

The Man of Rest

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon explores the concept of rest and deliverance, highlighting the curse on the ground, man's toil and weariness, and the expectation of deliverance through Noah and ultimately the Day of the Son of Man.

Scripture: Genesis 5:28

Topics: "Rest in Christ", "Hope"

Description

Horatius Bonar expounds on Lamech's prophetic declaration regarding Noah, emphasizing the dual nature of the prophecy that points to both Noah and a greater deliverer. Lamech's words reflect a deep faith in God's promise to alleviate the curse of toil and bring comfort to humanity, highlighting the weariness and longing for rest that all creation experiences. Bonar illustrates how Lamech's expectation of deliverance connects to the hope of a future restoration through Christ, who offers true rest to the weary. The sermon encourages believers to anticipate the ultimate removal of the curse and the fulfillment of God's promises in the new creation. Bonar calls for a life of holiness and godliness in light of this hope.

Transcript

"And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son; and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."--Genesis 5:28,29

THIS is the utterance of faith; it is the voice of a believing man that we hear in Lamech's words. Lamech speaks because God had spoken to him. It is not mere parental yearning; it is not mere selfish weariness crying out under toil; it is not the expression of a dark and vague hope; it is faith speaking out the revelation which God had made to it regarding creation's deliverance; and it is the first intimation we have as to the removal of the "curse,"--as to the "rest" and "consolation."

It is a double prophecy. By this I do not mean a doubtful or a conditional prophecy. There is no such thing as a conditional prophecy. If it be prophecy, it is not conditional; and if it be conditional, it is not prophecy. A double prophecy is one that takes in two events, or persons, or places in one description; the near and the far; predicting both, while seeming to predict only one; as David, in the seventy-second Psalm, points both to Solomon and to a greater than Solomon; as Isaiah points to the Babylon of his day and Babylon the great. The prophet sketches a scene or person immediately before his eye, but in language which intimates that a far greater is coming. The near or miniature sketch is so drawn as to bring out the full features of the larger and more distant.

So is it here with Lamech. God reveals to him the future of two persons and two things: (1.) his own son, and a far greater, of whom his son was but the shadow; (2.) the alleviation or removal of earth's curse, partially under Noah, fully under the greater than Noah. There are two remarkable prophecies before the flood, first, that of Enoch, concerning Messiah's coming with his saints, to destroy the wicked; which was a double prophecy, relating both to the deluge and to the judgment at the Lord's coming; the second is that of Lamech concerning "the rest" of the saints (2 Thessalonians 1:7) and the removal of the curse. Let us look into this second prophecy.

I. The curse on the ground. When man sinned, the first stroke of the curse fell. It had now lasted about fifteen centuries, unabated. It was something real: its results were both barrenness in what was good, and fruitfulness in evil. The whole creation groaned; the blight and sadness were felt everywhere. It was a record of human sin; God's visible testimony to the greatness of the first sin--the one sin of primal disobedience--"Cursed is the ground for thy sake." It is not yet removed. Creation is still subject to vanity. Corruption, mortality, decay, death are here. It has been a long curse, yet it is the memorial of a single sin.

II. Man's toil and weariness. The whole verse reads weariness and heaviness of spirit--almost despair. The world was growing more wicked and more luxurious. It was increasing in population. Men were not allowed to eat flesh; nor to kill animals save for sacrifice. These animals, increasing rapidly, would require an immense pasturage. Man's toil would thus be greatly on the increase; it would become quite oppressive and overwhelming. He knew not what to do, nor which way to turn. Toil, toil, toil! This was his daily lot. In the sweat of his face he was made to eat his bread. The curse on the ground grew no lighter, and his labour grew heavier. What with barrenness in good and fruit-fullness in evil, it demanded of him endless labour and weariness. He groaned under it along with a groaning creation. He was compelled to sympathise with the groaning and travailing creature. Such ought to be our feeling. Our toil may not be quite so oppressive; we do not so wholly depend on our toil; the appliances of art and the permission to eat animal food have alleviated our labours. But still creation groans, and man eats his bread in the sweat of his face.

III. Man's longing for comfort. The words of the verse are those of the hireling looking for the shadow, and longing for repose. These patriarchs were aged men; some nearly a thousand years. One thousand years of toil! What a life! If three-score and ten be so wearisome to some, what would one thousand be? Lamech, when he uttered these words, was one hundred and eighty-two. Surely he had known toil and weariness beyond what we can do! Do we wonder that he longed for comfort, that he sighed for rest, and that he breathed out these deep longings for deliverance?

Are we not longing too? Is toil so sweet that we wish its continuance? Or is rest so terrible that we do not desire it: and say "how long"!

IV. Man's expectation of deliverance. He knew that the case of earth was not hopeless. He would gather from the first promise that God meant, some time or other, to undo the curse. And while he sympathised with the "groaning and travailing" of creation, he joined in its "earnest expectation." He sustained himself under his toil by the expectation of rest. He was not satisfied to remain forever toiling and sweating. It was part of his creed to look for rest; to grasp the coming consolation. Man laboured and was heavy laden; but he heard the voice of the true Noah saying, Come unto me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest.

V. Man's expectation was connected with some one individual to be born in due time. Lamech had been taught of God to expect something in connection with his son, whom he named Noah, in consequence of

this expectation. And in his time relief was granted, the alleviation, though not the removal, of the curse and the toil, (1.) Noah received a confirmation of the first blessing given to Adam before he fell; (2.) In his time man's life began to be shortened; (3.) Permission was granted to till animals and eat their flesh; (4.) Special attention was directed to husbandry, "Noah began to be a husbandman." These partial alleviations given in connection with Noah were figures of the complete deliverance of creation in connection with a greater than Noah; in the day of the Son of man, the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, of those of whom Enoch prophesied "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints."

Thus we anticipate the deliverance of creation, the removal of the curse, in the day of the Son of man, when He shall say, Behold, I make all things new. The greater than Noah is at hand; and with Him the manifestation of the sons of God; and, with that, the rest which remaineth for the people of God; the times of the restitution of all things; when barrenness shall be exchanged for fruitfulness; and the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose: for we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Seeing, then, we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

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