

Soul Rest

by Thomas Cook

Entering into soul rest means to cease from our own works and trust in Christ for salvation and the Christian life.

Scripture: Hebrews 4:1

Topics: "Spiritual Rest", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches about the soul's undisturbed rest when harmonized with God, emphasizing the feeling of rest in the spirit-filled life on earth, not just in heaven. Soul rest involves ceasing from our own works and efforts to live the Christian life, relying on Christ's works and control. It also entails freedom from worry and fear of the future, trusting in God's providence and care. Additionally, rest from internal conflict signifies deliverance from indwelling sin, where Christ reigns without rivalry and believers experience tranquility, peace, and victory over sin.

Transcript

When all our powers are harmonized, each with each, and all with God, the soul enters upon a condition of undisturbed rest which is beyond the reach of doubt and fear. Among the many characteristics of the spirit-filled life there is none more marked than this feeling of rest which is developed in our personal consciousness. We sing of rest beyond the river, but we must not transport to the other shore the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him on this side of the river. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." These words are often quoted as though they had reference to the heavenly world. "But," says the Apostle, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit," indicating clearly that the believer's heaven on earth is meant, not some experience beyond the grave. "We which have believed do enter into rest." This rest is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews as "God's rest" (Heb. iii. 11), "My rest" (Heb. iv. 1), "His rest," "Christ's rest" (Heb. iv. 10), "a Sabbath rest" (Heb. iv. 4, 9). In the same Epistle we are taught that:

I. SOUL REST IMPLIES CESSATION FROM OUR OWN WORKS

"For he hath entered in his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from His" (Heb. iv. 10). Cessation from our own works does not mean ceasing from all kinds of work, for that is not true of saints either on earth or in heaven. We have no reason to believe that any saint or angel, or even God Himself, is ever inactive. He who enjoys soul rest is brought so intimately into sympathy with the Saviour that he is all aflame with zeal, ever hastening with quickened footsteps towards sinners dying in their sins

around him. It is as a widely-known preacher quaintly expressed it, "I enjoy that rest of faith that keeps me in perpetual motion." We are to cease to perform works with any such design as that of thereby saving our souls. Just so long as that constitutes the supreme object of our works, we are doing "our own works." But when the question of our soul's salvation is thrown entirely on Christ, and our works are performed out of love to God, they are not our works, but Christ's works -- the result of His working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. In one sense they are our works, because they are done by our own voluntary agency, but Christ is the moving cause of all that we do. True faith works love, and love does all for Christ. Faith in the great Atonement is the only basis of acceptance with God, apart from anything we can do. Faith sees salvation secured in Christ and ceases from compensative works, which by many are vainly wrought as a sort of offset against Divine forgiveness. As God did not rest until He had finished His creative works, so the Christian cannot rest until he ceases altogether from his legal works, and casts himself entirely upon the Saviour for salvation. Says Dr. Finney, "The truly believing soul rests from its own works. It sees salvation secured in Jesus Christ, and has no longer any motive for legal works. It works not from self nor for self; but its works are from Christ and for Christ."

In like manner we cease from our own efforts to live the Christian life. Many Christians live a life of resolution, instead of a life of faith in the Son of God. Those who trust to their own strength of purpose always find failure the result. The Gospel scheme is not fixing our will like flint, resolved to conquer or die. It is to commit the keeping of the soul wholly to Christ, and to cease from our own efforts. When we understand that it is not self-control, but Christ-control, we learn the secret of victory. The attitude of the believing soul is that of Peter's when he first stepped from the ship upon the waters of the sea, "Looking unto Jesus." Philosophy says, "Keep your eye upon your enemies;" but the Gospel says, "Eye Jesus only." Weakness results from a constant survey of the difficulties and temptations which beset us. Power comes when the eye turns towards the angel Jehovah. Christ is our "I am" for every "I need" of the soul. He is the storehouse, and, as need arises, we must go to Him. He supplies need as it comes, but not until it does come, and as we draw upon Him. "Human nature wants more -- wants to feel its wealth, to finger its coin; but is it not better to leave it in the bank, and go there for it as often, and in as large sums, as we like?" Such is the life of faith -- having all in Christ, and receiving all from Christ.

Self-endeavor is the great danger. This, rather than ambition, should be styled, "the last infirmity of noble minds." First the sinner goes about to establish his own righteousness, and even when that has proved to be a dead failure, he will be found striving to be his own sanctifier. Some write out their vows and put them into their Bible as reminders of their solemn engagements with God. Others decide that they will give more attention to closet prayer, attend all means of grace, visit the sick, and be more watchful against sin. Thus many sincere souls spend years in earnest struggling, substituting a renewed covenant, when failure disappoints them, for faith in the all-sufficient Saviour. Christ is offered to us in the Gospel as our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; and just so far as we make effort to dispense with Him in any of these particulars, we set aside the Gospel and seek salvation by the works of the law.

We have heard a lady tell how, when she was newly married, because she had not had much domestic experience, everything in the home seemed to go wrong. She did her best, but such difficulties arose that she was almost in a state of despair. One day she was so much discouraged that she sat down and wept. She was aroused by a knocking at the door, and found a telegraph boy with a telegram announcing that her mother was coming, and immediately her care was gone. "When mother arrived," she said, "I had no more anxiety, what I could not do mother could, and when she was with me I rested." What that mother was to her daughter Christ wants to be to us. If only we could learn to meet every call, difficulty, temptation

and trial, not saying, as many do, "I shall never be able to go through it," but saying, "I cannot, but Christ can, and He is with me," we should be able then to sing, with ever-increasing depth of meaning,

Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art.

II. IT IS REST FROM WORRY AND FEAR OF FUTURE ILL

Care is such a foe to happiness, that when it enters the heart happiness departs. Next to sin, it is the greatest evil that can come into a soul. It hinders prayers, prevents usefulness and defeats itself. The more the bewildered bird beats about the cage, the less chance it has of getting away. Fear and faith cannot keep house together. But a life free from care is not for that reason a careless life. In a certain sense we must be careful. Be careful to maintain good works is an apostolic injunction. The hymn contains the right sentiment, "Careful, yet without care, I am." One cannot be too careful when the care is to be right and to do right. But when the care is burdensome and distressing, we must learn to cast it on the Lord. Forethought is commanded, but foreboding is forbidden to those who are Christians. Misgivings about the providence of God lie at the root of all wearying worry. The secret tranquillity is trust. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Christ has the program of our best possible future in His hands. His will is the blending of infinite love and wisdom. If He chooses for us there can be no mistake. What the hidden plan of our future may be is no concern of ours so long as it is the will of God." It is sure to be right. Our only concern moment by moment should be, "Am I in the will of God?" If I am, then all is well. "All things work together for good to them that love God," though we may not be able to understand it. With this confidence we can sing with Faber -

Ill that He blesses is my good

And unblest good is ill;

And that is right that seems most wrong,

If it be His sweet will.

God governed the world well before we came into it, and He will be at no loss so far as we are concerned. He has taken better care of our past, and secured better results for the present, than we have deserved; why should we be anxious for the future?

How can I ever careful be,

While such a God is mine?

He watches o'er me night and day,

And tells me, "Mine is thine."

The lilies of the field He cares for, and we are of more value than they; also the birds of the air, and we are better than they. The very hairs of our heads are all numbered; which means that in all our matters, even as insignificant as the loss of a hair, God is interested; and it is in such ceaseless and perfect care -- infinite, tender, loving, and reaching to every possible necessity -we are asked to trust. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Alford's comment on this passage is precious, because his critical scholarship 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." The idea is that where there is perfect trust there is perfect contentment with our providential circumstances. We can then thank God even for disappointments, because we know they are for some wise purpose; and in this habit of reliance on God, not by spasms of faith, we find the true solvent for care. Those who have not entered into this rest not only bear the evils of today, but often import from the imaginary future all sorts of evils to increase their discomfort and distress. Can we not all say, as the aged Christian said to his family when they gathered round his deathbed, "I have had many trials and difficulties during my life-time, but half of them never happened"? This custom of crossing mountains before we reach them is most detrimental to Christian life. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Strength is never promised in advance, but given day by day as the day's needs require. We do well to follow Charles Kingsley's counsel, "Do today's duty, fight today's temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them." As grace is needed it will be given. "My God shall supply all your need." When we wonder if our need can be met, we act as absurdly as the little fish which Mr. Spurgeon imagined as swimming up the Thames, and wondering if there would be water enough for it. One day at a time, and one thing at a time, is one of the secrets of a life free from worry. If tomorrow brings some new duty, responsibility, struggle or trial, let it be sufficient that "our God will be alive tomorrow." Little faith will bring our souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to our souls.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

III. REST FROM INTERNAL CONFLICT, OR DELIVERANCE FROM INDWELLING SIN

Rest is cessation from strife or war. The children of Israel rested when they were freed from their enemies. Those who enter the rest of faith cease from their struggle with the flesh, or inbred sin, or depravity, by whatever name it may be described. All antagonisms to God are expelled from the soul and Christ reigns without a rival. Christ and sin can never exist in a state of partnership or affiliation. There is no war more distressing than civil war, and when a confederacy against Christ rages in the believer's heart, there is no possibility of rest. The strong man may be bound, but not being cast out, he makes desperate efforts to burst his bonds and reassert his supremacy in the household. The "infection of nature" within responds favorably to the temptations of Satan without. When the believer would do good, evil is present with him. It is to be feared that the majority of Christians are living in the seventh chapter of Romans instead of the sixth and the eighth. The tendencies to evil are so strong within them, and the contest with the flesh so distressing as to extort the cry continually, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the seventh chapter of Romans was never designed to be a representation of the ideal Christian life; it is rather a portrayal of the struggles of a convicted sinner seeking justification by the deeds of the law. The ideal Christian life is described in the sixth chapter, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Here we are taught that the purpose of the crucifixion of the old man is that the body, "in so far as it is a sin body" (Meyer), might be destroyed, "annihilated" (Cremer), "done away" (R.V.) "But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

The commandment is, "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." "If ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." To crucify and to mortify mean to put to death. The old man is not to be merely held down, but to be crucified until he is quite dead. Repressive power is nowhere in the New Testament ascribed to the blood of Christ, but rather purifying efficacy. When St. Paul said that he kept his body under and brought it into subjection, he made no allusion to the flesh, the carnal mind, but to his innocent bodily appetites. God does not propose to destroy our natural appetites, propensities and affections, but to take the sin out of them that they may be exercised rightly and properly, and always for His glory.

When John Wesley asked the German, Arvid Gradin, for his definition of full salvation he replied as follows "Repose in the blood of Christ, a firm confidence toward God and persuasion of His favor, the highest tranquillity, serenity and peace of mind, with a deliverance from every (inordinate) fleshly desire and a cessation of all even inward sins." To every word of this hundreds can subscribe. It is not our mere theory, but our experience. While conscious of many errors, ignorances, infirmities and defects which every moment need the merit of Christ's death, we claim by faith the rest from sin which the great poet of Methodism thus beautifully describes:-

All the struggle now is o'er,
And wars and fightings cease,
Israel now need sin no more,
But dwell in perfect peace.
All his enemies are gone,
Sin shall have in him no part,
Israel now shall dwell alone,
With Jesus in his heart.

Astronomers tell us that there is a point between the earth and the moon where the action of gravitation changes, and if we could hurl a missile with sufficient force that it would reach that point, instead of coming back to earth, in the superior attraction of the moon, it would rush on with increasing velocity to meet it. This illustrates human experience when "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." The natural tendency in us towards sin (the law of sin and death) is not only neutralized when Christ our life is fully apprehended (the law of the spirit of life) but under the more powerful operation of the latter law the soul now gravitates upward, every aspiration is Godward, and His service is a luxury and a delight.

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