

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

ENTERING GOD'S REST

The yoke when put on oxen had to be carefully made and fitted otherwise the oxen would experience pain and distress. As a carpenter Jesus would have been very familiar with the importance of this. He would have made yokes for the oxen and knew that when they were correctly made the yoke eased the burden of the oxen. Jesus uses this image for God. He tells his audience that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. All we need to do is accept his invitation to come to him and when we do, we will find rest.

However, we must play our part if we wish to enter the rest of God. Firstly, we need to be open. This is what Jesus means when he refers to "mere children."

Jesus is not advocating anti-intellectualism when he talks about "hiding these things from the learned and the clever". He is talking about an attitude where a person is so full of their own opinions that they cannot be told anything. They are not open to the idea that they can learn more. There is no room for God in their lives because they do not believe in the promises of Jesus. "Mere children" are those who are ready to learn, who want to follow Jesus and accept his teachings and who seek to live their lives according to those teachings. All these things are based on a childlike trust in God.

Secondly, we must be forgiving. Holding grudges is a heavy burden to carry. It takes up a lot of energy. When we feel tempted not to forgive let us turn our attention to Jesus who forgave his enemies from the cross. Jesus was gentle and humble in heart until death.

Thirdly, we must rid ourselves of unnecessary distractions and decide to spend some time with God in our lives. A simple example of this is to ask ourselves 'how much time do I spend on my computer, or on social media or on my phone? How do we find peace if we do not spend some time with Jesus in prayer?

If we accept Jesus' invitation it will not remove all the burdens of life but if we come to Jesus, we will find that the yoke we must bear will sit easily on our shoulders. If we ever wonder 'there must be something more to life than this', Jesus offers us that something more. If we go to him, we will find rest.