

SOUTHERN
PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF SERMONS

BY

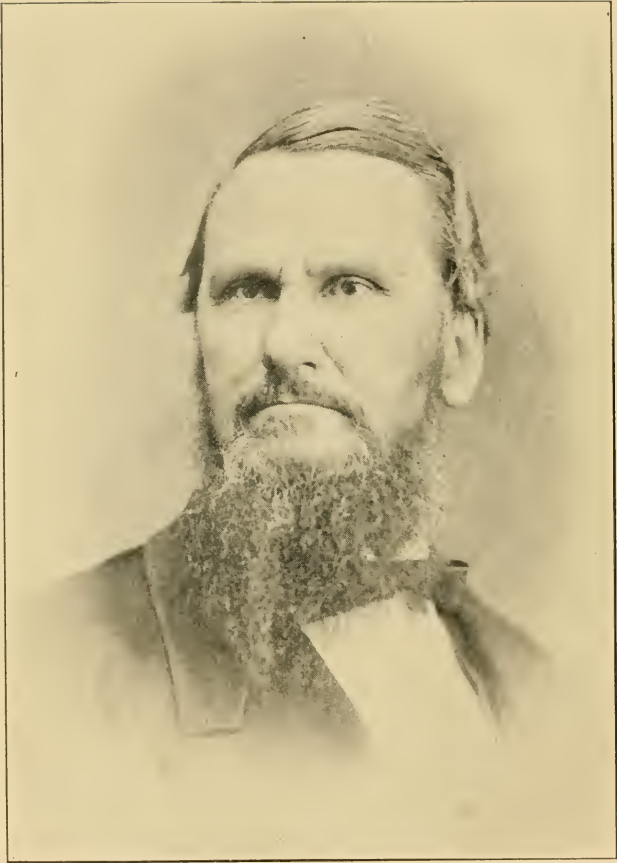
MINISTERS OF THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH.

Richmond, Va. :
THE PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.



COPYRIGHTED BY
JAMES K. HAZEN, *Secretary of Publication,*
1896.

PRINTED BY
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON,
RICHMOND, VA.



THE HAPPY SERVICE.

An Expository Sermon Preached before the 18th Virginia Regiment, 1861.

BY R. L. DABNEY, D. D.

“Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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.”—
MATT. xi. 28-30.

THIS world, my brethren, is a weary one. If any of you think not so, I can but liken you to inexperienced youths, who are summoned in the morning to set out on a toilsome journey, and in their ignorance of its real character, suppose it to be a pastime, because the adjuncts of the hour of setting forth are pleasant. They are in raptures with the free motion, and the exercise of their own exuberant energies, with the perfumed breath of dewy morn, with the fields glittering with liquid pearls, with the eastern sky bathed in crimson and gold, and with the beams of the rising sun. They bound along the way in sport, wasting the vigor which they will sorely need ere nightfall. They forget the sultry hours of the afternoon, when this cheering sun shall have put on its fervid heats, the dusty, lengthening miles, the thirst, and hunger, the aching limbs, with which they must drag themselves at evening towards a goal which seems ever to recede.

But no man lives long enough to learn what life truly is, without reaching the conviction that this is a weary world. We “labor and are heavy laden.” How pre-

cious and timely, then, is the promise of rest to such beings? Many of you are weary and burdened with the impossible endeavor to feed an immortal mind with earthly food. Some perhaps are heavy laden with their toils of self-righteousness, while they go about to establish their own acceptance with God, grievously galled by an uneasy, disapproving conscience. A few, I trust, are laboring with the salutary burden of conviction for sin, and conscious guilt. Some of you are wearying yourselves in vain, with the effort to break your bondage under sin in your own strength. God's people among you are oppressed with the "heat and burden of the day," while they strive, painfully, yet with better heart and hope, "to make their calling and election sure." Many are crushed with sorrows and bereavements, or with anxieties and fears. All these are invited by the benevolent Redeemer to come and find rest in him. Whatever may be their burden, he promises a gracious relief. How general, then, ought the interest in these divine words to be; and how eager?

When we are invited, "come unto me," we understand, of course, that this coming is not a corporeal approach to Christ's local habitation, which is not possible for us, in the flesh, nor necessary; but the embracing of his redemption by faith. This usage of the word is too well established in our Saviour's preaching to need much illustration. When, for instance, he says (John vi. 35), "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," the coming is manifestly faith. The yoke which we are to take up is the service of Christ. And when rest is promised to those who believe, and who obey, it is not bodily indolence, or sensual ease, which the Saviour offers, but inward peace. He himself defines it in the subsequent

words, as "rest to our souls." He may call us to stormy trials for his sake; he assuredly will call us to diligent, persevering labors for his cause; but he guarantees to us that sweet repose of soul, with which outward toils are light, and without which the ease and prosperity of sin are but a mocking torture. The main doctrine taught us, then, in this passage, is, that—

First, Our Peace is to be found in embracing Christ and his service by faith.

At the threshold of the subject, we are met by this inquiry: Who is it that makes this generous offer of rest to all the weary and heavy laden of earth? Consider how much is implied in it. To fulfil the obligation which is thus assumed will require no small resources of wealth, power, and love. To succor the multitudinous evils of humanity is, indeed, a mighty undertaking. Let us suppose that the mightiest emperor of earth, or the most powerful angel in heaven, had ventured such an invitation as this, and that it had been universally accepted. Before this vast aggregate of the wants and woes of men, his resources would seem to shrink into a mite, and the greatest finite mind would reel and stagger in the mere attempt to comprehend, as all created riches would be absorbed a thousand times in relieving the mighty mass. Who is this, then, that calmly stands up and announces to his dying race the audacious proposal? "Come one, come all, to *me*; and *I* will give you rest." Is this the Nazarene, the carpenter's son; the man who "had not where to lay his head"? How dare he pledge to suffering mankind, he, in his beggary, a relief which Cæsar, upon the throne of imperial Rome, with all the legions of her armies bowing to his sceptre, and all the nations of the civilized globe pouring their tributes into his royal treasury, would not presume to undertake?

If he is only what he seems, well may scribe and Pharisee resent with hot indignation the insolence of such imposture; and say, this man at once blasphemes God, in assuming a prerogative of compassion which belongs to him alone, and mocks the miseries of man, by vainly offering to take them all upon his puny arm.

Be assured, my brethren, that the holy Jesus would have been incapable of using this language had he not been conscious that he was not only man, but God. It was because he could claim:¹ "I and my Father are one"; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "He hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." Unless the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, and infinite attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, he cannot give peace to mankind. But he is both God and man. Unless the charge of insincerity and imposture can be brought against his character, this promise compels us to receive his proper divinity; and here, my brethren, is the foundation of our trust in him. Because he hath in himself all the fulness of the Godhead, therefore we can rely upon his love, power, wisdom and faithfulness, to make us happy in our dedication to him. Thus, the apparent paradox at the outset of his invitation is turned into a noble support of its solidity.

Second, We read assurance of our peace and blessedness in Christ in the nature of the yoke which we are invited to receive. "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."

Here, again, there appears to the unbeliever a still greater paradox; he is invited to look for rest in assum-

¹ Jno. x. 30; Col. i. 19; Eph. i. 21-23.

ing a yoke! It is when the yoke is unbound and the wearied ox is released to follow his own will pastureward, that he finds rest. So the perpetual delusion of the unbeliever is, that he can find his preferred happiness in the emancipation of his soul from the dreaded restraints of Christianity, and in this alone. This error, we trust, may be dissolved by reminding you of a few plain facts. The first is, that there is no such possible alternative for you, as you vainly dream, between the bearing of Christ's yoke and entire immunity. No; the only real choice within your reach is that between the yoke of Christ and the yoke of sin, of which Satan is the master. Now, if this is so, manifestly, one may be reasonably invited to seek the relief of his toil by exchanging a cruel and unrighteous bondage for a mild and righteous service. But I repeat, no man is free, or can be; all who do not bear the yoke of Christ, groan under that of sin and Satan. Such is the testimony of the Scriptures. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." They are "taken captive by the dèvil at his will."¹ I appeal to your own experience: Is the most reckless sinner really free from constraint? I speak not of the bonds of discipline; but in other respects, is he at liberty to regulate his actions by his own preferences? Nay; how often does his own passion and sin lay him under the most cruel restraint and self-denial? His delusive enjoyments in transgression are often purchased at a heavy cost, and then concealed at the expense of irksome sacrifices of inclination. These are but instances of the pinching of Satan's yoke. Here, then, is the choice which

¹ Jno. viii. 34; Acts viii. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 26.

you have to make, transgressor; not whether you may repudiate every yoke and go free as the wild ass of the desert described by Job; but whether it will most conduce to the repose of your soul to bear the yoke of Christ, your loving Redeemer, or of Satan, the soul-murderer. The first is right and reasonable (your own conscience avouches it), and your heavenly Master deals honestly and graciously with you. He lays it upon your shoulder; but he assists you with his loving and almighty hand to bear it; he solaces your labor with the sweetest foretastes of an approving conscience and heavenly hope; he makes it grow perpetually lighter by the growth of holy habits of soul; and at the end he converts it into a crown of glory. But Satan, a "liar from the beginning," brings his foul, unrighteous yoke to you, concealed with frippery, and persuades you that it is but a toy. Thus he binds it upon your neck, and when he has befooled you effectually, leaves you to bear it unaided, or mocks you with sardonic malice, while it grows ever more weighty; and having galled you like iron here, crushes your miserable soul at last into perdition. Under which, now, of these yokes will you find rest to your souls?

The second fact is, that it is not apathetic indolence or sensual ease which Christ promises, but rest for the soul. It consists of peace of conscience, harmony of the affections, and the enjoyment of legitimate and ennobling exercise for all the powers. Man's true well-being requires activity. Even an ancient pagan sage learned enough of this truth to define happiness as "virtuous energy." This definition we may accept if we be permitted to take it in the sense of the normal and healthy exercise of the soul's powers. He who has no rule of life, no worthy aim, no duty, can never be happy, because he puts forth no virtuous energy. He who bears the

right yoke, or, in other words, has assigned to him the proper activities, is the man who truly enjoys his existence.

Third, We may expect rest under the yoke of Christ because of the character of our Master. "He is meek and lowly in heart, and we shall find rest unto our souls." He is a gentle, kindly, tender master. A merciful master makes an easy service. His benevolence makes him watchful of the welfare of his servants, and considerate in dealing with their infirmities. His lowliness of heart ensures that he will never sacrifice the happiness and lives of his subjects in reckless and ambitious enterprises. He is not a tyrant to drag his wretched subjects, like an Alexander, or a Tamerlane, through frozen wilds and burning wastes, and to pour out their blood as a libation to the idol of his fame. He is the prince of peace, whose sceptre is truth and meekness and righteousness, and whose law is love. To his own people, he is the "Lamb of God," who loved them and gave himself for them. How, then, is it possible that he, in regulating the lives and services of his ransomed ones, should impose on them any other law than one which conduces to their truest well-being? To dread the yoke of Christ is guilty mistrust and unbelief.

But we shall not acquire the richest meaning of the passage, unless we include the connection of the clause, "learn of me," with the rest of the verse. Saith the Saviour, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." What shall we learn of him? Obviously, we learn of his meekness and lowliness of heart, how to take the yoke and how to wear it. Thus shall we find true repose of soul. This is but teaching us, my brethren, that if we would have true peace, we must imitate the spirit with which our Redeemer fulfilled the will of his

Father, and bore his cross. No more complete and ready method of proof appears to establish this assertion than to ask you to form to yourselves a conception of the inward life of such a man as the man Jesus. Suppose a servant of God, endued with just his affection and benevolence, with his unselfish disinterestedness, with his purity, with his forgiving temper, with his magnanimity, with his elevated devotion, and moving among us in the fulfilment of the duties of the Christian life, under the impulse of these lovely sentiments, combined with the social ties appropriate to our nature sanctified. Does not this at once constitute a picture of a life than which none can be conceived more imbued with the sweetness and sunshine of true happiness? Would not such a life glow with the very light of heaven's own bliss amidst the gloom of our sorrows and sins? Some one may say, perhaps: Such was the temper of Jesus; yet he was "the man of sorrows." True; but it was because he "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." It was the burthen of our guilt which pressed upon that pure and holy heart. Let us suppose that he had borne no load of obloquy, of death, and of divine desertion for us; that he had enjoyed the friends and outward blessings with which our lot is crowned; and had experienced no heavier chastisements than God's fatherly mercy appoints to his adopted children here, sustained by the consolations of his grace. Then, indeed, would his life have been one of heavenly peace within. And such would ours be if we learned of him, his heavenly temper. Reproach and opposition might still befall us, for we should still be in a wicked world; but the serene spirit of conscious rectitude and of forgiveness would sustain our souls in a loftier atmosphere, high above the flights of all the embittered shafts of malice. Pain, fatigue,

sickness, would still visit us ; but the spirit, baptized in peace, would sustain our infirmity. Our hearts would sometimes bleed with bereavements ; for we should still be sinners, although pardoned ; yet there would be no poison in the wound, for the assurance of the love of the hand which directed the stroke would medicate our pain. If, then, we would find rest to our souls, let us learn to imbibe the temper of the meek and lowly Jesus, and to bear his yoke with that devoted spirit with which he fulfilled his Father's will in living and dying for us.

Fourth, In the concluding verse our Saviour gives this crowning argument : "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light ; and ye shall find rest to your souls." But this reasoning the unbeliever repels with more incredulity than anything that has preceded it. The yoke easy, and the burden light ! he exclaims. How can this be ? Has not Christ himself said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way ?" Is not the commandment declared to be "exceeding broad" ? "The righteous scarcely are saved." How ; then, can it be argued that we shall find our true repose of soul in the service of Jesus Christ because the burden of it is easy ?

The unconverted man has often a worse ground of incredulity than this : that of his own experience and consciousness. He says to himself : "I *have* endeavored to bear that yoke ; I was earnest in my attempt, for was I not impelled to it by the infinite moment of the worth of an immortal soul, the sense of dreadful guilt, the terrors of an endless hell ? I strove hard to live the Christian life. Often I renewed my struggle, even with almost despairing bitterness ; but the task was too great. I have relinquished it, and again I am living the life of careless impenitence, conscious that the danger of perdition is not removed, but only veiled partially from my

own eyes by my insensibility, well aware that my conscience is not cleansed, but only seared. So well have I learned, by my own miserable experiments, that this grievous yoke of Christianity would crush out every enjoyment of life for me, if borne in earnest, that I am now stubbornly braving the appalling risks of an unprepared death and a lost immortality, rather than face the burden again at present. And after all this, would the preacher persuade me that "the yoke is easy and the burden light? Alas! I know better!"

Such is the skepticism, and such its ground which most adult transgressors read in their own hearts, when they scan their contents honestly. Say, unbeliever, have I not given correct form to your inmost thought? And your most intimate conviction is at points with the express declaration of your Saviour. How shall I attempt to solve this crowning paradox for you, and to reconcile your unbelief to this gracious truth? This is a task which the Holy Spirit can alone accomplish with efficacy; and, thanks to him, he does not require the execution of it from his ministers. Nothing but a true conversion by his power, experienced in the heart, can enable the sinner to appreciate the nature of Christ's service. The blind man cannot be taught precisely what are the beauties of the spring before his eyes are opened. But yet something may be said to obviate your incredulity; something which, though it will not make you comprehend how this yoke becomes light, may yet enable you to apprehend that it is not unreasonable it should become so to the believer.

Remember, then, that the declarations which the Scriptures make of the straitness and difficulty of the Christian's way refer always to man's native unassisted strength. Relatively to that strength, the way is indeed

arduous. It is impossible to exaggerate its difficulty; if we should persuade the unconverted heart that it is absolutely certain his unaided strength and resolution will fail before it, we should be strictly true. And now, I appeal to your own consciousness: Were not those ill-starred efforts to serve Christ, whose failure now so discourages you, made in your own poor strength? Did you not begin them unconvinced of your impotency? Was not this the thought of your heart: "Seeing the danger of my soul, *I*, as a rational being, will resolve; and *I* will fulfil what I resolve. I shall not be an inconsistent, half-way Christian, like these despised ones whose blemishes have so often been the butt of my contempt. I shall reform my life truly, and keep the law, and thus prepare and recommend myself for gospel forgiveness." Did you form those purposes of piety and make those efforts, in explicit, full dependence on a spiritual ability to be communicated to you by Christ, of free grace, so that your sole encouragement to attempt them was his faithful word of promise? Alas, no! And therefore your service of him was a mortifying failure. Now I beg you to weigh the real statement of your Saviour in the text. He has never said that the yoke would be easy, or the burden light to a soul which attempted to lift it apart from him. What he taught was this: that he who "cometh" to him, he who "learns of him" shall find the yoke easy. This you refused to do; you have never really tested the correctness of Christ's declarations; you have, in fact, no experience whatever upon the subject.

"But¹ when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And one chief portion of his purchase for us was enabling grace, which is

¹ Rom. v. 6.

offered to our faith on the same terms with remission of sin. Hear now some of the blessed assurances of this fact: ¹ "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new; and all things are of God."² "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."³ "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."⁴ "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

If these precious promises are true, is it not clear that he who has them fulfilled in his soul may reasonably expect a wholly different experience from yours in bearing the yoke? Here new views of truth are given: a spiritual ability is awakened in the faculties hitherto misdirected to sin and sense; man's impotence of will for spiritual good is renovated by the almighty will of the Spirit. If, indeed, Christ does all this in him who comes and learns of him and takes his yoke, plainly that service may be easy and pleasant to him which before was intolerable. Sometimes the curious child, straying where the laborers have laid down their implements, takes up the axe or scythe adapted to a man's strength, and undertakes to use it. But his youthful limbs are unequal to the task; his toil is excessive; his breath heaves with panting, his heart throbs, and his joints

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17. ² Gal. ii. 20,

³ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ⁴ Ezek. xxxvi, 28, 26.

quiver with fatigue. As he lays it down, he concludes perhaps, thus : " How burdensome and repulsive must the life of the laborer be ! Surely every pleasure of existence is crushed out by his excessive toil ! Yet he is mistaken ; he has judged their tasks by his measure of strength. They have the muscles of men ; and when they come forth in the breezy fields or fragrant woods, refreshed with food and their veins rich with lusty blood, there is a positive joy in the vigorous swing of these weapons of sturdy and honest labor. Similar is the error which you have made, when you have attempted to bear Christ's yoke in your own strength, which is weakness ; and overpowered by the burden, have inferred that Christ cannot make it light by his grace.

But there is another solution, which is, if possible, more important. It is found in the difference of motive and affection by which the service of the believer and that of the unbeliever are prompted. Those labors are easy and pleasant which are inspired by love, however absorbing they may be of time and strength. But if they are compelled by reluctant fear and rendered in hatred, the lightest exertions gall the heart. The man who is incapable of domestic love looks on the toils of the laborious father with disgust ; he thinks his life that of a galley slave ; and says to himself that no power nor price on earth shall ever bend him to so irksome a bondage. But does that careful parent think so ? Nay, his labors, his crops, the glebe watered with the honest sweat of his brow, are dear to him ; he cherishes them with all the affectionate interest of heart's treasures ; they feed those whom he loves. As he pursues his busy tillage through the sultry hours, although he does feel the heat and burden of the day, he is happy in his endurance ; because he has before him the peaceful home which is blessed

with the fruits of these labors, the board spread with bounty by the work of his sturdy hand, with the smiling faces around it, the welcome of pattering feet and gleeful voices, and childish arms about his neck, which he expects to meet him as he returns at eve, heavy perhaps of limb, but light of heart, from his daily tasks, and the loving smile of the thoughtful mate, who keeps the hearth bright for his coming. Go now, to that man, and tempt him to leave his fields for some scene of sinful amusement; tell him that his daily labor is nothing but a miserable drudgery, and that it is time for him to seek enjoyment abroad. Will he hearken? No; his labor is his enjoyment; those guilty and mischievous scenes have no allurements for him, because love makes him happy enough in his industry.

Or, if this instance is not enough, we may find a more conclusive one in that which is the strongest and purest of all affections found among sinful men, the love of a mother for her babe. And this, also, imposes the severest toils which any of the duties of common life require. As the young female, a stranger as yet to this devoted love, witnesses the sacrifices of some mother, lately her comrade, amidst the perpetual watchings and sleepless cares of the nursery, it may be that she looks on with disgust and dread, and she says to herself, not for all the world would I submit to such an abhorred burden. But the time comes when the fountain of maternal love is opened in her heart also. Now see the recent votress of fashion! How zealously does she forsake the admiration of society, and sacrifice the bloom of her beauty, lately so much prized, amidst the vigils of her domestic tasks. These cares are no longer repulsive. Propose to her to resign her tender charge wholly to some hireling, whose well-paid skill will probably far

surpass her inexperience in providing for its welfare, and to return to the delights of the ball-room. She will reject it, and as she presses her infant to her bosom, will declare that no joy of earth is so sweet as the care of this darling object. Whence this change? It is because a new love has been born along with her offspring. The yoke of love is ever easy, and its burden is light.

In like manner, if he who comes to Christ and learns of him, learns thereby to love, this new motive abundantly explains the fact to you, sinner, so incredible, that his yoke becomes easy. For, I take your own heart to witness, that in your former efforts to live a religious life, no love animated your resolve. The world and self-will were still sweet to you intrinsically. If you felt the sting and bitterness of any of your sins, it was only because self-love was terrified by the looming of the danger they incurred. The Christian life was abhorrent to your secret heart; and the language of your inner thought was that this divine Master was an austere man whose service you would defy if you dared. Poor, unwilling captive! No wonder your service, wrung by fear from a bitter, reluctant heart, was a galling bondage.

But now remember the blessed truth already established from the Scripture: that when a believing soul embraces the cross, Christ "crucifies the enmity thereby"; that he engages to take away the stony heart out of our flesh and give us a heart of flesh; that when he reconciles God to us by his atonement, he also reconciles us to God by our effectual calling, and sheds abroad his love upon our hearts. Then, as the regenerated sinner considers the amazing love and condescension of a Redeemer God, stooping to death to rescue him from unutterable ruin, a new-born gratitude conspires with

adoration for his excellences, and he begins to say, "I love him because he first loved me." Then the love of Christ constraining him becomes the spring of a joyful obedience; and he sings with devout delight, in the language of David, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds." This is the way, O sinner, the yoke is made easy and the burden light! Cannot you apprehend it?

Perhaps such a glimpse of the beauty and glory of the cross hath penetrated your heart (which may God grant), that you are almost ready to say: "Ah! if I could only claim that wondrous Saviour as mine, if I could believe that the divine blood was indeed shed for my sins; that the burning throne, whose just wrath now blights every look which my wretched soul turns towards God with fear and enmity, was changed for me into a throne of grace; that this dreadful God was indeed reconciled, and was become a tender Father, I, too, could love—I, too, could serve with hope and cheerful obedience. But how shall I know this? How read the secret verdict of heaven, which requites and adopts the object of almighty grace?

I will tell you how. But first let me warn you not to mistake the obstinacy of your own native opposition to God. . If you think that the mere apprehension of your own interest in the cross, and of the excellence and love displayed therein towards you will be enough of itself without the invoking of the sovereign Spirit to renovate your obdurate heart, you will be disappointed. No doctrine, no moral suasion alone, not even that of dying love, will melt that flinty thing; nothing but the power divine which first created it. But if you feel that you could indeed love Christ, if only you were assured that

he had first loved you, then it is my delightful commission to tell you that you may claim that privilege of loving. Christ invites you. His own words are: "Who-soever will, let him come." He tells us that the man upon whom God's secret verdict of the heavenly justification and adoption is passed, is he who is truly willing to embrace and to serve Christ. Are you willing? Then you are one of those for whom the invitation is sent. Come, then, thou weary, heavy-laden soul; "Come to Jesus and he will give you rest. Take his yoke upon you and learn of him; for he is meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light."

Permit me, in closing this discourse, to point out two instructive lessons which are contained in these words of the Saviour.

One is, that faith always includes an immediate assumption of all known duty. Christ here explains "coming to him" in verse twenty-eight (which is his customary expression for believing), by taking up the yoke and learning of him in verse twenty-nine. The true believer, although of all men most impressed with his own impotency to live the Christian life aright, immediately sets about that very thing. It is because the gospel promise pledges Christ's strength to make the yoke easy; and the function of faith is to embrace the promise just as it is. Now, there is somebody here whose failure and distress are all explained by this remark. My brother, you think you comprehend and approve the plan for a sinner's pardon through Christ, and that you can trust it. But you have not found rest for your soul? It is because there is some yoke, some duty, which you have not assumed. What is it? You know; I do not. God does. Take it up like a man;

do it now, not self-righteously but believingly, and you will find the blessed rest.

Second, There is somebody else here who thinks he sees and craves the blessedness of the soul which has received the conscious assurance, in its own exercises, of being saved in Christ. He says, "Oh! if I could only feel in my heart these new-born affections and thus know my interest in him, how joyfully would I flee to him and embrace him with his service; and no toils nor sacrifices should tempt my happy heart for one moment to forsake his yoke. But alas! when I look within, all is cold and dark. How can I venture with this un-renewed heart?"

The answer which Christ here implies is this: The conscious, inward experience of his grace is bestowed by your coming and when you come, not before. Hear him: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me," . . . "and ye shall find rest to your souls." You must find it by taking the yoke, not before you take it. You must venture on his divine word, trusting that alone, and committing yourself to his fidelity in advance of your own experience. And does not he deserve this, who died for you? Cannot you trust him? If he saved you by the method you desire, your trust would be, after all, not on him but on your own experiences. How sandy a foundation!

But there is a more offensive form of this mistrust. Some anxious, convinced souls would fain have the peace; but they are loath to commit themselves irrevocably to Christ's yoke until they have made a sort of conditional experiment for themselves of the comfort and ease with which they may bear it. They cannot trust the word and oath of the Saviour who is the God, and who so loved them as to lay down his life for their souls.

No; they must be allowed to finger the yoke, to weigh it in their hands, to judge how it will wear, and then, if they like it, perhaps Christ will be permitted to bind it on permanently. Deluded soul! Of course the yoke, thus tried, will not wear lightly. And what is such mistrust but an insult to the majesty, the love, the faithfulness of Christ? He will not traffic with you for your deliverance on such terms as these. You must trust yourself without reserve to his fidelity, or he will turn with holy scorn from your insolent proposal, and leave your miserable soul to perish in its doubts. "The fearful" (they who are too timid to trust themselves to the faithfulness of their God and Saviour) "and unbelieving and abominable . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)