

The Secret Place of Rest

by Carter Conlon

The secret place of rest is found in weakness, not strength, and is characterized by trust, not knowledge, in God's power and justice.

Duration: 36:05

Scripture: Romans 7:15

Topics: "Rest In Christ", "Trusting God"

Description

This sermon titled 'The Secret Place of Rest' delves into the profound truths in Matthew 11:28-30, emphasizing the need to come to Jesus in our weariness and heavy burdens to find rest. It highlights the importance of trusting in God's strength rather than relying on our own efforts, and the significance of surrendering our struggles and weaknesses to Him to experience true rest and peace.

Transcript

I have a message this morning for you entitled, The Secret Place of Rest, The Secret Place of Rest. If you'll go to Matthew Chapter 11, please, in the New Testament, and then let's pray as we turn there. Now, Lord Jesus, I thank you, God, that you will enable me to live what I'm about to preach.

I thank you, Lord, that you are my strength. I thank you that you're my rest, and you're teaching me to let you be everything in my life. I thank you, Lord, for the things that I understand and the things that I don't.

Thank you, God, when I come to the end of strength, because that's where your strength begins. Thank you, Lord, that in your word you say that you don't reveal the greatness of God's strength to anyone but those who know they need it. I pray, God, for the miraculous in this sanctuary today.

I ask you, Lord, to undo burdens, unlock prisons, give strength, let there be joy where there was sorrow, freedom where there was captivity. Lord, let it be true what we sing. Now let the weak say, I am strong.

Let the poor say, I am rich. Jesus, may this truly be a day in this church where you are honored and the desire of your heart is satisfied. Enable me to speak this.

God, I stand only as an oracle for you of no other desire, no other agenda, just to honor you. Help me to do that. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Matthew chapter 11, verse 25, at that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight. 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 to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. 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 you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. In these three verses, 28, 29, and 30, are some of the most profound truths in the New Testament.

We read these things, we talk about them, we memorize it, but in measure at least, most of us don't fully grasp it. We don't really understand what Jesus meant when he said, 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.

I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Now since the fall of Adam, there have been many people, including many of us today, who want to get back to God and live lives that are pleasing in his sight.

That's got to be, hopefully, the reason that you're here today. Now I know there are some people who come here to be entertained. You've heard about a church on Broadway, and you're curious.

You want to see what it's about. There are some people that are just looking for fire insurance. You don't want to go to hell, but don't necessarily want to live for heaven either.

You like to attend church, and that's part of the package of church. It always has been that way, and it always will be that way. But there are many people who want to get back to God, want to live lives that are pleasing in his sight.

From the day that Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, and man was, in a sense, cast away from that tree of life, that place of perfect rest in God, he has been circling the globe generation after generation, mile after weary mile. Now many are careless and don't care. They live in absolute rebellion to God, to the ways of God, the reality of God, and the eternity of God, and they will suffer the consequence of that.

But many on this journey, including many who are here today, in your heart, you say, God, I want to live for you. I want to live a life that is pleasing to you. I want to live a life that brings honor and glory.

And so you come to church and work hard at spiritual things. You practice self-discipline. You try to do the things that you hear.

You come to church, your own devotions, you open the Bible, truths are brought to you about Christian virtue and Christian living, and you sincerely determine in your heart, I want to do this. I want to live this way. I don't want, for example, love does not bear grievances or make a list of wrong suffered.

So you get up in the morning, you read that in 1 Corinthians 13, and you say, today I'm not going to bear a list of grievances until somebody cuts you off on the roadway or just, you know, tells you the subway car is full or take the next elevator, whatever it is. It's so difficult to do these things. And many people work hard

at this self-discipline, but they end up in practice like a stringed instrument that's wound up too tight.

They're ready to snap at any moment. Become rigid in their dogged determination to serve God and don't dare add another ounce of burden to that because they can snap just like that, can fly off the handle at the slightest provocation and wonder why. In this sanctuary today, but out of sync with the sound of true worship, imagine if one of the instruments on this platform was wound up too tight.

It would be on another level altogether and you would hear it. It wouldn't sound right. It doesn't blend in with the sound of true worship.

Now the person on the instrument could be sincere, could be one of the most sincere on the platform, but yet the instrument is not tuned right. There's no rest in that instrument. Instead of bringing you and I to the throne of God with a rest and a peace, it could come across as a funny sound, as a screech almost, and it would be a sound that is not conducive to coming into the presence of the Lord.

And others are beginning to bend or stoop under the weight of their own desire to do right. If you take a guitar and you wind the strings up too tight, eventually the neck on it will warp one way or the other because it's designed to withstand a certain pressure, a certain tension, and if you increase that tension, eventually that instrument will begin to bend under the weight. I wonder how many here this morning are bending under the weight of trying to do good.

You're bending under the weight of trying to please God. You're bending under the weight of wanting to walk with God in a way that truly is pleasing to Him. Now, Paul in Romans chapter 7 speaks for all of us when he describes how we in our own attempts try to be godly.

I'm going to just read it to you from the New Living Translation. Now, listen to the words of Paul, Romans 7, 15. I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it.

Instead I do the very thing I hate. Can anybody identify with these words of Scripture? Verses 18 and 19. I know I'm rotten through and through as far as my old sinful nature is concerned.

No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. I don't know how many people have going through this or been through this in some area of your life where you know what is right, you want to do it, but simply can't find the strength to do it.

Paul says, when I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Verse 22, he says, I love God's law with all my heart.

Now, that's the dilemma that many people in God's kingdom find themselves in. I love God's law. I love God's word.

I know God's word is right, and I do want to do it. Now, Paul is speaking about the human condition that we all find ourselves in apart from Christ. Verse 24, he says, oh, what a miserable person I am.

Who will free me from this life dominated by sin? Now, Paul is describing this predicament that's only felt by those who truly want to walk with God. Those who want to walk with God are aware of their condition, they have a sensitive conscience, and they want to do what is right. Now, the hypocrite is just the opposite.

The hypocrite is content with religious ceremony, scoffs at the suggestion that it might be not enough to get him into heaven, and isn't overly concerned as to whether his or her life is in line with the truth. The hypocrite is completely happy with just a suit on Sunday, and the Bible under his arm, and to sing a few songs of Zion, to say, change his speech as it is, and say God bless you several times to different people. Completely satisfied.

Doesn't really matter. That's what religion can do to a person. It can bring us to the point where our whole focus is on the exterior, how we look, and are we talking right today? There's no deep inward desire to have a life that is in line with the truth of God.

There's no conscience. There's nothing scarier than meeting somebody that you can't speak to anymore about spiritual things. They have an answer for absolutely everything.

As a pastor, I've been there many times, pleading in my heart with somebody who's going in a direction I know is not good, but they're so entrenched in that direction, they so have written off the word of God. They've written off every vessel that brings the word of God. They've looked at the preachers, the leaders, and they perceive certain flaws in the leadership, so they don't have to listen to them anymore.

And write off the word of God, and God himself could not reach them. Yet, they will be at every church service, they'll have their hands in the air, they'll be zealous, but they are moving and doing things that are going to bring them into destruction, but they can't be reached anymore. Now as we go back in chapter 11 of Matthew, we become aware of some of the things that the righteous know.

Now, when we started, it says at that time, verse 25, now what was the time? In Matthew chapter 11, here are some of the things the righteous know. Number one, that God promises to keep and guide those who are called to represent him on the earth. At the beginning of this chapter, word came to Jesus that John the Baptist, the man that knew Christ and loved him, had become confused.

His life had become difficult. John was in prison. And in prison, he started, in difficulty, he started to doubt the reality of what he had heard.

I don't know if he felt maybe that after his season of announcing the coming of the Messiah and calling the nation of Israel to repentance, did he think that maybe it should be time to rest? Did he have a mental picture of what the end of his life was going to be like and it just didn't pan out that way? And in prison, he sent word and said, are you the one that we're to look for or should we look for somebody else? And Jesus turned to the crowd and he said to them, when you went to see John, did you think you went to see a reed that was shaking in the wind? He said, no, that's, that's not who John is. John was, it was forewritten in the word of God that John was going to be the messenger. He was going to be the voice sent to the father to herald my coming.

In other words, Jesus is saying there is, there was something written about John and it cannot be overcome by any adversity. When you came into the kingdom of God, there was something that God had decreed about you for your life. And don't think for a moment, my friend, that the whole journey is going to be smooth.

Sometimes the journey is going to be very difficult. It's going to be very rough along the way, but he will never fail you. He will not forsake you.

You will not be overcome because God said you won't be overcome. It's that simple. For all intents and purposes, John looked like he was losing his faith, but Jesus said, no, he's not a reed shaking in the wind.

Yes, he's facing tremendous adversity, but he's not going to be bowed down by it. He's not going to be overcome by it because it is written about John and deep in his heart. John is a man.

Christ said, and blessed is he who shall, whosoever shall not be offended in me. John, don't be offended when it doesn't go your way the way you think it should. Don't be offended.

Don't be turned back. Don't be cast into despair because of hardship. Because the plan that I have for your life is a plan that you may not fully understand.

The way that I have decreed that your life should bring honor to my name may not fit in with your self-view. You may have embraced some knowledge or some understanding about where you think your life is going. And when it doesn't go there, don't cast away your confidence in times of difficulty.

You are not a reed shaking in the wind. Every genuine Christian, you hear this today. You are not going to be overcome by the adversity that you're facing.

And this is a wicked time. The winds of adversity are blowing against every righteous person in God, perhaps like never before in our history. There's wickedness on every side.

Ungodliness is abounding. Truth has fallen into the streets. I know that many of you are enduring such ungodly scolding in the workplace.

You're going through difficulty in trial. The airwaves are just bombarding you at every turn with negativity. But you will not be bent by the wind of adversity.

You'll make it through. No strange thing has happened to you. God foreordained a plan for your life the day that you came to Christ.

I'm talking now to the sincere Christian. God foreordained a plan for your life, a way that you are going to bring glory to Him. And as God lives, you and I will get to the end.

We will cross that line. We will have a crown of righteousness. We'll have a song in our heart.

We'll have bounce in our step. We will not be triumphed over by any power of hell or evil. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.

Hallelujah. Then He said in verse 16, what will I compare to this generation? He said no matter how I call, whether somebody like John comes and yells repent or somebody like the New Testament church comes and dances for joy in your presence, it's all about my power. It's all about my willingness to carry you, to sustain you.

It's all about my faithfulness. It's not about you. It's about me, the Lord says.

But no matter which way I turn, no matter how I call, there are so many who will not come into this life that glorifies God. They will care in their carefreeness to simply ignore it. No matter how I call, I've called you into the power of an endless life.

I've called you into something other than yourself. I've called you into a strength that is not your own. And no matter how I call, no matter what kind of vessel I use, whether it's mourning and whether it's dancing, that's what actually He's speaking about.

He says you still, many will still not come. Then He began to upbraid the cities in verse 20 where most of His mighty works were done because they repented not. The righteous are aware the judgment is in store for those who had access to the life-changing power of God and for various reasons they chose to turn away from what God was offering them.

Incredible! If we don't turn towards the power of God, if the testimony of His power is among us and yet we choose to ignore it, where do we go? What do we do? What lies in store? Where's our future? Now I believe that's why Jesus thanked His Father. In verse 25 He said, Father, I thank You, Lord of heaven and earth, because You've hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. He thanked His Father for the secret of who He was, that secret that was hidden from all of those who knew except from all of those but those who knew that their lack of strength and complete dependence was on God.

You've hidden it from the wise. You've hidden it from people who are always learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, whose whole relationship with God is rules and regulations, who categorize people and score on the weak and the weary, who live to put new diplomas on their walls and have some new thought about God. Jesus said, Father, You've hidden it from these who use God for their own gain.

You've hidden it from these and You've revealed these truths unto babes. You've revealed these truths unto those that know they have no strength. They know they can't walk unless somebody reaches down and holds their hands.

They know that they have no ability to do anything on their own, to procure anything on their own, to be anything on their own. They are the weakest of the weak sometimes in the church of Jesus Christ and in our society. And Jesus said, Father, You've hidden these great truths about Your power and Your justice and Your plan.

You do have a plan and it can't be overcome. And He said, You've hidden these great truths from everybody that uses You for any other purpose than to be a vessel through which You are glorified on the earth. They'll never know Your power.

They'll never come into the rest. They'll always be like instruments wound up too tight in the presence of God, always questioning the reality of God, always doubting and debating every time there's a storm or some difficulty comes their way, never ever coming into that secret place of rest. I want to suggest to you today that the place of God's rest is not found in strength, it's found in weakness.

It's not found in knowledge, it's found in trust. It's not by the amount of study. Thank God for study.

It's important that we learn. But you'll not find the rest necessarily in that. You and I find the rest when we finally get to the place of saying Jesus, I trust You.

I trust You whether I'm lying in a hammock on a beach or I'm in a ship that's falling apart in a storm, whether I'm healthy, whether I'm sick, whether things are going the way I think they should or going completely in the opposite direction. Lord, I trust You. God Almighty, I trust You.

And there's one cry in the heart, Father, glorify Thy name. Glorify Your name. Right where I am.

Not with thoughts of escaping and going into some other place, but right where I am. Right where I walk. Right with the people that I rub shoulders with every day.

Right in my circumstance, with my paycheck, in my apartment, with my kids, my husband, my wife, my family. Glorify Your name, oh God. Glorify Your name.

Glorify Your name. Lord, I'm weary. I'm tired.

Lord, You've got to glorify Your own name now. I tried to glorify it. I can't.

I tried to study my life into righteousness. It doesn't work. I've attended every prayer meeting that I know exists, but I still can't do it.

You've got to glorify Your own name. Paul says, who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? And then he concludes, and he says, thank God the answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank God.

Thank God I don't have to do it in my own strength. Thank God. Thank God.

Thank God. Thank God. Because none of us can do it, folks.

Nobody. It doesn't matter how much you've accomplished, how big the crowds are that you've preached to, how many years you've walked with God. The moment you think you can do it in your own strength, you'll find out very quickly you can't.

None of us can. None of us. None of us.

Not one. Father, You've hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and those who think that they have the strength, and You've revealed them unto babes. Oh, Father, it seems so good in Your sight.

Verse 27, He said, all things are delivered to Me of My Father. In other words, I have all authority. I have all power.

Everything is in My hand. I am the one who sits at the right hand of all authority. I am the one who will rule the nations with a rod of iron and has the right to judge for eternity.

And no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Hallelujah. You see, Jesus had to trust in His Father.

He had a wholehearted dependence on His Father. He walked through this earth not according to His own will, but the will of His Father. He had a promise that His Father was going to raise, He was going to die for the sins of humanity, and His Father was going to raise Him from the dead.

He had to trust it, just as you and I do. He was every bit human and every bit God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He said, Oh, Father, if it be possible, take this cup from Me.

Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done. He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities, folks. He knows our struggle, but He knew in that Garden of Gethsemane there could be no life, there would be no resurrection for Him, and there would be no life for You if He did not fulfill the will of His Father.

He trusted His Father. And then He says, Come to Me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I looked up the original definitions of these words, and here's what it means in essence.

Come to Me, ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The word labor means you feel fatigued, and you're tired from working hard. You've worked hard to be a Christian.

You've worked hard to have a testimony, but you're just so tired. You feel so bowed down, it's gotten heavy. You're heavy laden.

It means you're loaded up. You're overburdened with spiritual ceremony and anxiety. That's the actual definition.

You're just overburdened. You've gotten to the point where you say, I just can't handle another prayer meeting. I don't want to read my Bible.

I'm so tired. I've tried so hard, and I'll give you rest. In other words, the actual definition is letting down cords or strings which have been drawn too tight.

Rest is like, I'll just reach down and I'll unwind all that tension in you. And I'll bring your life into the right pitch, where you can truly raise your hands in My presence and give glory to Me. Because the two of us are singing the same song.

We are actually walking together. That's why it says in verse 29, Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. I'm meek and lowly and hard, and you shall find rest for your souls.

Now the illustration we always use, and it's an accurate one, is when you had oxen plowing in a field, generally speaking you'd have an older, stable, strong oxen that knew the pathway, that knew how to cultivate the ground. Quite often some of these older oxen didn't even have to be led. And they would take a young oxen who's just learning now what it's like to walk this pathway and to cultivate this ground and they would pair it up in a yoke with the older one.

The younger one didn't know the path, was less strong, oft times confused. But the stability of the older one and the strength of the older one would quite often just carry that young one along as it began to learn its route, as it began to learn how to cultivate the field, how to do the work of the Master as it was. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.

It says I'm meek and lowly and hard. When you and I buddy up to God as it is in our weakness, the first thing we find is that He says for I dwell in eternity. My name is holy, but I dwell in the high and holy place with Him also that's of a contrite and a humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

You and I say oh God, I'm so weak and you are so strong. I have so little to add to this journey. What do you want me to do? And He says just walk with Me.

I'm the one who's pulling the plow. I'm the one who provides this strength. I'm the one who knows where to go.

I am the one. All you have to do is walk with Me. But why do you want me? What have I got to add to this whole journey? And He just looks over and says I want you because I love you.

I want you because you're dear to my heart. I want you because though I dwell in eternity yet I'm wanting to come down and walk with you in your weakness and impart to you strength that you don't have. Give you the power to do what you could never do.

He's lowly. I'm meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. In other words, my yoke furnishes what is needed in your life and my burden is light.

The word light means moves forward with an alternate power source. It's the difference. The actual definition says it's the difference between rowing and sailing.

Same journey. What would you rather do? Row or sail to get to the other side? I'd rather sail. You row if you want.

I'd rather sail. Now you and I have a part. We have to chart a course as it's revealed to us.

We have to keep our hand on the rudder. We have to do a few things. But the power to make the journey comes from another source.

Oh come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest. Come to me all ye that are wound up too tight. You know how that shows itself? You're at home and your husband says to you, why do you pray all the time? Why do you go to church? And you say, because I'm a Christian.

You're wound up too tight. That's the only way I can really describe it. And the more you try to serve God, the tighter you get wound.

And the Lord says, won't you just let me be your power source? Won't you accept the fact that I want to walk with you? Won't you just let me be your strength? Won't you just enter into the victory that I won for you? The life that I have for you. The promises that I make to you. It's not about what you promise me.

It's about what I promise you. That's where your strength is. Won't you just believe that I'm able to get you to the other side? Yes, we have to plow over some rocky ground.

We have to walk through some difficult valleys. But you'll never be alone. I'll never forsake you.

I'll never leave you. Don't be offended at the path that I take you on. The journey that I lay before you.

I will be your strength. Come to me if you're laboring and heavy laden. Come to me if you can't get the victory.

Come to me if you're tired of trying to live the Christian life in your own strength because you can't live it in your own strength. Now, you might be a strong man in here today. You might be a strong-willed person.

You might think, no, I think I can do it. But there's a day coming in your life, folks. You get older.

You're going to get sick. Things are coming your way. And you're going to realize this message eventually in your life.

But if you realize today that you are needing the strength of God. Father, thank you that you've hidden these truths of the rest and the strength of Christ from those who are wise in their own sight. And those who think they can do it in their own strength.

You've hidden these things, but you've given it to babes. You've given it to those who are weak. All they can do is cry out.

All they can do is hope and wait that somebody else is going to give them nurture and strength to get through the next day. You've given these truths to babes. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.

If you say in your heart, I'm the weakest one in this assembly today, then you are probably the closest one to the strength of God. That's the beauty. That's the mystery of the kingdom of God.

That's the secret place of rest that Jesus has provided for you and I. Hallelujah. It's so wonderful just to let it all go and give it all to God. I want to give an altar call today for those that say, Pastor, you've just preached my life.

I labor. I want to do right, but I'm heavy laden. The burden has gotten heavy to me.

It's not supposed to be heavy. I'm doing this in my own strength and I'm tired. Whatever it is, whether it's trying to be a good person, get free from sin, be a good husband, wife or a good father, whatever your situation is, would you let go? Would you put it in the hands of the one who'll give you the victory? Come to me.

Come to me. Now, this seems simple this morning, but I tell you this one of the most profound truths in the New Testament. When you fully understand where the strength of the Christian comes from.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for this word. Thank you for your people.

God almighty, would you help us as a church to come into the rest that is ours in Christ. Give us the power to get through our storms, our nights of despair, the times, the trials that we don't understand. Help us, Lord, to hear your voice and not be like those that ignore you.

God, give us the grace not to be like those cities and places where your power was available, but the people rejected it. God, I don't want to be one who rejects your power in this generation. I want the full access of everything that you've got from my life.

Lord, I thank you for this with everything in me. In the mighty and holy name of Jesus. I want to give an altar call for those who need rest.

You're tired of the struggle. You're tired of trying to get free. You're tired of trying to be holy.

Would you come and just let God do it for you? You're tired of trying to make your marriage work. Would you let God do it for you? Would you do that? Let's stand together and please just make your way out. In the annex, if you could stand between the screens, we'd appreciate that very much.

Just make your way here. We're going to pray together as we worship. Jesus, we trust you.

We love you. We thank you. Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory.

It's not in us, Lord. It's in you. It always has been in you.

We acknowledge our need of you, Lord. We need you every morning, every afternoon, every evening. We need you to be a people who will glorify your name in the earth.

And we want to thank you, Lord, that you will walk with us and talk with us, cover our frailty and be our friend. Thank you, Lord, for giving us rest. You said to the prophet Isaiah, in quietness and confidence will be your strength.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, God, with all my heart. I ask you, Lord, to deliver every man and woman at this altar from all of the burdens that they carry, even those that seem to be good.

Lord, let this be a time of peace and joy and rejoicing and thankfulness that we don't have to cover our own sin and we don't have to be our own source of power. It's all in you, Jesus. There is a place of rest in you, Lord.

Thank you for that rest, O God. Keep us, Lord, dependent on you. Keep us aware that you are more than willing to be our glory and the lifter of our head.

We love you, Jesus. Can you just tell them you love them this morning? Lord, we love you. Lord, we love you.

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