

The Nature of the Saints' Rest

by Richard Baxter

The saints' everlasting rest is the perfect, endless enjoyment of God by the perfected believers, to which their souls arrive at death and after the resurrection and final judgment.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:12

Topics: "Atonement Theology", "Blood Sacrifice"

Description

The preacher delves into the concept of 'leitourgia,' highlighting its significance as a public service or ministry, particularly in the context of the Jewish priesthood. The sermon emphasizes the necessity of blood for cleansing and forgiveness, drawing parallels between the shedding of blood in the Old Testament sacrifices and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Through various Old Testament examples and New Testament references, the preacher illustrates how blood symbolizes the costliness of sin and the atonement required for forgiveness, ultimately pointing to Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for the redemption of humanity.

Transcript

From heaven's height the soul surveys the Promised Land. Looking back on earth, the soul views the dreary wilderness through which it passed. To stand on Mount Memory, comparing heaven with earth, fills the soul with unimaginable gratitude, and makes it exclaim:

"Is this the inheritance that cost so much as the blood of Christ? No wonder! O blessed price! Is this the result of believing? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor? Is this where Christ was so eager to bring me? O praise the Lord! Is this the glory of which the Scriptures spoke, and of which ministers preached so much? I see the Gospel is indeed good news!

"Are all my troubles, Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place you came to so unwillingly? Was duty tiresome? Was the world too good to lose? Could you not leave all, deny all, and suffer anything for this? Were you loathe to die to come to this? O false heart, you had almost betrayed me to eternal flames and lost me this glory! Are you not ashamed now, my soul, that you ever questioned that Love which brought you here? Are you not sorry that you ever quenched His Spirit's prompting or misinterpreted His providence, or complained about the narrow road that brought you to such a destination?"

"Now you are sufficiently convinced that your blessed Redeemer was saving you, as well when he crossed your desires, as when he granted them; when he broke your heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to you, unworthy self, for this crown; but to God be the glory forever!"

Here on earth our condition is quite different. We have lost interest in God. We have lost all true knowledge of Him. When the Son of God comes to rescue us and bring us back to God, He does not find in us the ability to believe. He offers us eternal happiness, but we blink blindly and stare at Him with disbelief. As the poor man who refused to believe that anyone could have a million dollars because that was so far above what he himself possessed, so when Christ comes offering us heavenly treasures, it seems beyond belief.

When God wanted to give the Israelites their rest in the Promised Land, it was harder to make them believe it than to overcome their enemies and give it to them. When, at last, the Israelites possessed the land, they had only a "cash

advance" on a much greater inheritance to come. Yet they could not believe God for more than they already possessed. If they expected more from the Messiah at some future time, they envisioned only an increase of their earthly prosperity. The writer of the book of Hebrews aims most of his letter against such unbelief. The rest provided in the Promised Land of Canaan and in the sacred Sabbaths was intended to teach God's people to look for a further rest in Christ.

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). This text is the writer's conclusion after various arguments. This conclusion contains the basis of all the believer's comfort, the purpose of all his service and suffering, the sum of all the Gospel promises.

And now, dear reader, whoever you are, young or old, rich or poor, I appeal to you in the name of your Lord, who will soon call you to a reckoning and judge you to your everlasting, unchangeable state. I charge you to do more than merely read these words. Do more than read and dismiss these things with a nodding of approval; but enthusiastically commit yourself to this work. Fix your heart upon God in Christ. Find in Him your only rest.

May the living God, who is the goal and rest of all His saints, make our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving Him, and delighting in Him, may be the main activity of our lives. God grant that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; "lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest," we should "come short of it," (Heb. 4:1) through our own unbelief or negligence.

What is the saints' everlasting rest? It is the perfect, endless enjoyment of God by the perfected believers, to which their souls arrive at death. Further, it is that eternal enjoyment of God to which both soul and body arrive most fully after the resurrection and final judgment.

Though angels and risen spirits enjoy this rest already, mortals are far away from it, and by nature, are going in the opposite direction. All are making haste towards hell, until by conviction, Christ brings them to a halt, and then, by conversion, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself. Those who never knew they were without God and on the way to hell, never knew the way to heaven. Whoever sought for what he didn't know he had lost? "Those who are healthy need not a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt. 9:12).

There are Five Conditions represented in the heavenly rest.

1. Ceasing From the Means of Grace

When we have reached the port, we have finished sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied he has done his work. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Neither shall we need to fast, and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is finished. The laborers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the weeds burned, and the work completed. The unregenerate are past hope, and the saints are past fear forever.

2. Perfect Freedom From All Evils

In heaven there is nothing that spoils. All that remains outside. There is not such a thing as grief or regret. No sorrow or sickness, no weak body, aching joints, helpless infancy, decrepit age, bad temperament, tormenting fears, alarming anxieties, stabbing pain, nor anything that deserves the name of evil. We wept when the world rejoiced, but our sorrow is turned to joy, and no one can ever take that joy away.

3. Personal Perfection Both of Body and Soul

If God did not perfect us to make us capable of appreciating heaven, it would little matter to us how wonderful heaven might be. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). The physical eye is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear of hearing them, nor this heart of understanding them. In heaven the eye, ear, and heart are made capable. The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more glorious to us is God's glory.

4. Nearness to God

Here, reader, do not be surprised if I be at a loss to explain. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we shall be, but only in general that when Christ "shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2), no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot very well know what it is to enjoy Him.

I stand and look upon a hill of ants. They don't know me, my nature, or my thoughts, though I am their fellow creature. How little, then, must we know of the great Creator, though He, with one view, clearly beholds us all.

If I should tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot understand; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace. How much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of the heavenly glory. But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace gives them a slight foretaste of glory.

If men and angels should try to express the blessedness of that state, what could they say beyond this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be WITH ME where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me" (John 17:24).

5. New Powers of Body and Soul In the Enjoyment of God

This eternal rest is not the rest of a stone which ceases from all motion. O Christian, this is a rest, as it were, without rest; for "they rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). This BODY shall be so changed, that it shall no more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, "I am not the man I was," how much more will the resurrection make us different. Our senses shall exceed what we now experience. God will fill up, with Himself, the expanded capacity of our glorified senses. Certainly the body would not be raised up and continued if it were not to share in the glory.

How wonderful is the MIND also. It can measure the sun, moon, stars, and predict each eclipse to the minute, many years in advance. But the peak of its accomplishments is that it can know God, who made all these. Christian, when, after long gazing heavenward, you have caught a glimpse of Christ, are you not ready to say, with Peter, "Master, it is good for us to be here"? (Mark 9:5). "O that I might dwell on this mountain top! O that I might always see what I now see!"

Consider the enjoyment of God's LOVE. Did He love you, an enemy--a sinner? Will He not now immeasurably love you, a son--a perfect saint? He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin (Matt. 23:37), with what love will He rejoice over the New Jerusalem in her glory! (Rev. 21:2).

Christian, believe this, and think on it--you shall be embraced in the arms of that love which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory. Know this, believer, to your everlasting comfort; if those arms have once embraced you, neither sin, nor hell can get you again forever. The saints' everlasting rest consists in the enjoyment of God by love.

Consider also the part of JOY. You, poor soul, who may now pray for joy and wait for joy, and complain for lack of joy. It may be God keeps your joy until you have more need. Better that you lose your comfort than your safety. If you should die full of fear and sorrow, it would be but a moment and they would all be gone and replaced with joy unimaginable. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). O blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill you with joy now, if a voice from heaven should tell you of the love of God, the pardon of your sins, and assure you of your part in these joys! Think what your joy will be, when your actual possession of it all shall convince you of its truth!

It will be not only your joy, but a mutual joy. Is there joy in heaven at your conversion? (Luke 15:7). Will there be none at your glorification? Will not the angels welcome you there and congratulate your safe arrival?

But wait! Dare we proceed further into these marvelous mysteries of God? I think I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). O forgive your servant, Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I regret that my understanding is so dull, and my expression so inadequate for such a glory. I have only heard of these wonders. O let your servant see you and possess these joys, and then I shall give more accurate descriptions and give you fuller glory. Then would I confess, "I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42:3). Yet "I believed, therefore have I spoken" (Ps. 116:10). Though the weakness be the result of my own dullness, yet the fire is from your altar. Forgive the sins that stain this effort. Wash them away in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none, must be your service here. O take your Son's excuse for His disciples, which excuse we also plead, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-baxter/the-nature-of-the-saints-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