

Seven Sabbatic Years

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele shares his experience of soul-rest, a state of being that brings deliverance from unsatisfied cravings, spiritual conflict, and the burden of souls unsaved and un sanctified.

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Matthew 11:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philipians 4:6, Hebrews 4:9

Topics: "Soul Rest", "Christian Service"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the soul-rest found in full trust in Christ, emphasizing that it is not a cessation from Christian activities but a stimulus for unremitting effort to glorify Christ. He explains that this rest does not exempt from spiritual conflict, temptation, or the burden of unsaved souls, but rather leads to deep sympathy and ministering to others. Steele also highlights that this rest involves strong disapprobation towards wrongs, deliverance from unsatisfied cravings, release from irksomeness in Christian service, and salvation from doubt and worry about the future.

Transcript

"On this glad day the glorious Sun

Of righteousness arose;

On my benighted soul He shone,

And filled it with repose.

"Sudden expired the legal strife;

'Twas then I ceased to grieve;

My SECOND, real, living life

I then began to live."

THE chief characteristic of the seven past years of my Christian life is soul-rest, running through every day and hour, like a golden thread. "For we which have believed do enter into rest. Since there are many misconceptions respecting this rest, I wish to testify to my own experience in this regard:

1. It is not a cessation from Christian activities, and a sitting down with folded arms, enjoying the dreamy ecstasy of a mystical devotion. Instead of this, I find in this soul-rest an amazing stimulus to unremitting effort to glorify Christ in the salvation of all for whom He died, and especially in the perfect restoration of those believers who are only partially healed of the malady of sin.

"Rest is not quitting the busy career;

Rest is the fitting of self to its sphere.

'Tis loving and serving the highest and best;

'Tis onward unswerving, and that is true rest."

2. I do not find it an exemption from spiritual conflict and temptation. Christ's threefold Waterloo battle and victory occurred only a few days after the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Intense spiritual illumination is one of the conditions under which a great spiritual field-fight is possible. Pickets may skirmish a little in the dark, but armies shake the earth with their thunders only in the daylight. Many Christians do not enjoy religion enough to be the subjects of a downright spiritual struggle. But after sunrise Satan unlimbers his biggest guns. Thank God, he may be so thoroughly beaten before breakfast, in the first onset, that his assaults will be feeble all the rest of the day, not daring to take the field in person, but sending some ugly "messenger to buffet" the soul.

3. Nor is this rest a release from the burden of souls unsaved and unsanctified. In fact, in my years of spiritual unrest, my own soul was my greatest burden, leaving me little time or strength to devote to others. But now that I have

"A heart at leisure from itself

To soothe and sympathize,"

I find myself drawn away from the unprofitable and unhappy self-introspection and medication of my own ailments to the unalloyed bliss of ministering the healing balm to the wounded and dying souls about me. I have been brought into deep sympathy with Paul in his willingness to be accursed from Christ; that is, to make an additional atonement for his kinsman according to the flesh. I have shared his continual sorrow of heart from this cause.

4. Nor do I find this perfect rest of a soul in full trust in Christ, an easy-going, lazy optimism, which occupies the rocking chair, indifferent to all coming events, and believes that everything, even gigantic social and political evils, are all working out the highest good. I find myself, by tongue and pen and vote, antagonizing every movement of Satan in society, in politics, and in literature. I have forbodings when selfish and wicked men are lifted into power; and I can claim the promise that "all things work together for good" only after a vigorous resistance to sin in every form. I write this just after casting my ballot for a prohibitory Governor of Massachusetts, in the endeavour to build a dyke against the sea of drunkenness which is fast engulfing this historic commonwealth. My candidate was not elected, but personally, though not for the State, I can claim the promise that all things are working out many a great day's work for me. "Things to come are yours."

5. This rest does not exclude the strong feeling of disapprobation where a manifest wrong is done to another or to myself. It is not the office of the Holy Spirit to dull the moral perception, and deaden the

moral feeling which naturally accompanies such a perception. The unfallen angels and the holy God must be endowed with such a sense of justice, that they instinctively condemn every violation of the moral law.

An old English divine taught good moral philosophy when he said, that a soul that could not feel a righteous indignation in the presence of glaring injustice, was as defective as a man who had a withered muscle. This feeling of moral disapprobation must not be confounded with a desire to inflict suffering on the offender. We may keenly feel a wrong, while we calmly leave its punishment to the Judge of the quick and the dead, praying for the timely repentance and salvation of the wrong-doer.

After this negative view we turn the leaf, and read the positive side.

1. It is a deliverance from unsatisfied cravings.

"Man has a soul of vast desires,

Which burns within with quenchless fires."

In this unappeasable longing for something yet unattained I trace the features of God in the human soul. If man is in the image of his Creator, there must be a capacity in his nature which only the Infinite can fill. When filled with all the fullness of God, the soul for the first time experiences rest from unsatisfied desire. But only so long as we continue to drink from this overflowing fountain shall we be satisfied. "He that believeth (perpetually -- see the Greek) on me shall (by no means -- strengthened negative) never thirst." It is the instinctive feeling that soul-thirst will follow, if we cease drinking.

2. Release from that irksomeness of Christian service which characterizes a subtle legalism. The yoke of Christ chafes when sin still lurks in the soul. When we do not in all respects freely will what God wills, we are carrying a burden up-hill. But when full trust in Christ brings us into perfect harmony with God, both the burden and the hill suddenly vanish, and we begin to sing: --

"I worship Thee, sweet will of God,

And all Thy ways adore;

And every day I live, I seem

To love Thee more and more."

Was not Jesus addressing justified souls still wrestling with inbred sin when He promised rest to those who labour and are heavy laden? Unawakened sinners feel at ease under the yoke of sin -- the ease of spiritual stupor. Only the initially saved feel the pressure of the yoke and their own inability to throw it off. Christ completes their deliverance from a sense of servility when they come to Him, as the Giver of rest, as well as the Forgiver of sins.

Says Olshausen: "The discord in man is not immediately removed after his entering into the element of the good. For this reason the Redeemer speaks also of a yoke and a burden which He Himself imposes, which is only felt by man so far as he is still encumbered by sin; his nobler nature feels Christ's Spirit and life to be a homogeneous element." Hence the entire removal of sin is easement from Christ's burden. We are then no longer yoked, but free oxen in infinite clover. This is the idea of this celebrated annotator, only he would put the broken yoke of inbred sin and the clover beyond the river. "There is rest beyond the river." May a new order of anointed poets arise, who will bring back to mortals on this side the river the

good things which by a sad mistake have been transported to the other shore! May the revisers of the Bible correctly put a comma instead of a period between the ninth and the tenth verses of the second chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians -- "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit," so that the English reader may no longer be led astray from the true meaning of the Spirit, the description of the believer's heaven on earth, when Christ is spiritually manifested to the soul in all the fullness of His love by the abiding Comforter and Sanctifier. (See John xiv. 21, and xvi. 14).

3. Rest from that original tendency to sin inherent in fallen humanity. This is our testimony, not our mere theory. We no longer read with incredulous wonder, the definition of the full assurance of faith written by the German, Arvid Gradin, at the request of John Wesley: "Repose in the blood of Christ; a firm confidence toward God, and persuasion of His favour; the highest tranquility, serenity, and peace of mind, with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and a cessation of all, even inward sins.

4. Salvation from doubt, the disturber of the soul's peace. This is an element of the uninterrupted Sabbath of love made perfect, and it differs from the ordinary witness of the Spirit in two particulars -- it is abiding and not intermittent; and it attests purity as well as pardon.

5. Rest from worry and fear of future ill. Why should I go about like fabled Atlas, carrying the world on my shoulders, since I have found the real Atlas, the divine Burden-bearer, Jesus Christ? "Casting all your care on Him." Alford's comment is precious, because by his critical scholarship he brings out an idea not expressed in the English version: "Casting (once for all, by an act which includes the life) all your anxiety, the whole of it, not every anxiety as it arises; for none will arise if this transference has been effectually made." This is what I term rest from worry, rest attained, by a single act of trust, and retained, not by spasms of faith, but by a habit of reliance on the Son of God, the King of Glory.

"Now rest, my long-divided heart;

Fixed on this blissful centre, rest."

The reader will fall into a great error if he infers that I have had no tribulations and bitter cups during these Sabbatic years. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, arising from the sins of men, yet he ever carried in his bosom a repose too deep for the human plummet to sound -- the peace of God which passeth all understanding. The disciple is as his Lord. St. Paul was cast down, but not cast away; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Thus the hemisphere of my soul which has been turned toward Christ, has been filled with perpetual sunlight, while that turned toward sinners has been in the shade. Thanks be unto God, the joy of heaven will not be hemispherical, but spherical and full-orbed. 'There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are AT REST.'

Meanwhile, this happy pilgrim pillows his head upon his knapsack in the lengthening shadow of his seventh milestone, and, with his face toward the New Jerusalem, snatches a moment's repose.

"Here in the body pent, absent from Him I roam;

Yet nightly pitch my moving tent a day's march nearer home."

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