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## The Words Opened and Explained

“For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). Here we have the reason and encouragement, the reason why we should take the yoke of Christ upon us and the encouragement to take it, because it is easy and His burden is light.

“My yoke.” Christ would have us take His yoke upon us. You had that in the former verse, but the spirits of men are loath to be brought under a yoke; they count it burdensome. Therefore, says Christ, “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,” and then, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Once you have but learned meekness and humility you shall then find My yoke easy and My burden light.”

“Easy.” The word that you have translated in your books “easy” is *chrestos* in the Greek, a word that signifies profitable, utility, and commodious. So it might be turned. And upon this, regarding those who were called Christians (Justin Martyr had such an expression) he called them “crestians,” from this word, because they were men who were useful and profitable. And so they might be called crestians as well as Christians. “My yoke is profitable and that makes it easy.” Whatever a man undertakes, yet if it brings much profit with it, you count it easy. You who take a great

deal of pains and endure much difficulty at sea, who go to the Indies, yet if it brings in profit you count it easy because so much profit comes in.

Second, as the word signifies profit, so it signifies gentleness in opposition to severity, roughness, harshness, or rigidness. So I find the word in Romans 11:22 where the apostle says, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." There it is *chrestos*, or easiness. For so *chrestos* there is the same word, only here it is the adjective and there it is the substantive, the easiness, and gentleness, and severity of God, severity and gentleness opposed to one another. God is very gentle, sweet, and good unto some, and is very severe unto others. So, "Take My yoke [upon you, for it] is easy." That is, it is gentle in opposition to severe. And this is very suitable to what Christ has said before, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," and "My yoke is as I am, low as I am, of gentle disposition, as I am meek. So you shall find no rigidness, no harshness, no hardness in My yoke." That is the meaning of the yoke. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." It may be a yoke and seem to be heavy to you, but the yoke is easy. But it may be a burden, you say. Well, if it is a burden, it is light. The word is nimble or agile. It is a very strange thing that it should be a burden and yet be light. It may be a burden to flesh and blood; it may be in some respects burdensome many ways. But when you have taken it upon you, you will find it to be light.

Now the word translated here "light" is taken from the lightness and agility of stags, of those creatures that are very swift and agile, nimble and light in their motion, from whence the word comes.

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“My burden is light.” The meaning in the original is this: It is such a light burden as man may have it come upon him and dance with it, leap, and dance, have joy and delight with this burden upon their backs. Other burdens press down, make a man go heavily, but this burden is so light that, for those who have it on, it makes their hearts light and easy so that they can go and skip and dance with this burden upon them. That is the word in the original. We have no word in the English to express it thus. The word that you have in 2 Peter 1:5–6 has some likeness to that which Christ means, “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness,” and so he multiplies particulars. And now the Greek word in the original means to lead in the dance, add these virtues one to another. It is true, it signifies the ministering of the supplies that members have from the Head. Only, in your English Bible it is said, “Add to your faith virtue.” It either signifies the ministering of the Head to the members—that which the members receive by the ministering of the Head, and so it is proper there, that all the virtues we have they are but added one to another, from the virtue that is ministered from Christ our Head to us members—or else the word signifies “to lead in a dance,” as first one goes and the other follows, so faith goes first and that leads on the other. It signifies the delightfulness in Christianity, when faith goes before, and all the other virtues coming after, and there is a delightfulness in all the ways of godliness and Christianity and in the exercising of virtues.

That suffices for the meaning of the words, "My burden is light." Such a burden as will make the heart light, and that one may have a burden on and go lightly and skipping as if he had none. Only one thing more for the opening of the words "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." I confess these two expressions many make to be but all one, "yoke and burden," and others think there is a little difference, that by yoke is meant what Jesus Christ requires of us in the gospel to do, and by burdens is meant what we are required in the gospel to suffer, both active and passive obedience. The coming under the rule and government of Christ in the gospel, that is a yoke. But it is a very gentle yoke, and so when we come under the obedience of Christ to be professors of the gospel, we must expect to suffer much and bear great burdens of afflictions in the world. "But," says Christ, "these burdens of afflictions, if they come and persecute you never so much here, you shall find them to be but light burdens. All that I require of you to do shall be easy, and all that I require of you to suffer shall be light." So that from hence we have this point of doctrine, for I shall not handle them asunder but put them both together.