

## **Sin and Yokes/The Way Through**

**There's a commercial I saw on TV a while ago that still makes me giggle-**  
**- a woman holding a homemade pie knocks on a new neighbor's door-**  
**and when the new neighbor answers, the woman with the pie says "Hi,**  
**I've brought you this pie to see if you're weird"-**  
**- the new neighbor says- "Oh- smells aggressive!"**  
**"Would you like to come in and snoop around a bit?"**

**The lady with the pie steps in the house and says "Oooo, I smell onions!"**  
**Is there anybody here who can't identify with that ad?**  
**Sometimes we'd just love to say what we really think-**  
**We usually manage to take the more tactful route**  
**but every now and then- those first thoughts slip out.**

**We do the very thing we didn't want to do.**

**Along the same lines I doubt if there's anybody here today**  
**who can't identify with Paul when he says**  
**"I don't understand my own actions!...**

**I do the very thing I hate instead of what I want to do!**

**- I do just the opposite of the good I intended!..."**

**I had good intentions... Why did I eat that second piece of pecan pie?**  
**...and with ice cream, too! –**

**Why did I spend all that money on those shoes?... Have that last drink?...**

**Why didn't I just keep my mouth shut when she asked me**  
**if that dress made her look fat?**

**We don't have to interpret this scripture for today's society...**  
**we understand it only too well-**

-because we really haven't changed in the last couple of thousand years!  
It's the same old thing! We think a thing through- we know what we plan to do-  
and then we don't do it- we blow the whole thing.  
We eat the pie or have the extra drink-  
we buy the expensive toy or we hurt somebody-  
We think a good game- We just can't play a good game!  
Even though we know full well there are consequences well beyond  
those seemingly harmless slips :  
Eventually the extra pie does help clog arteries-  
might precipitate a heart attack.  
One day, maybe today- the extra drink can be a factor in an accident-  
even a death.  
The extravagance- well- the logical conclusion of out of control spending  
is that eventually we can't pay what we owe!- and we suffer the consequences-  
And the harsh words will wound, even break a relationship.  
Paul uses military terms to talk about it- - it's appropriate-  
He says there's a war between the mind and the body-  
*Guess which wins!*  
He says: It's a law-- that when I want to do what is good- evil is close at hand.  
I am a captive to that other law. It's a law called sin.- Missing the mark-  
Talking about sin isn't very fashionable in Episcopal circles-  
It conjures up a red faced preacher pacing around with his flappy bible in one  
hand, shouting about what will happen to all of us  
if we don't stop doing whatever it is he's against.  
That kind of talk about sin doesn't help me a bit-  
For one thing, that kind of talk makes it sound as though  
I can get myself out of whatever trouble I'm in-  
—and I've learned, over the years, that I can't - .I can't conquer sin by myself

**I need more help -**

**What Paul says makes a whole lot more sense!**

**Paul just gives up and he waves the white flag- –**

**“Who will rescue me from this body of death?”**

**“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

**Paul has learned- and he wants to teach us - that there’s help for our fallen condition-  
which is the fallen condition called “sin.”- and we’re all in it!**

**The difference between us and Paul on this point is that we ‘enlightened’ people  
don’t tend to agonize much over our failures- (sins) the way Paul did-**

**We just give them another name- we say “oops”- and we do it all over again-  
Paul took responsibility for what he’d done.**

**He said “I’m guilty”-and he cried out to be rescued.**

**Somebody who’s drowning- or at least treading water in the middle of the ocean  
doesn’t have any illusions about being able to get out of it by themselves-  
they know the ocean is too big-**

**and they have to have help if they’re going to survive.**

**Paul knew he couldn’t rescue himself- But do we?**

**Do we even take our sins seriously enough to cry out for help?**

**Maybe the challenge for us is to realize we’re helplessly adrift-  
bogged down in our sinful condition-**

**that –like Paul- we don’t have the ability within ourselves to change ourselves-  
(addicts)**

**Jesus said “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.**

**Take my yoke upon you- learn from me-  
my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

**So- what does that mean- that we swap a heavy burden for a yoke?**

**Is that a good thing- a yoke sounds mighty permanent to me-**

**Well, the heavy burden is sin-**

**and if it doesn't feel to you like a heavy burden- it ought to!**

**The yoke is two things-**

**in Jesus' time, the law was referred to as a yoke-**

**so-Jesus says we're called to take on his law\_-**

**instead of the myriad of laws of the religion of that time! –**

**Jesus' law is simple- in fact, it's simplicity itself-**

**Jesus said: “love one another as I have loved you”-**

**-think you can try to do that?**

**Maybe- maybe not-**

**But it gets better-**

**A yoke was put on two animals when they worked**

**to keep them in a rhythm with each other-**

**One could help the other pull the load.**

**The yoke was to make their work easier.**

**The good news for us is that we are yoked to Jesus- Jesus is yoked to us**

**to make it possible for us to bear the burdens that we have-**

**That's all good news- but before we get there- to the good news-**

**- there is one catch-**

**...the catch is that we have to reach the point of knowing**

**we can't bear our burdens alone- no matter how much we try-**

**despite all our efforts- we can't help our own sinful condition.**

**When we finally do cry out- as Paul did-**

**“who will rescue me from this body of death!”**

**-then we hear Jesus calling to us- saying**

**(in the words of *The Message*)**

**“Are you tired, worn out? Burned out?...**

**Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.**

**I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me-  
watch how I do it.**

**Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.**

**I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you.**

**Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”<sup>1</sup>**

**My advice is to give up now. Raise the white flag of your soul-  
and ask Jesus to fit you for his yoke-**

*Amen.*

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Message*. A paraphrase by Eugene H. Peterson. Mt 11:28-30.