "Learn of me," may mean either "take me for your teacher," or "take me for your copy or model." In both these senses the teaching of the Pharisees was fitted only to produce unrest.

Such then are the three sources of a sinner's unrest. Our Lord offers to abolish them. Yet not simply to abolish them, but to give something in exchange, far more blessed. He has a substitute or exchange for each of these respectively,--a substitute which will not merely remove the unrest arising from these three causes, but will give in exchange three corresponding things fitted to impart rest at each of the points whence formerly the unrest had proceeded.

I. The exchange of yokes. "Take my yoke upon you." As if He said I too have a yoke, but very different from that which has hitherto galled your shoulders; here it is at your side; take it; put it on; it is easy and pleasant: thus you shall find rest for your souls. Yokes are for the purpose of constraining the unwilling and resisting animal to submit to its owner's will, and do its master's work. Christ's yoke is certainly for the purpose of fitting us for doing his will and work; but then it does this by making us thoroughly willing, by making the service pleasant, by removing everything that galls or wounds. It is an "easy yoke," so easy that it makes the work easy and delightful; we would not part with this yoke; it is pleasant to bear, and the work is pleasant to do. We may understand it thus. The yoke is that which He says to us or bids us do; it is also the way in which He says this, so tender and gracious, it is the spirit He infuses, the spirit of love and liberty. It is the yoke of forgiveness and peace. Did not he lay this yoke upon the sinning woman when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Did He not lay it on Zaccheus when He said, "Come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." Did He not lay it on his disciples when first He said, Follow me, and when afterwards He said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." It is not the yoke of bondage, or gloom, or penance, or uncertainty, or terror, but the yoke of the "new commandment," which springs from his love to us, and leads us to love and serve in return. Thus we get a new Master, we enter on a new service, with new and blessed laws, of which the beginning and the end is love. Hear Him saying, "Take my yoke upon you; for my yoke is easy."

II. The exchange of burdens. "My burden is light." Your present burden is hard and heavy, it weighs you down, it makes you faint under it; you are like Israel under the burdens of Egypt. Let me take that off, and give you one of my own in exchange. You will find the difference. Mine is light; it not only does not press you down, but it raises you up, it makes you lighter and more buoyant than before. This "burden" is his whole service or the things which he calls us to do or suffer for Him. For in taking his yoke we do not become idlers. We work. But all our work for Him is gladness; every new piece of work raises instead of depressing us. Such is the power of his love shed abroad in our hearts, the love that casts out fear, the love that passeth knowledge. III. The exchange of teaching. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;" not in word or outward demeanor like the Pharisee, but in heart. Take me for your teacher; take me for your model; learn of one who will not be angry at your ignorance and stupidity; imitate one who will

shew you what it is to be lowly. Learn of me, He says to you. All other teaching is unrest; this is rest and peace. It is the teaching of love; it speaks of love it offers love; it exhibits love; the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The reception of this teacher and his teaching is liberty, is rest, is deliverance, is gladness. It is this which heals the soul, which binds up all its wounds, which dispels all its clouds.

O man, let Jesus teach you. Give up your intellect, your heart, your whole soul to his teaching. He knows what to teach and how to teach. His teaching is rest! Of no other teaching can this be said; all besides this is unrest and weariness. Of this only it is not true, that increasing knowledge increaseth sorrow.

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