

Hey you! Yeah you! You look tired... are you okay? Are you tired of carrying all that baggage? Wanting life to be easier? I understand that sentiment, I really do. But, is it possible to somehow lighten our load - if not not physically, how about emotionally and/or spiritually?

Well, if your among those who is asking this question, including me, then I've got good news for you ~ the answer to all of those questions is: YES! :)

Check this verse out:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." ~ Matthew 11:28-30

In case you didn't catch it, that verse has a lot of comfort in it, but to keep it in context, let's also compare it to a couple of other passages to see and dig into more of what it's talking about.

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." ~ Matthew 16:24-28

Obviously whatever Jesus is describing in Matthew 11 is not that life can or will become super-easy down here. That's explained further in Genesis 3. **"Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.' To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.' "** ~ Genesis 3:12-19

A couple of notes stand out there, to me. In brief, blaming God for tempting them only got them in more trouble, but because they did choose to listen to Satan and rebel, we all inherited extra pain and "**thorns and thistles**" in all of our work. Also, work has been made harder and is a gift to be embraced: "**cursed is the ground, for your sake**", and when we reject grateful diligence, we are walking in rebellion to God. Hard work is designed by God as a gift, and only when we become comfortable with hard work and becoming more and more diligent in it, only then will we reach levels of maturity that God can then really use us, and He desires to do so when we choose to follow His Word.

Okay, so clearly: pain, trials, diseases, and selfishness/enmity are all the result of and consequences of man's rebellion. Okay, now, it looks like either there is a contradiction or we haven't come across the understanding of how Jesus can make our load lighter. Since we know that God is smart enough not to contradict Himself, then there's got to be some deeper level of meaning here. Let's look at a few more verses and see if we can discover it.

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" ~ John 8:31-32

AHA! Now, that looks like the right subject: the sinful choices and addictions you and I choose enslave us but, following Him and His Word in every area of our live frees us. That has to be the right subject. But, thankfully, Jesus didn't stop with just that passage. That passage above is familiar with many, but in this culture with so many psychologists in pulpits, it's twisted to say things that Jesus didn't mean. In context, the above passage is a part of conversation with Jewish people who were really convicted as they listened to Jesus and they were looking for an out - some way to prove that Jesus was not telling the truth, so therefore they didn't have to obey what He was teaching them. And through this conversation, Jesus tells us what that light load is and how we make our load heavy. Check it out: **"They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?' Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 'And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 'Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'" ~ John 8:33-36**

There we go! Now that should help it all to start clicking, for those who are seeing this concept for the first time. There are many liars out there who will say all kinds of things - anything to make you and I feel good about ourselves and our rebellious choices against God and help us rationalize and minimize the consequences as 'bad luck' and 'better luck next time!' ~ No. Jesus is clearly teaching us that the patterns of sin we get ourselves in become slaveries - we become addicted to the rebellious choices we choose. So, we need to be careful to choose our addictions carefully... hmm... maybe that's the point. Maybe we need to all continue to break free from the

little things we, as a society, call 'vices', for they are the symptoms of a rebellious heart. And maybe we need to learn simplistic obedience. In fact, that is what God's Word teaches us and that process right there - intentionally learning what is evil and stopping it, and learning what is good and right and growing in doing it - that is discipleship. That is what it means to follow Christ. But, just so that this is clearly not my words, but a pattern in God's Word, let's look at a couple more verses before we close for now.

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you..." ~ Romans 6:8-14

I'm sure some of you noticed that that passage started on the subject of salvation - bought by Jesus' blood, and then quickly transitioned to discipleship, since salvation, becoming a new creation, walking in obedience and discipleship are inseparable. If obedience does not follow, the heart has not changed. If there is a new heart-attitude and desire to obey, then there is a heart change that will show itself in growing obedience to Him and His Word, which will lead to a hunger for His Word, spending more time in it, and throwing out everything that seeks to take up the time to study His Word.

"... For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." ~ Galatians 5:14-26

That passage is loaded with day-by-day discipleship truth. I don't have time to unpack it, but I pray that you spend time intentionally analyzing it and applying it to your life and the everyday details, as I'm doing too.

Till next time ~ let's keep growing as a disciple of Christ, and learning how to teach it to others.

your brother/friend and a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH