

The purpose of this publication is to spread the truth, to sow God's good seed, the Word of God, and to confront religious error for the good of men's souls. Editor: Allen Dvorak

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needed to keep the Law of Moses in addition to obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ, Peter referred to the Law of Moses as a yoke "that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (v. 10). All those who lived under the Mosaic Law and did not keep it perfectly found it to be an oppressive "yoke," amounting to an insufferable burden.

The "fathers," by means of their traditions, had even increased the burden of the "yoke" that they laid upon their Jewish brethren. Jesus referred to this additional burden, hard to bear, that the scribes and Pharisees laid upon men's shoulders (Matthew 23:4).

Jesus, in contrast, described His "yoke" as easy and His "burden" as light, inviting the multitudes to "take my yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:29a, 30). A yoke speaks of control, submission, but the Lord's yoke is "easy." The Greek word so translated (*chrestos*) means "good, virtuous, mild, pleasant (in contrast to what is hard, harsh, sharp, bitter)" (Vine). It is probably no accident that Matthew recorded this invitation and then proceeded to detail the oppressive Pharisaical

interpretations of the Sabbath day restriction (see Matthew 12:1-14).

Typically, a "yoke" also suggests labor. Even the yoke which a man might lay upon his shoulders as a means of evenly distributing the weight of a burden speaks of labor. Jesus, however, invited those who are heavy laden, i.e., in subjection to the Law of Moses or to sin (see Romans 6:16, 21) to take on His yoke and they would find rest! Jesus doesn't offer another "yoke" like the Law of Moses (see Galatians 5:1); through forgiveness, He offers true relief from the burden of sin!

<sup>1</sup> For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.  
-- **Galatians 5:1; ESV**

It is significant that the Lord's yoke must be "taken"; He does not force us to submit ourselves, to put ourselves under His control, but to allow Him control of our lives brings "rest." There is perhaps irony in the fact that, if I want rest, I must accept the Lord's yoke!

#### **Bible Challenge Question - Answer**

Due to a plot by the Jews, the Roman tribune sent Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea with an armed guard of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 horsemen. They left in the night and went as far as Antipatris, about halfway to Caesarea. On the next day, the 400 foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem and the 70 horsemen accompanied Paul the rest of the way to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-32). One gets the impression that the tribune wasn't taking any chances with Paul, the Roman citizen!



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## **"Take My Yoke Upon You"**

By Allen Dvorak

"His yoke's a burden never, 'Tis easy all day long."

That's the second line of the third verse of the song "Come Unto Me" (#540 in *Hymns for Worship*). As the reader probably recognizes, it is a reference to the words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew:

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."  
-- **Matthew 11:28-30; ESV**



to "lighten their load." Note the language:

<sup>4</sup> "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you..." <sup>9</sup> And he said to

them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have

said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?'"  
-- **2 Chronicles 10:4, 9; ESV**

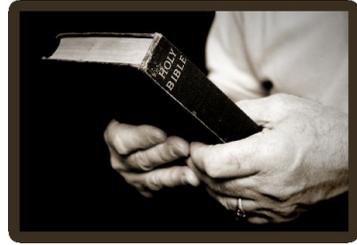
One might get the idea from the words of the song, and even from some passages in Scripture, that a yoke constitutes a burden, a weight. For instance, at the death of Solomon, the people of Israel asked his son Rehoboam

A yoke is "a shaped piece of wood placed across the necks of draft animals such as oxen or donkeys to enable a pair to pull a

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# "I'm Afraid"

By Allen Dvorak



Fear can cause:

1.   P
2.   F
3.   F

Some common causes of fear:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

An important first step: \_\_\_\_\_

Lessons from Two Failures:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (Numbers \_\_\_\_\_)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

A success story: \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

We SHOULD fear the One who can \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 10: \_\_\_\_\_).

We SHOULD be afraid to \_\_\_\_\_.

Love brings \_\_\_\_\_ and casts out \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 4:17-19).

"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear; what can  
man do to me?"  
-- Hebrews \_\_\_\_\_

**"Never let the fear of striking out get in your way."**

-- Babe Ruth

**"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."**

-- Mark Twain

plow, cart, or heavy load together" (*Eerdman's Bible Dictionary*, p. 1077). "A yoke generally consisted of a single crossbar with leather or rope nooses or wooden rods that were fastened around the animals' necks. The crossbar was attached to a shaft that pulled the load" (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 1153).

Although obviously a yoke would involve some weight, its purpose was to control, to direct the efforts of the animal. The yoke was the means by which the strength of the animal was harnessed (pun intended!) to pull a plow or a load. When two animals were yoked together, the yoke served to coordinate their efforts. The Law of Moses prohibited the yoking of an ox and a donkey together for the purpose of plowing (Deuteronomy 22:10). Those must be animals who do not work together well (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 for an application of the principle to people).

In light of the purpose of a literal yoke, it is not surprising that a yoke became a "symbol of hardship, submission, or servitude" (*Harper's*). If that submission became a hardship or led to oppression, then the yoke was said to be "heavy."

The Lord instructed Jeremiah to make a yoke and put it on his neck to visually represent the message that the nations needed to submit to Nebuchadnezzar and serve him (Jeremiah 27:1-6). Even the king of Judah was given the same message:

<sup>11</sup> But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to work it and dwell there, declares the Lord." ' ' <sup>12</sup> To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people and live."  
-- Jeremiah 27:11-12; ESV

The rabbis of Jesus' day used the word "yoke" to refer to the "sum-total of obligations which...a person must take upon himself" (Hendriksen, *Matthew*, p. 504). They spoke of the "yoke of the Torah" to represent the obligations of the Law of Moses. In the discussion among the disciples in Acts 15 regarding the question of whether Gentiles

**Bible Challenge Question**

**How many Roman soldiers accompanied Paul when he left Jerusalem for Caesarea as a prisoner?**

The answer to this question is on the back page.