

Chafing Under The Yoke

June 9, 2019

Philippians 2:1-11

Please find with me Romans chapter twelve.

The things you see around you are more important than you think. And, those very ordinary, physical things were often used by Jesus in His teaching ministry. For example, one day He said Matthew 7:16 *"Ye shall know them by their **fruits**. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"*

On another day He said this Matthew 23:27 *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto **whited sepulchers** [graves], which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."*

Then, of course, He also picked up a little child one day and said this Matthew 18:3 *"And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as **little children**, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

And salt. Matthew 5:13 *"Ye are the **salt** of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."*

Fruit, graves, salt, even a little child. There's glory and there's power in the things around you if you'll take time to consider them. And Jesus chose to teach with those very same things. Then, there's this one *"Take My **yoke** upon you..."*

Jesus, as you know, was a man of good works. But He was also a Man of good words. And a specific symbol was always apropos. Every time, in every case, He's conveying a

pertinent message to those who would listen. And that's what a symbol does.

I've titled today's message "Chafing under the Yoke." Shall we pray?

Here's our verse for today. Romans 12:1 *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

(3) For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

I've got a problem; the same very same one you have. Your mind is either hindering you or it's helping you on with your life.

Romans 12 is the effect. It's the positive fallout of the first eleven chapters of his epistle. You see, the Gospel does affect you. It affects you personally. It's very affective. And it's very effective. You do change. And you will continue to change every day until you enter Heaven.

The first effect we found was a command. It's the command in verse one; "present your body to the LORD." Nothing is the same once you are saved. But, especially, your body. You are not your own. And when you pick up on this simple truth, you will see that the LORD is concerned with, not only your life as a whole, but with your body, what you do with it and how you treat it; especially what you do with it today.

In the past, your body was your own. And in the past your body was a body of sin. In the past your body was a slave to sin. That's no longer true. Now, in Christ, you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In Christ your body belongs to

Someone else. It belongs completely to the LORD. Now, you are His servant. And what does He ask you to do with it? To present it to Him as a sacrifice; a living, holy sacrifice; one that is pleasing to Him. Folks, this is the reasonable thing for every child of God to experience. You've been called out of darkness in His marvelous light and you've been called to consecrate your body to Him as an offering.

The consecrated body; that's what the Christian life is all about; consecrating my body to God; every morning; every day. Watchman Nee once said this about consecration. *"I do not consecrate myself to be a missionary or a preacher. I consecrate myself to God to do His will where I am, be it in school, office, or kitchen, or wherever He may, in His wisdom, send me."* The presentation of my body to God is the effect of Romans one through eleven. It's the only way a Christian can make spiritual progress.

And, it's your reasonable service. Let me just add one more thing about this word "reasonable." Someone has wisely said this. "Isn't it interesting that in the Old Testament, all of the sacrifices were dead when they were offered up unto God?" Yes, it is. And the only kind of sacrifices we can make today are living ones. That's perfectly reasonable. It's the most logical effect of your salvation. Your body is now the living sacrifice that the LORD accepts.

And the last time we looked at Romans twelve, we discovered what it means to prove the will of God; to test it; to find out personally if His will is indeed good, pleasing to the LORD and perfect ("having reached its intended purpose").

The will of God is found in just one place; the Bible. And only as you apply the principles of the Bible to your circumstances will you ever be able to prove that the LORD's will is beneficial, pleasing to the LORD, and perfect.

Now, today's question from Romans 12 is this. "What does a renewed mind look like?" The renewed mind is another effect of your salvation.

Romans 12:2 *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ..."*

And the answer is given to us in verse three. Romans 12:3 *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

Here's what we find.

Whenever you are thinking more highly of yourself than you should, you're lying to yourself. And, whereas worry is thief, pride is a liar.

Paul's concern is what you think about yourself. He wants you to think about what you're thinking. But, it's more than that. It's also what you're thinking about those around you. And Paul notes that he needed grace from God to even say this. And the reason is simple. Paul was the greatest Jew of his day. He was the greatest Christian of his day. So, you can be sure that he knew by experience the temptation to be proud.

Philippians 3:4 *"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."*

You and I can't hold a candle to Paul. But, who here doesn't have a problem with pride? Folks, whether you realize it or not, you probably have a high opinion of yourself. You may also have too much self-confidence. I've got the same problem because the temptation to be proud is always on the prowl.

Now, what is a sober mind? Sober means healthy. A person with a sober mind has a sober outlook on life. His thoughts are balanced. Do you remember the LORD's healing of the man of Gadara who'd had a legion of demons in him? He cast out the demons and the people who saw it were shocked.

Mark 5:14 *"And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. (15) And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: ..."* This is the very same word as "sober" here in Romans 12.

A sober mind is a right mind. It's a mind that can see both sides of a matter and can choose what is right. It actually comes from two Greek words that mean "able to safely regulate your life."

This, according to the Apostle Paul, is a direct result of your new relationship to God. So, sober means healthy.

Now why? Why should you be sober-minded and not think too highly of yourself? Well, there are lots of reasons. I want to pass on just a few.

First, because the temptation to pride is always present. Choosing to have high opinion of yourself is yielding to the sin of pride. And here's what it looks like when you have a very high opinion of yourself.

One, finding fault with others.

Two, intentionally displaying a harsh spirit towards someone.

Three, a defensive attitude.

Four, being desperate for attention.

Five, preferring some people over others.

(These five come from Pastor Jonathan Edwards, born in East Windsor, CT. Edwards graduated from Yale in 1722 at the age of nineteen. He also pastored First Church in Northampton, MA for thirty years. [Found on [\[god.org\]\(http://god.org\) "Seven Subtle Symptoms of Pride" by Fabienne Harford July 15, 2015\]\).](http://www.desiring-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

You see, whenever you compare yourself to others, you've quit sober-mindedness and turned to high-mindedness. It's very easy to think like the world, isn't it?

Here's what Peter tells us. 1 Peter 5:6 *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: ..."*

And here's how James says it. James 4:10 *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

Now, what does the world say about pride? How does the world see pride? It's great. How else can you succeed if you don't take a lot of pride in yourself? Think about the thousands of Hollywood personalities that stand on the red carpet and have the paparazzi photograph them? If you're good; if you have the acclaim of people; if you're powerful; if you're among the rich and famous; if you're proud of yourself, you are highly honored in the world. And, if you're on your way to Hollywood, you're on your way to being quote "discovered."

And the opposite is also true. How does the world view humility? Humility, in the eyes of many, is a sure sign of weakness. Think about the last time you had to humble yourself before another person.

And how does a sober-minded person think? He or she doesn't think too highly of themselves. They see their giftedness as God-given. They see their beauty as God-given. They see both their strengths and their weaknesses as God-given.

Pride always diminishes faith. And humility always increases grace.

So, then, why be sober-minded? Because, first the temptation to pride is always present.

Second, you need a sober mind because it's easy to get discouraged. And it's easy to be tempted to give up.

Do you remember the story about Israel being attacked by the Moabites and the Ammonites? Jehoshaphat was the King of Judah. It was the ninth century B.C. Jehoshaphat wanted more than anything to do what was right before the LORD. But, just because you want to do right doesn't mean you won't have enemies.

Here's an example of how important it is to have a sober mind. Here's Jehoshaphat being attacked by his enemies and crying out to the LORD.

II Chronicles 20:10 *"And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; (11) Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.*

(12) O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us [sober-minded humility]; neither know we what to do [sober-minded humility]: but our eyes are upon thee [sober-minded humility].

(13) And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. (14) Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation;

(15) And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."

If you'd like to read the entire story of this sober-minded man, read it this afternoon. It's found in II Chronicles 20. You'll see that the LORD fights for those with a sober-mind.

Yes, it's easy to be discouraged and be tempted to give up. But sober-mindedness says "I will trust when I cannot see."

1. When I cannot understand God's leading,
When I do not know the reason why
He should choose the path that lies before me,
Still to Him in faith I can reply:

Chorus

I will trust when I cannot see,
When I'm faced with adversity,
And believe Your will is always best for me
I will trust when I cannot see.

2. When I feel the sting of disappointment
And my dreams lie crumbled in the dust
When my best adds up to loss and failure
And the things that happen seem unjust:

3. When I face the furnace of affliction
And the pain seems more than I can bear,
When I think it strange this fiery trial
Still I'll tell my blessed Lord in prayer.

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First, because the temptation to pride is always present.
Second, you need a sober mind because it's easy to get discouraged.

Third, you need a sober mind because some people chafe under the yoke of the LORD.

Turn back with me to the Gospel of Matthew at the eleventh chapter and verse twenty-eight.

Matthew 11:28 *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) 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. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Aren't you glad the LORD calls to us personally? Aren't you glad that He works on you personally as well? Each one of us is invited to join Him in His yoke. He's got one side and you've got the other. And in the LORD's day, the typical symbolic yoke was, likely, the yoke of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. And, yes, that yoke was hard, but the LORD's was easy.

But, have you ever considered Jesus with a yoke on His shoulders? Doesn't that picture say something to you about the LORD's surrender? No doubt, every time you hear these words, you are thinking about your own surrender to the yoke. But, isn't Jesus also saying that He too must be surrendered? Isn't He resigned to His Father's will? Doesn't He have the awareness that everything in His life was working together for good? Jesus even says that He's meek and lowly in heart.

But, here's the key. He also sees His yoke as easy. How often do you see yours as easy? Or have you been chafing under it? Do you say to yourself "I wish this thing wasn't in my life" "I wish he or she wasn't in my life" "I wish I didn't have to deal with this thing or this person"?

How often this past week did you chafe under His yoke?

And, when *does* the yoke chafe your shoulders? By the way, did you know that when a carpenter builds a yoke, he designs it so that it fits the animal very well; which means, of course, that a yoke is not designed to chafe the animal. And think about this, Jesus was a carpenter. He may have constructed many yokes as an Israeli carpenter.

When does the yoke chafe? It chafes when you are insisting on your own way. It chafes when you shoulder too much of the burden. It chafes when you don't believe that the LORD is working everything together in your life for your good. It chafes until you do something about it. It chafes until you finally surrender to the yoke.

And listen again to Jesus. *"My yoke is easy. My burden is light. And I will give you rest."* The only way this is all true is when you submit to Him, to His shouldering the loads in your life, to you, not only presenting your body to Him, but also when you choose to have a sober mind. Because here's what happens when you choose a sober mind. You are able to see both sides of the thing you are facing and to choose the right one.

Now, what are you going to do with Romans 12:3? Romans 12:3 *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

Hasn't the LORD given you your particular measure of faith? His hand is upon you even in the measure of faith He has dispensed to you.

Ray Stedman was the Pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, CA for over forty years. The LORD took him home to Heaven in 1992. Here's a word from Ray Stedman on what it means to stop thinking too highly of yourself.

"When I get up in the morning I try to remind myself of three things: First, I am made in the image of God. I am not an animal and I don't have to behave like an animal, because I have an ability within me, given by God himself, to react and relate to God. Therefore I can behave as a man and not as a beast.

Second, I am filled with the Spirit of God. The most amazing thing has happened! Though I didn't deserve it in the least degree, I have the power of God at work within me. I have become, in some sense, the bearer of God, and God himself is willing to be at work in me in terms of the little problems and the little pressures

that I am going to go through this day.

And third, I remind myself that I am part of the plan of God, that God is working out all things to a great and final purpose in the earth and I am part of it. What I do today has purpose and significance and meaning. It is not just a meaningless thing that I am going to go through.

Even the smallest incident, the most apparently insignificant word or relationship, is involved in that great plan. Therefore it has meaning and purpose.” [Found on www.raystedman.org “Who Am I, LORD?” March 13, 1977]

Are you chafing under your end of the yoke?

Remember this.

First, you need a sober mind because the temptation to pride is always present.

Second, you need a sober mind because it’s easy to get discouraged.

And third, you need a sober mind because some people chafe under the LORD’s yoke.

So, who here will choose the sober mind today? Will you take the Bible and apply it to your situation? Will you stop being chafed by your yoke and by being identified with the world and begin to let the LORD carry your load? If not, why not?

Shall we pray?

Hymn #