



What is
Matthew
11:28-30
SAYING?

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Matthew 11:28-30; *"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."*

If you had read this in the KJV, all these words would have been written in red to show that they are the words of Christ. Christ is here calling on all who labor and are heavy laden to come find rest in Him. Now, an out-of-context reading of these words have led many to misinterpret the 'labor and being heavy laden' here to mean being stressed in our earthly pursuits, and from this have emerged, sermons on how we ought not to toil and be 'stressed' out in our careers because we believe in Christ Jesus. Now, that's a fine counsel - you don't have to work till you're stressed out in your career and your health is ruined, but that's not what Jesus was saying here. Flip to Paul's experience in **Acts 20:35** and you find him saying in a **Pastors' conference**, *'I have*

shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak', and at 2

Thessalonians 3:8 he says to the church, '*but [we] worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you...*' It's very much apparent from these texts of the bible that Paul, many years after being saved, did not rest from his earthly struggles and toil and labour in order to earn a living and to support others. This is because the rest Jesus was inviting men into in our opening texts is not *financial rest or economic freedom*; rather it's the rest of salvation. Hence, being heavy laden is about pursuing salvation by self effort and performance! Let's see this more carefully:

The phrase **heavy laden** is the Greek word, **phortizō** and it means to place a burden upon, to load up, and metaphorically to load one with a burden of rites and unwarranted precepts or overburden with ceremony or spiritual anxiety. So, this was about a religious burden - rules, laws, and commandments! Jesus used this word twice in the gospels and the second usage is key to

understanding the first. Let's see this: **Luke 11:46**;
"And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." The word, **load** is the same Greek word used for **heavy burden** at **Matthew 11**. Who were those loading people up with burdens according to **Luke 11**? Lawyers! That's the Greek word, **nomikos** which also means one learned in the law or an interpreter and teacher of the law of Moses. So, these were the people who put heavy burdens on others hence they themselves didn't touch them with one of their fingers - that is, they didn't even know how it felt. They were religious oppressors!

So, the call to rest is from religious obligations and commandments of men which can never save your soul. From the days of old till the present time, the idea of salvation by what you do; i.e. seeking to be made righteous by religious obligations and meritorious works of performance, has always stood opposed to the idea of salvation by faith in Christ alone. The major hindrance to

finding God's rest is this erroneous ideology of working for the same. Observe this scenario in the book of Acts:

Acts 15:1; *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."* Did you see that? Some men invaded the church with the doctrine of salvation through the laws and custom of Moses. What was the response of Paul and Barnabas to this? See **verse 2:** *"Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question."* They had no small dissension and dispute with them! That is, they disagreed sharply and then took the matter to Jerusalem to other apostles and elders. Guess what Peter said about this matter? See **verses 10-11:** *"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord*

Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." Did you see his description of the law of Moses? A yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear! That's the very thing Jesus came to save men from - a burden of trying to please God and be accepted by Him based on our works. Peter says, 'we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved...' So, the opposite of the laws and obligations that burdened men is the GRACE OF GOD! Look at this:

John 1:17; *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* Did you see that? The opposite of the laws that burdened and burdens men is the grace and truth of Christ. What is grace? The word, **grace** as used in these verses is the Greek word, **charis** which also means favour, benefit, or gift. So, imagine this, you've been told all your life that you have to work for your salvation, but Jesus says come to me and receive it as a gift. That's totally disruptive - a total departure from what you've always known. The idea stuns you and staggers you; it is

too good to be true but it is true. Jesus says you should rest from all these religious obligations and burdensome rules and commands. He wants to take the load off your shoulders and free you from your religious task masters. Will you let Him?

In conclusion, how do you find this rest in Christ? Back to **Matthew 11:28-30**: *"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."* We find His rest by taking His yoke upon us. What is His yoke? To learn from Him! His yoke is light and His burden is easy because He isn't laying a load on us, rather He feeds us with the knowledge that saves and matures! This is why the invitation is to come and learn. What are we to learn? **Verse 27**: *"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."* The knowledge of the Father revealed in the Son is

what gives us rest. What is that knowledge? We find a summary of it at **John 3:16-17**: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

That through the love of God displayed in the sacrifice of Jesus for us, we stand without condemnation before the Father. What more? By this same love, we also become children of God! **1 John 3:1**; *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."* Salvation is being born of God - we become His children. Now, you see why working for your salvation makes no sense? Nobody works to be born - being born is the result of the work of your parents. In the same vein, by the gospel, Christ has done the work and by faith we enter into that place of rest where God now fathers us. Halleluyah!

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