

Committed to Christ

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I want to read a very short paragraph in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11, from verse 25. At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto this. Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son. And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal [00:01:01] him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and lower me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

I was very interested, indeed, in the reference made this afternoon by our brother John Flett to his seafaring days. He was talking about the fact that it isn't the storms and the gales that determines the way the ship goes, but it's something that's done from inside the ship. Now, I don't know whether he has ever heard the poem. I suspect he must have known it at one time, but it's just slipped from his mind in its words, but the thought [00:02:02] remains with him. Well, it's indelibly imprinted upon my heart and my mind, and I would like to repeat the exact words of the poem to you, hoping that as this came to me when I was a little fellow, some of the young people who are here, even boys and girls, might remember the words, and there might be a help to them as there were to me. My mother, when I was a little fellow, used to exhort me almost ceaselessly to begin and to tread the Christian pathway, and I haven't the slightest doubt that I often became impatient with her words of wisdom, but she had more weapons in her armory than direct exhortation, and on the walls of my bedroom from time to time there used to appear a text or a poem or a quotation, not a word said, [00:03:02] but it's a striking thing that several of these have remained with me word for word to this very day, and that's one of them, and these were the words. One ship drives east and another drives west by the south same wind that blows. It's the set of the sails and not the gales that determines the way it goes. Now I trust that they might come to us this evening from this well-known scripture, something which will for old and young help us in the set of our sails, so that we may proceed along in the way of life, and the way of light, and the way of truth, and in the way which is the Savior's way, which leads us now and in the end to the Father. Now we have read a very short paragraph here, and it's divided into two most dissimilar parts.

[00:04:07] A great many of you here will be able to quote word for word the second part of the paragraph, come on to me, and I will give you a rest, but perhaps many of you aren't quite so familiar

with the first part of the paragraph. But reading it again, as we have done this evening, I don't think that there could be any doubt in our minds that the Savior intended this to be one paragraph. It was one bit of teaching. It was one of the marvelous sayings concerning which the Lord Jesus Christ said, let these sayings sink down into your ears. Now these two parts of the paragraph are very, very dissimilar. If we look at our Bibles and see from verse 25 to verse 27, [00:05:05] three verses, two of them very long, they're in very sharp contrast with the four verses, 28 to verse 30, quite short verses. The first part contains the most exalted truth, and the second part deals with the earthly path and service of the servant. The first part deals with something that the eagle's eye has never seen. The second part deals with the lowly earth-born toil of the oxen at the plow. One would think that since they are so closely joined together by the Savior, there must be a close connection between them, and I make bold to suggest that at least one connection is this. And it would be a very helpful thing to us all to get this thing imprinted on mind to start with. It says in verse 27, all things are delivered to me of my Father.

[00:06:12] The creation and upholding of all things by the word of his power. The folding up of the heavens like a garment worn out when God's time comes. All things, things illimitable in their cosmic magnitude. All things are delivered to me of my Father. The Father has given into his hand all things. You and I are called in the second part of the paragraph to deliver over to him the conduct of our lives. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. Is it too much to ask that you and I, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, made his own by that wonderful love of his, that we [00:07:05] should be willing and ready to commit to him altogether the conduct in practical daily detail of our lives? And that's what he's meant by the saying, take my yoke upon you. Now I've said that the paragraph is divided into these two sections, verses 25 down to verse 27, and they are about the Father and the Son. And verses 28 to verse 30, they center upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God in his person, and his invitation to those who are weary and heavy-laden to come and find their rest in him. It begins in verse 25 by saying, at that time. Now it seems very plain to me that the Lord Jesus [00:08:03] Christ spoke the things at this time in the sense that he had just shown how those cities in which his most mighty works had been done had rejected and turned away from him. It was at a very special stage, not the final stage, but a very special stage in their rejection of him, because his work had been in Galilee, and these cities of Galilee, it says of them that they did not receive him. He began to upgrade in verse 20 the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done because they repented not. It was at that time when there came upon his spirit the fact that these cities that had seen a manifestation of his love and his compassion and his delivering power, they had refused the allegiance of their hearts and lives. They had refused to receive his [00:09:03] message. They had refused to repent, and it's in these circumstances at this time that the Lord Jesus speaks about the uniqueness of the relationship that existed there in the supramundane world, the world entirely above this world, in that world the relation between the Father and the Son, how all things were committed to him. The Lord Jesus raising his eyes to heaven, he says, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that's an unusual description for the Father, a description which we might have thought fits the Son himself. Why? Because the Father gave it to him that he should have such a name and responsibility. He addresses the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, and says, I thank thee because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Now what are these things? Well, these things can only be the [00:10:03] real truth about the person who was there amongst them and was preaching the gospel of the kingdom and was bringing the good news that he himself had come to proclaim, but he's not received. If we look at a still earlier part of the chapter, we find in verse three that John the Baptist in prison sent a message to the Lord Jesus and said, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? In other words, he asked a question about the real truth concerning this person who had spoken such wonderful words and performed such mighty

works. Who is he? Is he the one that Holy Scripture has led us to expect? And the Lord Jesus, speaking about these things, said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Now that means, of course, that the knowledge of the Father [00:11:01] and the Son is something which is not available to the normal means, however cultivated they may be, the dwelling men. It's only those who are willing to take the place of loneliness and humility and an entire distrust of the powers that are in themselves. These are the ones to whom the truth about these things would be revealed. He thanks the Father that they had been revealed unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Verse 27, All things are delivered to me of my Father. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Now, I want you to notice particularly that in these verses, the way in which the divine persons [00:12:03] are referred to is a very special and distinct one. It is the Father and the Son. You have it in verse 27, No man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. And I suggest to you, without attempting to make an absolute rule of it, that when we see these forms of expression in the New Testament, the Father and the Son, it is not speaking primarily about the earthly knowledge that we may have of the Father and the Son, but it's speaking about the eternal persons of the Godhead, and it draws our attention to the fact of the relationship that existed between them before the world was. In other words, we are introduced in this little verse into the most exalted regions that we can possibly think of, even in the light of the [00:13:07] revelation that has come to us from the Holy Scripture. We think now of the care over us, the great salvation that has come to us, the care over us of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our saviour and our intercessor and our head. We think of the way that the Father, our Father in heaven, is willing to stoop down and take account of our daily lives. He knows what things we have need of. We have no need for anxiety about these things. He knows, and that's a very wonderful thing, concerning which I don't wish to say a single word to minimize the greatness of it. But the Father and the Son lived with eternal life in their own home in heaven before the worlds of you and I were on the scene at all. It's the eternal home of God that's drawn attention to in these [00:14:04] names, the Father and the Son. And there was there the exchange of love between the Father and the Son. We are not told very much about that eternity before the worlds were, out of which springs our blessing, because out of it came election and predestination. We're not told much about it, but the two things we do know about that world, we know from the prayer in John 17. And there's no doubt at all that in this verse, and this verse alone in the synoptic gospels, the whole truth of the gospel of John springs out as much as to say, although we don't speak primarily about these things, there is absolutely no difference between us and John. What he speaks of, he speaks of by direct divine inspiration. What we speak of, we speak of by direct divine inspiration. But there [00:15:01] is absolutely no tension between the two. The truth that's developed so fully in the gospel of John is here in its full germ, in these words, the Father hath delivered all things, and no man kneweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. And what is it that we learn about that eternal state? Well, we read in the 17th chapter of John, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. That home of the eternal dwelling of the Father and the Son was a home of divine, unchanging, everlasting, perfect love. The Lord Jesus Christ also said in that chapter that he asked to be restored to the glory which I had with thee before the world's world. It was a home of unsullied light and perfect glory. [00:16:08] It was a home of love. It was a home of glory. It's the place into which we, the beloved sons of God, through him are going to be introduced. But oh, let us seek to get an impression, slight though it may be to begin with, let us seek to set our spirits in the line of recognizing the truth concerning the Father and the Son in all eternity, which lies before and prior to all the blessing that has come to us. It has all flowed to us from that home of eternal light, where was the Father and the Son, and it's in that exalted region that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in this

passage. We have to notice that it says, no man knoweth the Son but the Father.

In other words, it's all one with the statement that these things are hidden from the wise and prudent. They are quite inaccessible to human knowledge. It's rather like the passage from [00:17:07] Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, I hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love him. Oh, the greatest discoveries of the modern world about the finest, finest constitution of matter and the power that dwells there. It all comes down in the first place to what I can see, perhaps even a needle on a dial, or the ear can hear, or something that can be conceived in the mind of man. There's no other means whereby men can know them, these things, but the things we are speaking of dwell entirely beyond the utmost powers that are given to the natural man. The Father is not known, and we read here, the particular thing I was reading then was, no man knoweth the Son but the Father. Neither [00:18:06] knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Now I suggest to you that the fact that it does not say that the Father reveals the Son is not because the Father does not reveal the Son. Well, I might stand open to correction here, but I suggest to you it does not mean that the Father does not reveal the Son, because you remember in Matthew 16, flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you, he said to Peter, but my Father which is in heaven. But it is not in the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this address to the Father, is not his purpose to dwell upon the revelation of the Son, his purpose is to dwell upon the revelation of the Father. And so he says, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. If we were to ask what's the prime central purpose of Christianity, [00:19:07] then there would be a good case for saying that the prime purpose of the coming of Christ is to make known the Father. And oh how we ought to desire that we might be in tune with the divine persons who are here spoken of in this matter of knowing the Father. Have we a place in our faith, and in our prayers, and in our exercise, and in our feeding upon the word of God, and our communion with God, have we a special place for the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed the Father? In our worship, whether it be individual, in the private place, or whether it be in the assembly, have we a special place for the worship of the Father? Because the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, the Father seeketh such to worship him in spirit and in truth. The [00:20:03] Lord Jesus Christ has revealed the Father. And he then immediately after that changes to speak to the disciples, those who would hear, and says unto them, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. A very remarkable story that many of you will have heard, that when the explorers of the last century eventually unraveled one of the great mysteries of the dark continent of Africa, after many, many attempts have been made to discover the source of the Nile, they found that the Nile was the drainage of two immense inland seas. I'm not sufficiently up-to-date to know to what their names have been changed now. I can hardly think that they still have the names Victoria Nianza and Albert Nianza, but those great, those great [00:21:01] inland seas were drained down the tremendous river, the Nile. And what they discovered was that although there was life by the renewal of the fertility of the lands of Egypt, by the annual overflowing of the river, there was more water at the source than anywhere along the life-giving stream. And so it is. The life-giving stream of the gospel has come to us in its fullness, but never let us forget in our faith and in our desire to make progress in the knowledge of the things of God. Never let us forget that there is more fullness and blessing at the source with the Father and the Son in that eternal home in heaven than anywhere along the line, which with its marvelous blessing has come down to us. That is the source from which it has come, and that is the place to which the Lord Jesus Christ would lead us for the fullness of our joy even now. Now the Lord Jesus Christ changes from this tremendous feature of exaltation.

[00:22:10] I suppose that of the symbols that have been applied to the evangelists, it's for this reason that it's the eagle that is thought to be the symbol of the gospel of John. It is because the eagle, from

its exalted position, with its eagle eye, it can even look at the sun. And it's for that reason that we have here the eagle's view of the Father and the Son, of glory and love and the fullness that dwells with them. Now it's the Son of God himself who speaks in the second part of this paragraph, and I want to spend the rest of my time to try to leave with you a really wonderful impression of something that, so to speak, comes down immediately from the wonderful [00:23:02] truth that is just hinted at in this first part of the paragraph, that the Lord Jesus Christ says to the disciples, and I want you all, the youngest who can hear me and understand, to the oldest, I want you all to take away these three words which epitomize the message of what the Lord Jesus Christ is here saying, come, take, learn. Come unto me, all ye that labour under 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. Now I suppose that we must think of this as being a gospel passage, and such is the fullness of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will be impossible to deny that it has a very sweet and powerful gospel message. The only rest of soul are those who [00:24:04] are burdened with the conscience of their sins. Perhaps these few are wrestling with the burden of the law, and there's a sweet gospel message in that the Lord Jesus Christ says, come unto me, and I will give you rest. But you know these words have come to me, and the reason why I speak to you of them this evening is because they've acquired a fresh living power in my heart and life in the last few years. I'm quite sure there's a far more in them than the wonder of the gospel message that they contain. Come unto me, all ye that labour under heavy laden. If there was ever a time when men and women and young people at all ages realize that the world in which we live is a world that makes us weary and heavy laden, it's the day in which we live. The message was suitable to all [00:25:05] time, but oh what a special weather is that it's almost impossible to escape these days the pressures that make us weary. We can bear no more of the desperate evil of this world in which we live. We feel burdened with a load that we cannot get away from. We feel burdened as though we will never be able to see our way through the perplexities. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a very very simple word about that, and I would find it quite impossible to deny to myself that the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking about every aspect of our lives, our lives, when he says, come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Now the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ can give us rest, we might dwell upon it a longer time, [00:26:03] but it would prevent me from giving more attention to what I believe to be the foundation of the statement that the Lord Jesus Christ can give us rest when we are weary and heavy laden, and that is that we can take his yoke upon us. Now this in one sense is the very centre of what I have to say to you. Take my yoke upon you. It has been thought possible that the Lord Jesus Christ meant, share with me the yoke. If you are yoked with me, you can do far more than you can by yourself. Now so far as I'm concerned, that interpretation is clean out. It's not possible that the Lord Jesus Christ meant this, not only because of the fact that in the famous Old Testament illustration of him and his sacrifice, there was to be an animal taken upon which had never come [00:27:04] yoke. There was never any restraint upon his will by something that was alien to his will, and therefore I don't believe for a moment that it means that we are to be yoked alongside him, I grant that the general meaning of the yoke is the person we are yoked with. It's a very lovely thought, the Lord Jesus Christ says, and I beseech thee, true yoke fellow. He was wanting someone to help these sisters who were finding it difficult to agree with each other, and he said, I beseech thee, true yoke fellow, help them. In other words, the Apostle Paul was appealing to the fact that he and this brother were united together, they shared the yoke of Christ that was upon them. But I don't think that yoke fellow, important and widespread, is its use in that, [00:28:01] with that particular meaning. In other parts of the New Testament it could possibly mean that here. It means that every individual disciple is being urged

here to take the yoke of Christ upon himself. Now what does taking a yoke mean? It means that I entirely accept the fact that the will of another is to guide and dominate my life. I accept the fact that it is not my will, but the will of another that is to guide and dominate my life. Of course, we are never in the situation when this is perfectly carried out. We're never in the situation when there is a complete and absolute subjection of ourselves to the yoke of Christ. But there is a moment, I'm sure there is a moment, and this is supported by many other scriptures, there is a moment when we realize that this is the principle on which our lives are lived. Take my yoke upon you. You see, it doesn't only mean [00:29:04] that we accept the will of another, but it means that will that we accept is an absolutely perfect will. All the divine compassion is in it, all the divine love is in it, all the divine wisdom is in it, the darkness and the light, and all the divine strength and power is in the will that we accept when we take his yoke upon us.

It's a very wonderfully peace-giving, rest-giving view when we find ourselves in darkness and in difficulty, weary and heavy-laden. It's a very wonderful thing to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ has invited us here to let him accept the responsibility of these decisions. And there is the picture of the yoke. It's there upon the beast with its nose down to the ground, and it is the voice and the touch of the guide that determines the next step that it takes. It has no intention [00:30:05] at all of finding its own way. The yoke is the symbol and the expression of the fact that it's the will of the person who's driving, the will of the person who is guiding that is accepted in every step of the way. And I don't think I need emphasize the fact that there is the way here, the way in toil, the way you can combine pouring out your life in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please him and to accomplish the task that he has set you to do. But there is in it the most perfect rest, you see, because he is letting us know what is his will, as he's always willing to do, and that will is perfect. That will is all light, it's all love, it's all compassion, it's all perfect strength and power that remains known through us. I wonder if any younger person here realizes that while they have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, [00:31:05] they have never taken his yoke. I believe that the tense that's used here, as in other places our scripture indicates, it might very often be a moment of decision when the truth dawns upon us that it is our privilege to bear the yoke of Christ. I read the other day of an incident in the life of the musician Mendelssohn. He was visiting one of the French cathedrals, I would call it Reims, and when he went in, he immediately asked the beadle to let him have the key of the organ loft, and the man said, Sir, it is quite impossible for me to do that. I'm absolutely forbidden to let a visitor play the organ. And Mendelssohn went away somewhat hurt and somewhat distressed, but for the time being [00:32:06] accepting it. But after a bit he came back again and exercised a bit more persuasion, and finally the man gave him the key and he disappeared up the steps into the organ console. And after a few minutes, there began to steal through the arches and thunder in the vaults such sounds of music as the man who'd lived there for years had never heard before, and he stood there spellbound while the great cathedral resounded to the whispers and the thunder of the mighty organ. And when the composer came down again, he said, Sir, who are you?

Well, he had to confess, I'm Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Well, he said, what a fool I was not to hand over the key straight away. And you know, the most wonderful things can be accomplished [00:33:05] by our bodies when they're in the hands of the master. It was the music that was in Mendelssohn, it was not the ivory of the keys, it was not the quality of the pipes that produced the majesty and the beauty and the sweetness of that music, it was what was in Mendelssohn pouring himself out through the materials that lay before him. And once we accept the yoke of Jesus and all that is in him, his compassion, his love, his beauty, his meekness and lowliness, as it says here, they can manifest themselves in us, but not otherwise. They will not show themselves in us as long as we persist in holding the reins of life in our own hands. And not only is this a tremendous lesson for those

who are young, but you and I with grey hairs and bald patches, we need to be renewed again and again in all that it means to accept the yoke of Christ.

[00:34:08] Take my yoke upon you. And then he says in my last few minutes, learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Ye shall find rest to your souls. Now I've wrestled with the grammar of this simple thing. I am convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ meant not primarily learn from me as a teacher, but he meant primarily learn of me as an example. I use the term somewhat hesitantly, but so far as believers are concerned, we are exhorted to follow his steps. But of course, it's impossible to differentiate entirely between the two because if we learn of him, this will certainly involve also learning of him. But it is likeness to him that he is meek and lowly in heart. You know, this is something which can be expanded and light can come upon it [00:35:07] from other passages of scripture in a most wonderful way. Take that great church of the Corinthians. There was something desperately wrong. There was strife, there was division, there were every fleshly thing seen amongst them. And there was one word which seemed to embody the real trouble that existed in the fact that they were of a fleshly mind. That was the trouble. They were of a fleshly mind. They were carnal. And there was one word which seemed to embody the trouble. They were puffed up. They were puffed up. I say that because it should be several times in later parts of the epistle. At the beginning, when the trouble is described, it says we are puffed up for one against another. But it says, for example, when the trouble of the excommunication of chapter 5 came in, instead of being cast down before the Lord, they were puffed up. But when you get to the 13th chapter, it says love, [00:36:04] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Love seeketh not her own. Love beheld itself not unseemly.

And there, as you come to it, is the answer, in the practical sense, to the frightful errors and ravages that come from fleshly acting in the Church. It's divine love. And divine love was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we learn of him, in what we see of him, then we will have within us that love which beheld itself not unseemly, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, speaketh no evil, and so on. So you see what a wide field we have before us here, a practical effect from this teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me remind you again [00:37:07] of the connection between these two parts. All things are delivered to me of my Father. The creation of the world, the maintenance of the world, the ultimate rolling off of the heavens and the earth when their work is done, the one who has supreme control, beginning, course, and end of every feature of the created universe, as well as every creative being connected with it. All things are delivered to me of my Father. Take my yoke upon you. Deliver over to me the responsibility for the conduct of your lives, step by step and moment by moment, and ye shall find rest to yourselves.