



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Burdens

Release date: July 13, 2017

TAKE MY BURDEN

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. James 2:10

There are times when what goes unsaid is more powerful, more articulate, than what is said. Take, for example, the time Jesus spoke to a large crowd who had come to hear Him. He said, “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, *NKJV*). OK, we get the picture. We can relate to that. Today we know what burdens are—family problems, financial ones, and feelings of rejection and insecurity. We understand that Christ is saying, “If you come to me, I will give you rest.” We like that.

But what is behind the statement that “My yoke is easy and My burden is light”? With cattle or oxen, a yoke is used to keep an animal under control. It restricts freedom and self-expression. Undoubtedly Jesus emphasized the word *my*—“My yoke is easy; my burden is light.” Compared with what? That’s what remained unsaid, but the people knew. It was the burden of organized religion, which had long before gone beyond the spirit of the law to the legalism of the law. No wonder Paul wrote that the letter kills but the Spirit makes alive.

The Jewish rabbis had taken the instruction given by God and gone far beyond His intentions. In the process the whole purpose became obscured. And, believe it or not, they are still at it. Take, for example, the Associated Press article which appeared in newspapers around the world. From the *South China Post* printed in Hong Kong, I pulled this article. Headline: “Nose-picking banned by Israeli rabbi.” It reads, “a leading ultra-Orthodox rabbi in Israel has reportedly ruled that it is forbidden to pick your nose on the Jewish Sabbath.” Rabbi Ovadia Yosef ruled this not-so-socially-acceptable habit to be wrong because (in his words) tiny hairs inside the nostrils might also be pulled out.

I’m wondering if that old proverb about “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel” might include such prohibitions. In their day, Jesus condemned the religious leaders because they outwardly observed rituals such as washing their hands profusely when their hearts were stained with wrongdoing.

Lest I be misunderstood, Jesus is not saying that those outside the church who are just plain “good people” are better than those inside. No, that’s not His intent. He is saying very simply that when you follow Him and know Him, your relationship with God becomes meaningful and real, and—very important—you find rest for your soul.

Rest for your soul isn’t based upon the assurance that you have done all of these things, but rather Jesus Christ did for you what you could not do for yourself. Do you remember that story of the person who asks, “How much do you love me?” and Jesus held out his arms, making the form of a cross with His body, and said, “This much!” and He died. The spiritual rest which comes to the children of God is the deep assurance in your soul that your righteousness isn’t based upon what you do—whether it is refraining from itching your nose, or giving money to a good cause—but upon what Jesus has already done, something which God credits to your account, paid for by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Peter put it so graphically: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:24-25).

What a deal! “Take my yoke,” says Jesus, “and I will give you rest.”

Resource reading: Galatians 3:19-29