

R12.2 July 2023 Blog Rest

"Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened."
(Hebrews 4:1-2)¹

All people long for rest. Christ alone offers true rest. True rest does not exist apart from Christ. Rest has been defined this way: "the refreshing quiet or repose of sleep; refreshing ease or inactivity after exertion or labor."² While this definition is correct, it is far too narrow and shallow to describe the rest mankind seeks and the rest only Christ can provide. True rest exists contemporaneously on several levels.

Our bodies need rest. They need to replenish from physical exertion. Our cells need to be regenerated. Until we are in heaven with Jesus Christ, our bodies will continue to gradually break down. Our physical rest will always be temporary and partial. Our present bodies have built-in obsolescence. In heaven Christ will give us new bodies; bodies that will not be subject to age, disease, deterioration, or death.

Even though we are sinners, we yearn for rest from the power and presence of sin. Only Christ provides rest from the power and presence of sin. He gives us "the desires of our hearts."³ That is, He replaces our worldly, sinful desires with holy desires that He implants in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit implants godly desires and causes them to grow and multiply. We will have eternal rest from envy, lust, covetousness, selfishness, deceit, treachery, stealing, murder, etc. We will be free from being the *perpetrators* of sin and *the victims* of sin. Christ will free us from the lament of the Apostle Paul:

¹ All scripture references in this blog are ESV unless otherwise noted

² <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/rest>

³ Psalm 37:4

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."⁴

The divine, eternal rest includes a desire for ever-deeper intimacy with Christ. Throughout eternity we will never have enough of Him. There will always be something new and alluring to discover about Him. We will never be bored. Life will never be humdrum. As our desire for Christ deepens, our dissatisfaction with our polluted world will correspondingly increase. We marvel at sunsets and sunrises, but they pale before Jesus who is "the radiance of the glory of God."⁵ Sin will increasingly lose its allure until at last our eyes will see all sin in all its terrible repugnance. We will no longer be deceived or beguiled. We will be forever free from the desire of Lot's wife to look back and long for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Christ gives us rest from guilt and from our past. The Apostle Paul, whose past could have choked the life out of him, exulted: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."⁶ All of us have something in our past that haunts us, saps our joy, depletes our energy; however, through Christ we have rest from the universal, existential questions of life: "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose?" Our purpose is to know God, obey Him and love Him, not for His benefit, but for our benefit.

Christ also gives us rest from the *eternal penalty* for sin by taking upon Himself the punishment for sin that we deserve. So long as we are in the flesh grace may not erase the worldly penalty for sin. But when we are absent from the body and present with Christ, the divine rest we will have in Christ will forever vanquish the penalty for sin. But for now, the thief will still go to prison; the murderer will still face either execution or

⁴ Romans 7:18–20 (ESV)

⁵ Hebrews 1:3

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

a life sentence. But for those who receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, grace will remove our alienation from God who invites us to call Him Father. In eternity we will rejoice in our status as God's sons and daughters.

Christ gives us rest from death and the fear of death which oppresses us. When we receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, we immediately receive new and eternal life in Him "with whom we have to do."⁷ Christ will "deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."⁸

We access this divine and eternal rest only by receiving the salvation of Jesus Christ. We must believe Jesus. There is no other way. We must strive not to be one of those who "were unable to enter because of unbelief."⁹

Applications:

1. Do you have *this* rest?
 - a. What is the evidence in your life to corroborate your answer?
2. Is your level of intimacy with Jesus increasing or is it stagnating, or even on the decline? By contrast, what is your level of satisfaction with the temporal?
 - a. Wrestle with these questions and then exercise your will to pursue an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus.
 - b. Spend time talking about this matter with other believers and pray about it together.
3. Consider these *final* words in the Book of Daniel: "But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days."¹⁰
 - a. Spurgeon's words on this passage are instructive for us:

"Calmly resolute in duty, brave in conflict, patient in suffering, let us go our way, keeping to our road, and neither swerving from it nor loitering in it. The end will come; let us go our way till it does. Rest will be ours. All other things swing to and fro, but our foundation standeth sure. God rests in his love, and, therefore we rest in it. Our peace is, and ever shall be, like a river."¹¹

⁷ Hebrews 4:13 (NASB95)

⁸ Hebrews 2:15

⁹ Hebrews 3:19

¹⁰ Daniel 12:13

¹¹ July 25th *Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*, Daily Readings by C.H. Spurgeon