

Return Unto Thy Rest

by C.H. Spurgeon

The believer's rest is a state of peace and comfort that comes from knowing and experiencing God's love and presence in our lives.

Duration: 37:34

Scripture: Psalm 116:7-10, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 3:20, Revelation 20:6

Topics: "Spiritual Rest", "Communion With Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages believers to return to their rest in God. He references Psalm 116, where the psalmist acknowledges that the Lord has delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling. The speaker emphasizes that believers should not be satisfied with losing their spiritual rest and should strive to maintain their communion with Christ. He warns against being like a hen that continues to sit on eggs even when most of them have been taken away, highlighting the importance of not losing even a little bit of grace. The overall message is that believers should always seek to rest in Jesus and not be content with anything less.

Transcript

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Return Unto Thy Rest A sermon intended for reading on Lord's Day, December 22nd, 1901. Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington on Lord's Day evening, September 7th, 1879. Psalm 116, verse 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

You who have not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ have no rest to which you can return, for you have never found any. May God grant to you the grace to come unto Christ that you may find rest unto your souls. But we who believe in Him do enter into rest.

We are sometimes described as journeying through the wilderness towards Canaan, and the type is quite allowable, but still it must not be pressed too far, for in another sense we have already entered into our rest. We have entered the Canaan which our Joshua has given unto us. Moses by the law could not lead us into this promised land, but Jesus has brought us into it, and we now have our portion and our inheritance in the covenant blessings which God has provided for His people in Christ Jesus His Son.

God's people, when they are as they ought to be, are in a state of rest even now. I do not mean that they will have rest so far as this world is concerned, for this earth is not our rest, it is polluted. But I do mean

that, as the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

I do mean that, as he also says, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that peace includes rest, sweet rest, especially that peace of God which passeth all understanding, which the Apostle declares shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. If I am at this time addressing any who have for a while lost the enjoyment of this blessed rest, my message to them is, return unto thy rest. I hope that they will be able to take the psalmist's words to themselves and to say with him, return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

The first thing for us to remember is that the believer has his rest. The psalmist says, return unto thy rest, O my soul. There is a position or an experience in which the believer's heart is perfectly at rest.

While trying to think how I should describe it, nothing seemed to strike me as a more full and accurate description of the believer's rest than the apostolic benediction with which we are accustomed to dismiss our assemblies. He has true rest of heart who abides in the spirit of these words. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Amen. The first rest of the heart comes to us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We generally speak of him as the second person of the Blessed Trinity, but in the benediction he is put first because to our experience he is first.

No man comes unto God the Father except by God the Son. So to us, Christ is first because that is the way his grace works in us. And, beloved, when you know how to come to Christ for grace, nay, when you have come to him and have received from him the grace to cover all your sin, the grace to justify you in the sight of God, the grace of adoption by which you become a son of God in him who is the Father's only begotten and well-beloved Son, when you have received the grace of union with Christ so that you know yourselves to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, when you know that all his grace is yours and that he himself is yours, then it is that you get rest unto your souls.

Sin cannot any longer disturb you, for it has drowned in the red sea of his atoning sacrifice. Your necessities cannot distress you, for they are all supplied by God according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Nothing need perplex or afflict or worry you any more.

All the troubles of thought are ended as you believe what your Lord tells you. All the cravings of your heart are satisfied as you take him to be the beloved of your soul. All the struggles of your conscience are ended as Christ brings to you peace and rest forever concerning all your sin.

In fact, as soon as you come to him, he gives you, through his abundant grace, rest about everything. This, then, is the first rest of the believer which comes to him through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. There is a further rest for us who believe, and a very sweet one.

It is in the love of God. It comes to us when we hear such a gentle whisper as this, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Or this, since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

Or this, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When

thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior.

Oh, what blessed rest springs out of electing love and adopting love! What sweet rest we obtain from the assurance that God the Father and God the Son both love us, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. Thus is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. This glorious fact gives us rest with regard to our position here.

We cannot be troubled by affliction because it is sent to us in love. We cannot be worried about the future, for all its concerns are in the hands of the God of love. We no longer harbor doubt and mistrust, for we know that God is love.

O dear friends, when you once come really to know the love of God, it will give you wondrous rest. You will feel that he never smote a child of his except in love, that he never even frowned at one of his children except in love, and that he never was angry with one of his children except in love. And love, perhaps, never rises to a greater climax of affection than when it is forced to show its anger, and so uses the rod more to its own pain than to the suffering of those who feel it.

Beloved, I trust that each one of you who believes in Jesus knows what that rest of heart is which enables you to say, My God, my Father, thou canst do not to me but what infinite love dictates, for I know that thou lovest me even as thou lovest thy firstborn and only begotten son. The third rest of the believer is in the communion of the Holy Ghost. O beloved, this is the truest rest of the soul.

So far as your actual experience is concerned, when the Holy Spirit comes and takes complete possession of you, so that your will does not any longer struggle against the will of God but sweetly yields to its control, your desires do not wander but stay at home in full content, and you give yourself up entirely to the divine indwelling, so that Christ dwelleth in you and you abide in him by the power of his gracious spirit, then that same blessed spirit brings to your mind the deep things of God which are full of rich comfort for the soul and the precious things of the everlasting hills of the covenant of grace which abound in all the blessings that you can possibly want between here and heaven. For it is the Holy Spirit's special office to be the comforter of Christ's people, and he makes the soul either to sit still at the feet of Jesus, to hearken to his gracious words, or else to run with cheerful yet restful alacrity on his errands. For there is such a thing as rest in running in his holy service.

Now, dear friend, if you have these three things, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, I am sure I need not stay to prove to you that in your experience you have realized what it is to enjoy rest for your soul. Do you all know what it is thus to rest in the Lord? I thank God that I do. I feel especially at certain times that I could not ask the Lord for anything more than he has given me.

I could not wish anything altered. I could not desire to be in any other state. Nay, I do not even wish to be in heaven at such times as those to which I am referring.

When I sit down beneath his shadow with great delight, and his banner over me is love, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste, it is a little nether heaven, the vestibule of the palace of the great King. Many of you must know what this rest is. I feel sure that you do.

This fact makes it rather sad work to turn to the second division of my subject, which is that sometimes the believer leaves that rest. He should not do so. It is most grievous that he does, but alas, he does, as many of us are only too well aware by painful personal experience.

Sometimes he leaves it through affliction, and especially if that affliction comes from man. The psalmist tells us that in his haste he said, All men are liars. Perhaps he said some other naughty things for which he was sorry afterwards.

It is not always easy to be calm and prudent when you are provoked, and to be quite restful when everybody speaks ill of you or tries to lay traps to catch you. But the child of God should try so to master himself that all the dogs that bark can no more disturb him than the baying of a hound would turn the moon out of her nightly course. Happy and blessed is that man whose heart is fixed so that he can sing and give praise even though his adversary is all the while speaking bitterly against him.

Yet the flesh is very frail, and aches and pains of body as well as cruel slanders against character will sometimes turn the Christian aside from his restful state. He is not quiet and calm. He is in a hurry.

The leisure of his heart is broken, and he is in great confusion. God save us from getting into such a sorrowful condition as that, for if we had more confidence in our God we should have less confusion in our own experience. We should be much more restful if we did but do our God the justice of trusting him at all times, for he can never fail us.

I have known some Christians to be driven from their restful state through a want of submission to the divine will. Oh, dear friends, when you have been in sharp trials, when things have gone awry with you, and especially if some beloved object of your heart's affection is taken from you, then you have had a quarrel with your God. It is a very sad thing that we should ever differ from infinite love, or think that we know better than eternal wisdom, or begin to suspect the grace of the Most High.

It is sorrowful that this should ever be the case with any of us, and we cannot without many tears confess that we have sometimes had a dispute with God about what he has been doing with us. And then, of course, we could not rest, for in addition to our other sorrows our wise and loving Father chastised us for our naughtiness. He would not spare us for all our crying, but he went on with his own designs concerning us, even while we were so willful and rebellious.

Perhaps he even chastened us the more because of that rebellion. We may be sure that we shall never truly rest in the Lord while we have a stubborn will. Until every desire learns to lay its head in Christ's bosom and is fully satisfied with Him, we shall never be at perfect peace.

There is for each one of us a modified agony and bloody sweat until, like our Lord, we can truthfully say to our heavenly Father, Not my will, but Thine, be done. That want of submission to God lies at the root of half our unrest. We must submit to Him.

It would be well for us if we did so at once. Some Christians lose their rest through want of contentment. They are very happy in their present condition, for God has greatly blessed them, but their eye catches sight of a Christian who is better off than they are, and straightway they want to have as much as he has.

They are not quite so well dressed as that brother is, and they wish that they were. Their wife and family do not look, as the world says, quite so respectable as his. And sometimes, in their folly, they will throw themselves out of a happy position in life where they have the privileges of the means of grace and go into

a state of spiritual starvation just for the sake of being a little better off in temporal things, which is both foolish and wrong.

Now, until we are perfectly content with what the Lord appoints for us, we shall not have rest unto our souls, until we can honestly say, To Thy will I leave the rest. Grant me but this one request, both in life and death, to prove tokens of Thy special love, which you'll never know what it is to enjoy full rest of heart. I fear that there are many Christians who lose their rest in another way, namely through the world's joys.

Have you ever been with a party of friends where there has been a great deal of mirth and very little grace? If so, have you not felt, when you got home, that you could not pray as you were wont to do? Sometimes you have been taking your recreation properly enough, but you have not carried Christ with you as you should have done, and you have found after a while that your rest has gone. Laughter and merriment may do you untold harm unless they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If they are so sanctified, they may not cause us to leave our rest.

Frequently, too, Christian people lose their rest through allowing some conscious sin. For Christ in you will not long keep company with one another if you permit anything in your heart or speech or shop or home that is not according to His mind. His communion is with the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

But if sin be knowingly harbored, communion with Christ will not be enjoyed. The old Puritan was right when he said, Sinning will make thee leave off communing, or else communing will make thee leave off sinning. For the indulgence of any known sin is not compatible with a close walk with God.

If, beloved, you and I get at a distance from God, if we follow Christ afar off as Peter did, if we grow cold in heart, if we are neglectful of prayer, if the word of God is not the subject of our constant study, if we get worldly and carnal like so many of our fellow Christians are, we shall soon find that the rest of our soul is gone. It is a great mercy if you know when it is gone. It is a terrible thing to lose the joy of the Lord and the rest of your spirit and yet hardly to be aware that it is so with you.

There is a very simple simile of this state of things, but it is a useful one. You know that a hen, if she has some eggs under her, will keep on sitting. You may take half the eggs away.

You may take three-fourths of them away, but she still keeps on sitting, for I suppose she cannot count. Now, there are some Christians who are very much like that hen. They lose the most of their grace, yet they are just as happy as they were before.

But, beloved, your spiritual sense ought to be something much higher than the instinct of a poor silly bird. Your care of the divine grace entrusted to your charge ought to be something far superior to the care of a sitting hen over her eggs. To lose a little grace is to lose a great deal.

To miss even five minutes communion with Christ is to lack an incalculable blessing. Therefore, brethren, if you have lost the blessed rest you once enjoyed, do not be satisfied to remain in that condition. Do not sing with Kalpa what peaceful hours I then enjoyed, how sweet their memory still, unless you can also say with him, but now I find an aching void the world can never fill.

Never be happy unless you are truly resting in Jesus. That brings us to our third point, which is that the believer, when he has gone away from his rest, should return to it. And the sooner he does so, the better.

Return at once, dear friends, if you have gone away from your rest. As Noah's dove came back to him, so fly back to Christ, who is your Noah, your rest, for that is the meaning of the name. And I would argue with you to come back first, because it is quite certain that you can never rest anywhere else.

A man who knows not the Lord Jesus Christ can find rest in many places, such rest as it is. Give him a large estate, abundance of money and plenty of worldly friends, and you will find him quite content with those things. Like the mole, which has its home in the earth, he will go and burrow and make his home there.

An eagle cannot do that, and you are one of God's eagles if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. Neither in wealth, nor in honor, nor in pleasure, nor in conjugal domestic comfort can you ever find perfect rest. You have eaten the white bread of heaven, so your mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of earth.

You might have been satisfied with the world if you had never known Christ, but you are spoiled for that now. A countryman who has lived all his life in a lonely village where he never heard any music might be charmed when he first listened to one of our street organs. But let him hear some of the sweet strains of true music.

Then the noise of the street organ jars upon his ear. He cannot endure it. So, beloved, your ears have been attuned to something better than the world's merriment.

That can never satisfy you. To you, there is only one rest, and you must come back to it. Some of you backsliders have come in here tonight.

You have not been here lately, and you have been trying to be happy and comfortable apart from God. But as surely as the Lord loves you, you will have to come back to him, and the longer you stay away, the more bitter will be your weeping and lamentation when you do come back. Oh, that you would be wise and return at once and never wander away again.

You know too much, and you have felt too much ever to rest except in Christ, so do not attempt it. Further, this unrest puts you out of order for everything. I should like to put the question to you who love the Lord but are not perfectly at rest in him.

Does not your present state very much spoil your devotions? You cannot pray as you used to do when you had such a sweet sense of the love of God. You know that you have not the power in prayer that you had. God does not hear you now as he once did.

You used to run to him with your request and come back with the favor you had asked of him, but now you ask many times, yet you receive no reply. The reason is that you are walking contrary to him, and therefore he walks contrary to you. Does not this want of restfulness also decrease your power of working for Christ? You cannot plead with a sinner as you used to do.

You cannot speak to the anxious as you once did, for while your own soul is in the dark, although you may be wishful to give light to others, you feel that you cannot do it. If you wish really to serve the Lord effectively, you must have the joy of the Lord to be your strength. Then besides, do you not think that your want of rest is putting you into a state in which you are very liable to be tempted and to be overcome? The Cones are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.

And they are very sensible Cones to do so, for there are many beasts of prey to seek their lives, but they run into the rock, and so they are safe. If you are out of your rock, you are, like the Cone, exposed to danger. So run back again as quickly as you can.

You are never so safe as when you dwell in the wounded side of Jesus, peacefully resting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost. There is one thing more that I must say to those of you who are not thus resting. That is, this unrest can do no possible good.

I say this to myself as well as to you, for I too have sometimes erred in that way. I am ashamed to confess that it is so, for it ought not to have been the case, and I feel that I am more guilty than some of you in having done so, but I never yet have found any good come of a state of unrest. When I have not rested in God about everything, I have never found things improve any the more for all my worrying.

Suppose a farmer grumbles against God because the wheat is spoiling. Does his grumbling save it? Suppose a tradesman begins quarreling with God because business is dull. Will he not bring one more customer to his shop by all his complaining? No, there is no good in grumbling and no use in complaining.

The very best thing that you can do for yourself is just to come back and rest in God and say, It is the Lord. Let Him do what seemeth Him good. I have done all I can that was right for me to do, but I know that it is vain for me to rise up early and to sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness unless He is pleased to send the increase.

So I leave it all with Him. I will not fret and worry any longer. I cannot improve matters if I do, so I will just leave everything in the Lord's hands.

That is a right decision, my brother. For the end of your heart's controversy will be the beginning of your heart's rest. So rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

But if thou wilt be unbelieving, if thou wilt rebel and revolt against thy God, thou shalt be smitten more and more, and no rest will come to thee at all. So cry with the psalmist, Return unto thy rest, O my soul, and not only say it, but do actually return it once unto thy rest. The last thing about which I am going to speak to you is this.

The believer has one excellent encouragement to return. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. The psalmist tells us in detail what the Lord had done for him.

Or rather, he tells the Lord, For thou hast delivered my soul from death. In the fourth verse he prayed, O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. That was a single prayer, but he received a triple answer to it, for God is always able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

So the psalmist proved it, and he was able to say to the Lord, Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Now believer, you ought to come back and rest in God, because you have received from him these three marks of his divine favor. First, he has delivered your soul from death.

You will never die the second death. You are a saved man as a believer in Christ, for you, death has lost its sting. You may die after a fashion, yet living and believing in Jesus, you shall never see death in the full sense of that term.

For you, there are no flaming fires of wrath, no pit that is bottomless, no curse of depart. Your soul has been delivered from death. Now if that does not make you happy, what will? Why, my dear friends, the fact that God has saved our soul from death ought to fill our hearts with perpetual delight.

Suppose I should be starved to death, still it is a small matter now that my soul is delivered from going to hell forever. Suppose I had to live in poverty and obscurity and die like the martyrs at the stake. Well, what of that? There is an everlasting crown that fadeth not away, that will abundantly recompense it all.

Strike, Lord, said Luther, now that thou hast heard me, do what thou wilt with me, now that thou hast delivered my soul from death. I know how very poor you are, my dear friend, and what grievous burdens you have to carry, but still do not forget that the Lord has delivered your soul from death. You may be very poor and very sick and very sad, but you can never be lost.

You may be laughed at by the ungodly, but you can never be cast into hell. Blessed be God for this! Surely that is one thing to make you glad and to encourage you to return unto your rest. Next, the psalmist says, Thou hast delivered mine eyes from tears, and the Lord has done the same for many of us.

We have no cause for grief now. No cause for grief, exclaims one. No, none whatever.

But I have lost my dear mother, shall I not weep? Well, she loved the Lord, so she is gone to heaven. She is now before the throne of the Most High. So if thou dost weep because thou hast lost her, then immediately begin to sing with joy because she is up among the angels.

But I have lost my little child who was so very dear to me. Oh well, in that case thou art mother to one who is praising God day and night, so wipe those tears away. I rather like the idea of a young person at Brighton who asked that she might have grey horses to draw her to her funeral.

Why not? Why always have black ones? Why not have the white horses of delight? Let those who linger here sorrow that their loved ones have gone, but let them not be so ungenerous as not to sympathize in the eternal joy upon which righteous souls have entered. No, wipe your tears away, for ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Oh but, cries another tried friend, I have real cause for sorrow because I suffer so much and I am so poor. Well, if it is so, it will all be over soon. And remember what the apostle says, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Yes, you say, but still you do not know how much I suffer. No, I do not, and you do not know how much I suffer. But I know this, if the two of us put all our sufferings together, they are not worthy to be compared with the eternal love of the blessed God, who sent us all these aches and pains that we feel.

They are all sent by him in love, so why should we cry over them? He has wiped our tears away, so let us not weep anymore. Or if tears must come, let the salt that is in them tend to our sanctification. But do not let us shed one rebellious tear.

No, not even if all we have in the world were taken from us, why should the soul a drop bemoan who has a fountain near, a fountain which will ever run with water sweet and clear? If I have all things, I have them in my God. And if all things are gone from me, I would find them all again in him. Now, lastly, God has also delivered our feet from falling, as he did in the case of the psalmist.

I know that one reason why many do not fully rest is because they are afraid that they shall fall from grace, afraid that they shall dishonor their profession, and so on. Now, dear friends, I hope that you will never get rid of the godly fear of falling into sin, and never lose that holy insecurity with regard to yourself. But do not let that feeling extend to your God.

You know that our Lord Jesus Christ said, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. He has delivered your feet from falling, so he will keep you.

Therefore, begin to praise him and bless him this very moment. Cast away that fear of being cast away, and sing Jude's doxology now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen. Now, know you have nothing at all to fret about. Your soul is delivered from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from falling, so rest, rest, rest, rest.

You will glorify God by resting. One of the highest acts of devotion is to rest in the Lord. God grant it to you now, at his table especially, for his name's sake.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14351.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/return-onto-thy-rest/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net