

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
**THE REV . JOHN NEWTON**

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF  
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW,  
LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

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CONTAINING  
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA,  
DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,  
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,  
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,  
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED  
**MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.**

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

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**COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.**

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# SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE PARISH-CHURCH OF OLNEY.  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

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TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF OLNEY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE principally two motives for publishing these Discourses. The one is, to exhibit a specimen of the doctrine that is taught and most surely believed amongst us, to satisfy those who desire information, and to stop, if possible, the mouth of Slander. I cheerfully submit them to examination, in full confidence that they contain nothing of moment which is not agreeable to the general strain of the word of God, and to the principles of the church whereof I am a minister, as specified in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies. And that what I now print is to the same purport with the usual course of my preaching, I doubt not but all who stately hear me, will do me the justice to acknowledge.

My other motive is, a desire of promoting your edification. It is my comfort that many of you live by the truths of the gospel, and highly prize them. You will not, therefore, be unwilling to view the substance of what you once heard with acceptance. But it is to be feared, that the far greater part of the congregation have need to have the things pertaining to their peace pressed upon them again and again, for a different reason; not because they know them, and therefore love to have them brought to their remembrance, but because they have hitherto heard them without effect. For the sake of both, therefore, I am willing to leave an abiding testimony amongst you. I hereby take each of your consciences to witness, that I am clear of your blood; and that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

In the choice of the subjects I have selected for publication, I have not been solicitous to comprise a succinct scheme of gospel-doctrine, but have given the preference to such topics, which the peculiar circumstances of the times, and of my hearers, make me desirous might be had in continual remembrance.

The exposition of the third commandment, which was first delivered in your hearing, I afterwards preached (nearer the form in which it now appears) at London; and as it led me to touch on some particulars of a very public and interesting concern, I have given it a place in this volume. And I shall think myself happy indeed, if it may please God to give weight to the

testimony of so obscure a person, with respect to a grievance under which the nation groans.

As long discourses are in many respects inconvenient, I have chosen to publish no more than a brief summary of what you heard more at large from the pulpit. And as I aim to speak plain truths to a plain people, I have purposely avoided any studied ornaments in point of expression, being desirous to accommodate myself to the apprehensions of the most ignorant.

May it please the God of all grace to accompany my feeble endeavours to promote the knowledge of his truth with the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit! And I earnestly entreat all who know how to draw near to a throne of grace by Jesus Christ, to strive mightily in prayer for me, that I may stand fast in the faith, and increase in the knowledge of Jesus the Saviour, and that, for his sake, I may labour, without fear of fainting, in the service to which he has been pleased to call me. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

I am your affectionate friend, and servant in the gospel of Christ,

JOHN NEWTON.

*Olney, January 20, 1767.*

## SERMON XIII.

### THE SERVICE OF CHRIST EASY AND PLEASANT.

*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* MATTH. xi. 30.

THIS verse alone, if seriously attended to, might convince multitudes, that though they bear the name of Christians, and are found among the Lord's worshipping people, they are as yet entire strangers to the religion of the gospel. Can it be supposed that our Lord would give a false character of his yoke? If not, how can any dream that they are his followers while they account a life of communion with God, and entire devotedness to his service, to be dull and burdensome? Those, however, who have made the happy trial, find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced that there is no real pleasure attainable in any other way.

What the yoke of Christ is, we have already considered. It includes the profession of his gospel, obedience to his precepts, and submission to his will under every dispensation. But since it is confessed that a sinful nature and a sinful world will bring many difficulties, trials, and temptations upon all who walk in this way, it may be worth our while to inquire more particularly what there is in the yoke of Christ that overpowers all these hardships, and makes such amends for every suffering, that, upon the whole, every believer will subscribe to this as a sure and experienced truth, that the "yoke is easy, and the burden light."

I. Those who bear the yoke of Christ act from a principle which makes all things easy. This is love. It is said of Jacob, that when he served a hard master seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love which he bare her, Gen. xxix. 20. And many of you find it easy to do much for your parents, children, and friends, because you love them. But there is no love like that which a redeemed sinner bears to him who "has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood." Farther, love produces the greatest effects when it is mutual. We are willing to do and suffer much to gain the affection of a person we regard, though we are not sure of success; but when the affection is reciprocal, it adds strength to every motive. Now, the believer does not love at uncertainties: he knows that Jesus loved him first, loved him when he was in a state of enmity (1 John iv. 19); and that nothing but the manifestation and power of this love could have taught his hard, unfeeling heart to love him whom he never saw, 1 Pet. i. 8. This love, therefore, affords two sweet and powerful encouragements in service.

1. A cordial desire to please. Love does what it can, and is only sorry that it can do no more. We seldom think much, as I have hinted already, either of time, pains, or expense, when the heart is warmly engaged. The world, who understand not this heartfelt spring of true religion, think it strange that the believer will not run into the same excess of riot with them, 1 Pet. iv. 4. They wonder what pleasure he can find in secret prayer, in reading and hearing the word of God; they pity the poor man who has such a melancholy turn, and gravely advise him not to carry things too far. But the believer can give them a short answer in the apostle's words: "The love of Christ constrains me," 2 Cor. v. 14. His ruling passion is the same with theirs, which makes his pursuit no less uniform and abiding; but the objects are as different as light from darkness. They love the perishing pleasures of sin, the mammon of unrighteousness, and the praise of men; but he loves Jesus.

2. A pleasing assurance of acceptance. If we know not whether what we do will be favourably received or not, it makes us remiss and indifferent. But this animates the Lord's people; they are assured, that he will not overlook the smallest services or sufferings they are engaged in for his sake. He has told them in his word, That if they give but a cup of cold water in his name, and on his account, he will accept and acknowledge it, as if it were done immediately to himself, Mark ix. 41.

II. It makes a service still more easy and pleasant, if besides acting from a principle of love, the service itself is agreeable to our inclination. Esau would probably have done anything to please his father, in hopes of obtaining the blessing; but no command could please him more than to be sent for venison, because he was a cunning hunter, and his pleasure lay in that way, Gen. xxv. 27. and xxvii. 3. Now, the believer has received a new nature; so that the Lord's commandments are not grievous to him, but he delights in them with his whole heart. It is true, he groans under remaining corruptions; and this is properly his burden, not the service of Christ, which he approves and delights in, but because he can serve him no better. So far as faith is in exercise, he rejoices in every part of the yoke of Christ. He glories in the profession of his name. He has made Moses' choice; he prefers even the reproach of Christ to all the honours of the world (Heb. xi. 26.); and has a measure of that spirit, by which the apostles were enabled to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. He heartily consents to the precepts; he esteems them as a light to his feet; he makes them his meditation all the day. Nothing pleases him more than to find an increasing victory over the hindrances to his obedience; and the time of his greatest grief is, when, through infirmity, or the prevalence of temptation, he is seduced to neglect or transgress them, though in the

smallest instance, and in what does not pass under human observation. Even afflictions, though not joyous in themselves, but grievous, are cheerfully submitted to, because the Lord has appointed them, and is pleased to account them a filling up of his sufferings, Col. i. 24.

III. In other cases, even when there is a principle of love, and the service not disagreeable in itself, yet weakness may render it wearisome or impracticable. Though perhaps you would willingly take a long journey to serve a friend; yet if you are sick or lame, what could you do? But the yoke of Christ is light and easy in this respect, that there is a sufficiency of strength provided for the performance. This consideration makes every difficulty vanish; for though these should be increased tenfold, yet if strength be increased in an equal proportion, it amounts to the same thing. What is hard or impossible to a child, is easy to a man; what is hard to flesh and blood, is easy to faith and grace. The believer, though weak in himself, is strong in the Lord. The power on which he depends is not in his own keeping; but it is treasured up in the covenant of grace, or in the Lord Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, and is always to be obtained by prayer. Every child of God is interested in the blessing of Asher: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be," Deut, xxxiii. 25. By the day may be understood,

1. A day of service. Whatever the Lord appoints for us to do, if we depend upon him in the use of appointed means, he will certainly qualify, furnish, and strengthen us, for the accomplishment of it. If David is called out to meet Goliath, though he is but a stripling (1 Sam. xvii. 37.), and the other a practised warrior from his youth, he shall not be disheartened or overcome, but be made a conqueror though all appearances are against him. If we are in the path of duty, and if our help and hope is in the name of the Lord, we may confidently expect that he will uphold us, however faint and enfeebled we may seem to be to ourselves or others.

2. A day of suffering. If, like Daniel and his companions, we should be threatened with lions and flames, we may confidently commit our way to God; he can control the fire, and stop the lions mouth, Dan. iii. 16. and vi. 22; Psal. xci. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 17. While all things are in his hands, whose we are, and whom we serve, why should we fear that they will act beyond the bounds of his permission, or that he will permit them to do anything which is not his purpose to overrule to his advantage? Such considerations in the hour of need, seasonably impressed by his good Spirit, together with a trust in his promises, shall inspire us with new strength to meet the greatest danger undismayed; and with regard to trials immediately from his own gracious hand, he will so adjust them, in number, season, weight, and measure, to the ability he communicates, that we both shall be able to bear, and also

find away made for us to escape. With such assurances, we may boldly say, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man (or Satan) can do unto me."

IV. There is further, a consideration of profit and advantage, which makes the yoke of Christ easy. The believing soul is not mercenary. He loves his master and his service; yet it is impossible to serve God for nought. In the keeping of his commandments, there is a reward, though not of debt, yet of grace (Psal. xix. 11.): A great and sure reward, respecting both the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Those who sincerely take up the yoke of Christ, and cleave to him in love alone, have ample compensation in the present life for all that their profession can cost them. They enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, which is compared to a continual feast. St. Paul, though a champion for free grace, and determined to glory only in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (2 Cor. i. 12.), expresses a high and just value for this privilege; and that it afforded comfort, yea joy, in a time of trouble. Superadded to this, they are often favoured with the peculiar consolations of the Holy Spirit, which, though slightly esteemed by those who know them not, satisfy the soul as with marrow and fatness, and can change the voice of mourning into songs of praise in an instant, Psal. lxxiii. 3. And though these are not their constant food, yet they have real and habitual communion with God, from day to day, in his ordinances and providences. They live in his presence; they converse with him, and he with them; their good things are doubly pleasing, because they receive them from his hand; and this thought likewise sweetens every bitter cup of affliction which he prepares for their good. The mutual intercourse and communion his people have with each other, is likewise a considerable branch of their present reward. How pleasing is it, when speaking to each other in his name, they take sweet counsel together! they are confirmed in his way, by finding how their experiences answer as face to face in a glass; and he causes their hearts to burn within them, while they are freely declaring what he has done for their souls. Lastly, they are happy in a comfortable expectation of a better world, (Gen. xix. 18.); and when the appointed time comes, death will put an end to all their troubles; and then shall they fully know and possess the future reward which the Lord has prepared and reserved for them that love him.

This is briefly summed up by the apostle: They shall be absent from the body (2 Cor. v. 8), and all its inseparable evils; sin and sorrow, want, pain, and every distress that belongs to this mortal state, shall affect them no more; and they shall be present with the Lord, whom they love. Then they shall see his face without a cloud, and share his joy without abatement or interruption; and all this shall be for ever. When they are made pillars of the

new Jerusalem (Rev. iii. 12; 1 Thess, iv. 17.), they shall come out no more. The prospect of this makes them rejoice under all their tribulations; for they know whereto they lead, and how they will end. "These light and momentary afflictions are working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

From these things I hope it will appear that the yoke of Christ is easy. His people serve him because they love him; they love his ways: he is their strength; he comforts them now, and will be their portion for ever.

But perhaps some, whom I would willingly comfort, will rather be discouraged by this representation, and say, Alas! if it is thus, I am yet to seek. My love is so faint, my strength so feeble, my consolations so small, my obedience so imperfect, that I am afraid I have not known the easy yoke of Christ. There are therefore some other things to be taken into the account, and which are no just exception to the character our Lord here gives of his yoke.

1. The entrance, or first application of the mind to the yoke, or profession of the gospel, is seldom pleasant. Though the work of grace leads to love, it usually begins in fear. On this point we have already spoken at large. It is no pleasing state to be weary and heavy laden, to see ourselves obnoxious to a curse, and unable to escape; yet, by apprehensions of this kind, the soul is prepared to embrace the yoke of Christ; and none but those who have experienced the misery of a fallen state, will be truly desirous of the gospel-rest.

2. The progress is gradual. The first dawnings of grace in the heart are faint, and hardly perceptible; hence the whole process is compared to things that are very inconsiderable in their first principles. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which is hid and lost in the earth for a season; it is like leaven, which when cast into meal may be concealed and unnoticed for a while, but by degrees diffuses its influence through the whole mass (Matth. xiii. 31, 33); it is like the corn, which springs up and comes forward night and day, a man knows not how, Mark iv. 27. The growth in the Christian life being thus slow and indistinct, many who aim to ascertain their interest rather by the degree than the reality of grace, are often dejected to find their attainments proceed no faster. It is indeed a humbling consideration, but ought not to rob us of the comfort arising from a believing view of what Jesus has completely wrought out for us, and of what he has promised he will infallibly perform in us, in his own good time. A deliverance from this poring into ourselves for the grounds of our hope, is a part, a considerable part of the rest to which he invites us.

3. The difficulties attendant on that course of faith and obedience, which is included in taking his yoke upon us, are many and great. While we so-



jour in a wilderness-state, and in a sinful nature, there will be fightings without and fears within. It is the appointed and necessary rule of our profession, that “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God,” Acts xiv. 22. All who are against him will be against us for his sake, and the evil heart of unbelief will show itself in a variety of forms, as it is acted upon by various impressions, from the things of sense and the powers of darkness. But these troubles do not arise from the spiritual yoke of Christ, but from our present situation and circumstances, and shall therefore shortly cease for ever. His ways are ways of pleasantness, though we are sure to meet with perplexity and uneasiness, so far and so often as we wander from them into our own crooked paths. But,

4. The end is sure. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matth. x. 22); and all who are in his way, have his promise and power engaged in their behalf, that they shall certainly endure, that he will so lead, guide, support, and strengthen them, that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come, shall separate them from his love, Rom. viii. 38. Your complaints and fears, therefore, are no proof that you are not right. Go on, in his name. Trust in him in whom you have believed, and be nothing terrified by your adversaries. The longer you wear the yoke, the easier you will find it.

Let each one examine himself by what has been offered. If you have not a principle of true love to Christ, and a prevailing desire to live in all holy obedience to his will, you are no Christian; and, though you may begin warmly, you will not be able to hold out, but your profession will wither away for want of root and moisture. Nor is it difficult to know whether you love him or no; if you do, you have seen your need of him, and abhor yourself in dust and ashes.

From hence likewise you may discern the difference between the religion of the gospel and the formal worship that many are contented with, in which the heart has no place. Remember that “God is a Spirit” (John iv. 24), and unless you love him, you cannot possibly please him. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly condemned. His commandments likewise are spiritual; they extend beyond the surface of the outer conduct, and take cognisance even of the retired thoughts and intents of the heart. Many sins may be avoided, and many duties performed, from motives and principles which, not being derived from his word, or conformable to it, are therefore sinful in themselves, and make everything proceeding from them defective and displeasing in his sight. If you are attempting to serve him by your own natural strength and understanding, be assured that you have not yet taken up the yoke of Christ; if you had, you would find it answerable to the character he has given of it,

for his word is truth. But your constrained obedience you know in yourselves, far from being easy and light, is a heavy burden, which you would be glad to cast off if you durst. You serve the Lord as a slave serves a hard master, not with a willing mind, but of necessity, and from a dread of punishment. But in vain do you draw near to him with your lips while your heart is far from him. Therefore spend no longer your labour for that which is not bread, but come to Jesus, that you may find rest for your souls. He is able to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, to put a new spirit in you that shall delight in his yoke, to give you strength and ability for every part of your duty, and to make you a willing people in the day of his power.

Believers, rejoice in your security. The Lord has given you a never-dying principle of love, and provided for you a never-failing supply of grace. These will bear you up through all your journey, and at last bring you safely home to the mansions provided for you in your Father's house. Then shall you praise him, world without end.