

We have a sense that there is more to life than what is at first apparent. We may even have a vague awareness that to satisfy our heart's desire will take more than supplying something lacking, but also realigning something that is out of joint, not in others, not in the world, but in ourselves.

Paul knows this something to be a heart in conflict with itself. Just as a house divided cannot stand, so a divided self cannot know peace. The solution is not more toys or trinkets, more power or fame, not even more self-knowledge. Socrates has nothing on Paul in this matter.

I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Paul finds resolution to his conflict, not in knowing himself better, but in knowing a God who accepts him just as he is. *Thanks be to God*, Paul prays, *through Jesus Christ our Lord!* The God Paul discovers, the God Paul knows through Jesus, is not a harsh judge of divided hearts but a healing presence.

In the words of Jesus, *Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give your rest. Take my yoke upon you, and **learn from me**; for I am **gentle and humble** in heart (**friendly** and **accommodating** in heart - Luz's, Hart's translations), and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, my burden is light.*

It is not possible for us to recover a sense of well-being through harsh or severe self-criticism. In the imagery of fourth century desert monastics, "demon cannot drive out demon." But we are suspicious. Our inner critic protests: Isn't gentleness but a gloss for permissiveness, an indifference to the consequences of our behavior.

Love of God and others cannot grow out of self-hatred. If we remember we are giving up violence against the self out of respect for the image of God within us, out of gratitude for the gift of the image, we can mute the inner critic long enough to glimpse the rest our souls desire.

Finding rest for one's soul, accepting God's acceptance, does not mean we will be accepted by others. John the Baptist lives a very strict, ascetic life, denying himself in ways Paul could not. The crowd judged him possessed by a demon. Jesus ate and drank with sinners and the crowd judged him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors.

Jesus confronts the judgment of the crowd with mocking sarcasm: *We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.* Either you do not know what you really want or, you do not desire anything enough to risk the requisite

action. In either case, you are but pathetic observers rather than cheerful players on the stage of life.

John and Jesus lived very different lives; John was a “monk,” Jesus loved a good party. Both men lived faithful expressions of the image of God within them. Neither gained the approval of the crowd; each gained the approval of God.

If you act as faithfully as you know how to the image of God within you, you will suffer the judgment of those who go along to get along, of those who sell their souls for fame, fortune, or power, of those who cannot tolerate authentic lives which bear witness to transcendent realities.

Jesus invites us to learn from him. Why? Because his yoke is easy; his burden is light. The yoke of Christ is not a special asceticism, a denying ourselves of the necessities of life in hope of a heavenly reward. The yoke of Christ is loving one’s neighbor. As Augustine put it, “Whatever is hard in what is demanded of us, love makes easy.”

Love’s burden is light because of the light it reveals. In bearing the yoke of love, the mystery of God is revealed. Revelation, salvation, knowledge of God happen in concrete works of love. When loves work is done well, when its work is fulfilled in lightening the burden of others, the soul knows rest.