

The Splendor of the Saints' Rest

by Richard Baxter

The heavenly rest is a purchased possession that is free for us, but it was costly for Christ, and it is a place where we will experience the communion of saints, rest from the world and the flesh, and rest from sin and temptation.

Scripture: Isaiah 61:6, Romans 13:6, Romans 15:16, Philippians 2:25, Hebrews 1:7

Topics: "Christian Service", "Divine Authority"

Description

Greek Word Studies delves into the meaning of 'leitourgos', emphasizing its significance as a worker of the people, often associated with public duties and works of public use. This term is used in the New Testament to describe Paul, Epaphroditus, angels as God's ministers, and priests in the Jerusalem Temple. The concept of 'leitourgos' highlights the idea of serving in a religious capacity with solemnity and dignity, reflecting the authority of civil authorities as servants of God. The sermon explores the rich religious legacy of 'leitourgos' and its implications for both rulers and citizens, drawing parallels to historical figures like Cyrus, the Persian emperor, anointed by God to carry out His will.

Transcript

Let us draw a little nearer and see the splendor of this heavenly rest. The Lord cover us with His gentle grace while we approach to take this view.

What an honor is this rest. It is called the purchased possession because Christ bought it for us with His sacrifice. As we write down the price our purchases cost us, so let us write down the price of heaven as--THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.

It was costly for Christ, but FREE for us. If both the Father and the Son freely offer us the purchased life on our willing acceptance; and if they freely send the Holy Spirit to enable us to accept; what do we have in heaven that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must surprise the saints to think of this freeness! What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and receivings--between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in. What depths of gratitude will we feel to look down upon hell and think, "Yonder is the place that sin would have brought me; but this is where Christ has brought me! Yonder lies the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Who made the difference? Would I not now have been in hell if I had had my own way, and been allowed my own will? Would I not have lingered in Sodom until the flames had ignited me, if God had not in mercy brought me out?" We know to whom the praise is due and shall be given forever.

Let "DESERVED" be written on the door of hell; but on the door of heaven, "THE FREE GIFT."

Special mercy arouses more gratitude than universal mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel through the Red Sea, the miracle would have been less memorable. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, the saving of Noah had not been so noteworthy. If Sodom and Gomorrah had not burned, the deliverance of Lot would not have been talked of so much. That will surely be a day to remember, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken and the other left (Luke 17:34, 36).

We will enjoy the communion of saints. As we have been together in duty, danger, and distress, so shall we be together in the great deliverance. If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven may be our proper joy, how much more the real sight and actual experience? It is surely comforting to think of that day when we shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb forever.

Not only our old acquaintances, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know and enjoy. Yes, even angels, as well as saints, will be our acquaintances. Those angels who now are willingly helping us, as God's invisible agents, will then be our companions in joy. It is a beautiful characteristic of the heavenly rest, that we are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

On earth we receive God's blessings through secondary causes. They come second hand, or even third hand, or who knows how indirectly? To have needs but no satisfaction of them, is the condition of hell. To have needs met by other creatures, is our condition on earth. To have needs met immediately and directly by God, is the condition of the saints in heaven. To have no needs at all, is the condition of God alone.

He who makes His people "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, who brings forth his fruit in his season" (Ps. 1:3), will also give them the reward in His season. Do we complain because we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness? Do we lament because we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land? (Ps. 137:4). Do we groan because we find no harbor in the middle of the ocean? Do we object because we cannot sleep during working-hours? Wouldn't all of these things be very unseasonable? Shall we then wonder why we cannot have heaven on earth? Wouldn't that be just as unseasonable?

The new nature which God gives the redeemed, matches the reward that awaits them. Indeed, their holiness is provided by the Spirit of Christ, to fit them for heaven. God provides a spiritual rest suitable to their spiritual nature.

We are now as the fish in an aquarium. There is enough water in the aquarium to keep the fish alive, but what is that compared with the ocean? In heaven we shall live in a compatible environment. Christian, this is a rest after your own heart; it contains all that your heart could desire. That which you long for, pray for, work for; there you shall find it all.

Heaven excludes sin. What was the use of Christ's dying on the Cross, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Christian, if you once reach heaven, you shall sin no more. Isn't this good news? That hard heart, those evil thoughts, which tagged along, nagging you, shall be left behind forever. All baffling Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions shall be reconciled.

We shall rest from the temptations of Satan. What a grief it is to a Christian, though he resist the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord. What a torment to have such obscene suggestions made to his soul, such horrible ideas presented to his imagination, rebellious thoughts of God, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture. Especially when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready as fuel to ignite the instant one of those sparks should fall upon them. Satan has power here on earth to tempt us, but he cannot enter there.

All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. Here we are in continual danger. We can hardly open our eyes without danger of envying people above us, or despising those below us. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust. If we see deformity, we are liable to feel repulsion. If we are beautiful, it is fuel for pride. If we are ugly, we are likely to complain. If we have a high intelligence and gifts of learning, how prone we are to be puffed up, to seek applause, and to look down on ordinary folks. On the other hand, if we are not well educated, how easy it is to ridicule what we don't have and despise the scholarly. Are we in a position of power? How strong is the temptation to abuse our authority and mold others to our benefit. Are we subordinates? Then we are prone to envy others, to be critical and rebellious. It is our own corruption that thus traps us. We are our own worst enemies. But our heavenly rest will free us from all this. As Satan has no entrance there, so he has nothing to aid his subversion; but all things there shall help us praise our great Deliverer.

We shall also rest there from our divisions and unchristian quarrels with each other. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived in discord upon earth. There is no conflict there, because there is none of this pride, ignorance, or sin.

Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love. O happy day of the saints' rest in glory, when we shall have perfect unity. Now, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12); then, those who suffered with Him, shall be glorified with Him, and be at peace together.

Best of all, it will be an everlasting rest. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of once losing heaven. Study frequently, study thoroughly this one word--eternity. O that the sinner would study this word. I think it would startle him out of his dead sleep. O that the saved soul would study it. I think it would revive him in his devotion. "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17).

Reader, if you are a humble, sincere believer, and are waiting and longing for this rest, you will soon see and experience the truth of all this. You will then have such an understanding of this blessed state as to know that all I have written falls short of the whole truth a thousand-fold. In the meantime, let this much kindle your desires and revive your service.

What difference would it make in our daily lives, do you think, if we would keep this glory fresh in our thoughts? Would we be so inclined toward depression and discouragement? Would we be so unwilling to suffer or so afraid to die? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into this rest because of unbelief (Heb. 4:6).

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