

BLOOD, BREAD AND FIRE

The Christian's Threefold Experience

by

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CHAPTER NINE

“ENTERED INTO REST”

Often in strolling through cemeteries we have come upon the inscription, “Entered into Rest.” It tells us that some soul has moved out from earth's sorrow and struggle, some traveler gone home evermore to be with the Lord.

Precious indeed is that assurance offered in God's Word for all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But the believer need not wait until he reaches the grave to enter the Christian's rest. **“There remaineth a rest to the people of God,”** but although heaven is its consummation and perfection, it need not begin there. Just as there is a love of God and peace of God and joy of the Lord, there is a rest of God, and it is open here and now in this present life to whomsoever will enter in.

Certainly ours is a restless world today. **“There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked”** (Isaiah 48:22). **“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”** (Isaiah 57: 20). Men dope themselves with the sedatives of sin and get drunk on all the stimulants of Satan, but they awake more wretched than ever.

Even Christians who claim to have anchored their souls in the haven of rest allow fear and doubt and worry to rob them of their blessed privileges in Christ.. They live in a strain, taking their spiritual pulse and temperature, wearing themselves out in flesh effort, tense and feverish. This is not God's way, for He is neither hurried nor worried. Such Christians have not entered into rest.

In the midst of all the turmoil, our Lord invites us to His rest (Matthew 11:25-30).

First, He states the simplicity of it: **“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”**

Not many wise, mighty, noble have been called. While the worldly wise and the sophisticated stumble around looking for something complex and elaborate, the simple and child-hearted enter into rest. Only children and the child-hearted are genuine: all others are clowns.

Then the Lord declares the sublimity of this rest; He shows us His resources.

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

All good things come from God (James 1: 17); all has been given the Son by the Father; and all things belong to the believer (I Corinthians 3:21). It is God’s own rest given to us in Christ.

The Lord Jesus then gives us the secret of this rest: **“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**

He invites the laboring and the laden. Men labor today in a vicious circle, “getting on” without stopping to ask, “On where?” And men are laden today, burdened with loads no mortal can carry at this terrific modern pace, suicide, crime, insanity, heart failures, physical collapse all declare that the journey is too great. They try to flee as a bird to this and that mountain. They seek surcease in this fad and that ism, in wine and carousing. They steel themselves in hard-boiled cynicism or try to laugh it off in bitter nonchalance. But the burden grows heavier, and then they seek rest in the grave. Alas, the grave will bring no rest, for it takes more than a shroud and casket to give peace to the soul!

The only way out is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gives rest. But He also says we are to learn of Him and find rest. His rest is both an obtainment and an attainment. The possession involves a process.

When we come to the Saviour, receive Him into the heart, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is ours, and all that is His becomes ours, including His rest. Then, as we abide in Him, walk in the light, learn of Him, we find rest; we realize rest in actual daily experience; the peace of God garrisons our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Thus we might say the rest He gives is the believer’s by virtue of his new position; the rest we learn is realized in the believer’s practice. Because we have the possession, we must not ignore the process. There is nothing to earn but much to learn. All things are ours, but we must take His yoke upon us and become His disciples; we must let His mind be in us; we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. It is the yoke of bondage and the unequal yoke that crush the soul. Too many think of our Lord’s yoke as an extra load in addition to what we already carry. But it is wings, not weights. By it all other loads are lightened. We cast all our care upon Him Who cares for us. His statutes become our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. If we know these things, happy are we if we do them. Too many think only of rules and responsibility, but what He offers us is rest!

Turning to Hebrews 4: 1-11, we learn more of the believer’s rest. It is typified by the Promised Land and the Sabbath rest of God after the finished creation.

The Israelites did not follow Joshua into the land and so missed what God had prepared for them. Canaan represents a happy Christian life and not heaven as so many who sing, "I Am Bound for the Promised Land," wrongly imagine. We have no business standing on Jordan's stormy banks casting a wishful eye toward Canaan's fair and happy land where our possessions lie. We are to enter and possess and eat the fruit of the land; not live on samples brought back by spies.

Heaven is, indeed, the perfect and complete rest of the believer, but there remains a rest to the people of God here and now in this present life for all who will cross Jordan and follow the New Testament Joshua, Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, in spiritual conquest.

Just as God rested from creation on the seventh day, so the believer rests in a perfect redemption. **"He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."**

It is hard to learn that God has wrought in Christ all that is necessary for our salvation and sanctification and every other need, and we have but to "let go and let God." Just as one cannot sleep so long as he lies in nervous tension, "trying to hold up the bed," so we cannot rest until we learn to relax spiritually and cast all our cares upon Him who cares for us.

We are exhorted, **"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest."**

That is, we are to apply ourselves diligently to learn this secret and enter into it. It certainly is worth giving one's earnest thought to. We ought to make it our business until we have learned it, for although it is not earned, it is learned as we take our Lord's yoke upon us and become His disciples.

But just here comes a difficulty. We imagine that this rest is so complicated only a few can reach up to it, whereas it is so simple that only a few get down to it. The very simplicity of it seems to hide it from those who look for the complex and elaborate.

The whole matter is just one of believing that God has said and done enough to rest upon it in childlike confidence. Many dear souls just cannot believe that it can be as simple as that!

What is it to enter into this rest? To rest in Him for salvation is simply to depend upon His finished work on Calvary without any works of our own. Surely if God is satisfied with our Lord's accomplished salvation, we ought to be!

To rest in Him for assurance is to believe we are saved because God's Word declares it.

To rest in Him for sanctification is to accept and receive and trust Christ within us as our righteousness, made unto us sanctification.

To rest in Him for power is to ask for and receive by faith the fulness of the Spirit, then, believing we have received, to go forth to serve and testify, reckoning on the Power where and when we need it.

We rest in Him for every need of spirit, mind, and body because He has promised to supply them and to make all grace abound toward us. We rest in Him for the future because He has promised we shall be with Him.

We know these facts and promises, but according to our faith really to believe them shall it be unto us. We confuse the whole matter trying to explain it.

Here the simple soul finds peace while scholars wear themselves out trying to unravel it. We enter into His rest the day we really let go our tense and nervous strain and rest upon His Word, however unreal it may appear. There is no other way. It is not a matter of vision, strange feelings, emotional ecstasies. It is as definite as walking through an open doorway. We labor to enter into rest only in bringing ourselves to where we give up trying to understand it and reason it away and simply trust and obey. There may be at first a “sinking feeling” as though we had stepped out upon air, but we shall find the Rock beneath our feet.

We read of a man walking along a steep precipice at night. Slipping, he fell over what he thought was the edge of the cliff. Grasping a shrub, he held on tensely until his grip failed him and he fell — just six inches to solid ground beneath his feet! So we hold onto this or that until strength fails us and we let go and find God.

This way the saints of the ages have gone. From the fever of the seventh chapter of Romans Paul entered the rest of the Spirit-filled life.

After dissatisfied years, George Fox entered that rest when, as he put it, “I saw into that which was without end, and things which cannot be uttered, and of the greatness and infinitude of the love of God, which cannot be expressed by words.”

John Bunyan groped in soul-turmoil of dreadful doubts and fears until one day while crossing a field he was set free by the words, “Thy righteousness is in heaven.”

John Wesley, after ten years seeking peace and rest, crossed into Canaan when, to use his words, “In the evening I went very unwilling to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Well might Wesley receive help from Martin Luther, for it was that giant of God who, as an emaciated monk, worn out with trying to earn his own salvation, learned one happy day as he read that liberating message of Romans that **“a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”**

No longer enslaved in hopeless bondage of flesh effort that can never do enough to claim forgiveness, that day he crossed Jordan to thunder through the ages the glorious gospel: **“By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”**

It was George Whitefield who wandered around Kadesh-Barnea seeking rest through asceticism, fastings, and countless austerities, living on tea and bread until his frail body could scarcely climb the stairs. Nor did rest ever come until he got his eyes off himself and upon the Saviour and was able to say, "Oh, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God and a full assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul."

It was that saint, John Fletcher, who wearied himself at all hours of the night in quest of peace, drawing up resolutions, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, until one dreary day, tired and despondent, his eye fell at last upon that signpost that points to rest: "**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee**"! And then and there another troubled soul moved out of the feverish grind of self-effort into the Sabbath of His rest.

What more shall we say?

One thinks of A. B. Earle, the Spirit-filled evangelist, with a heart ill at ease for years, until one day a sweet, heavenly peace filled his soul, and a calm, simple, childlike trust took possession of his whole being.

One thinks of Frances Ridley Havergal wrestling with sin and worn out with heart-searching until that blessed word of I John 1: 7, "**The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,**" proved the key that unlocked the gates of bondage to set her free.

Catherine Booth, exhausted with a day of praying, lay on a sofa to rest and found there the rest of faith as she realized that whatsoever toucheth the altar is most holy and that if all is on the altar, all is holy.

Phoebe Palmer after seeking long and earnestly for peace because she thought it could only be reached through agony and struggle, learned it is found not by wrestling but by clinging and that "when she gave all trying over, simply trusting, she was blessed."

In these insane, terrific days, when the journey is too great for us all, may we come to our Lord and receive His rest; take His yoke upon us and find rest; labor to enter into rest; leave the wretched wilderness wanderings and possess the land; abandon frantic strivings of the flesh and cease from our own works as God did from His.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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