

The Christian's Rest

by Thomas Reade

The Christian's rest is a state of peace and tranquility that comes from trusting in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 11:28, John 14:27, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, Hebrews 4:3

Topics: "Faith And Rest", "Spiritual Refuge"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the Christian's rest, emphasizing that true rest is found in Jesus Christ, the believer's resting-place and refuge. He highlights the importance of faith, which transforms the inner man, purifies the soul, and enables believers to renounce worldly vanities. Reade warns against the restlessness and desire for change that lead to sin and sorrow, urging believers to seek true rest in Jesus amidst trials and tribulations. He also addresses the dangers of false doctrines, emphasizing the need to hold fast to the truth of God's Word and the rest that comes from trusting in Jesus.

Transcript

47. THE CHRISTIAN'S REST

"We who have believed enter into rest." Hebrews 4:3

As there is a heaven in going to heaven, so there is a rest, before we enter into the rest of Paradise. The soul which loves Christ supremely, which abides in him by faith, and in which Christ abides by his Spirit, enjoys while here a heavenly rest. Jesus is the believer's resting-place, his place of refuge. It is the believer's delightful privilege to hold communion with the Savior, to taste his love, to possess his peace. Oh! how sweet is true religion when felt in all its regenerating power! Lord grant that I may thus experience the joys of your salvation.

This world is indeed but a wilderness of worries; the region of sin and sorrow. Troubles, like thorns and thistles, spring up around us, and alas! too frequently they spring up within us. Unbelief, slavish fear of God, distrust of his providence, indulged lustings of the flesh, pride, and such like poisonous weeds, corrupt the soul and fill it with vexation.

Where, then, can true rest and peace be found in the midst of such anxieties? Surely no where but in Jesus. How true is his declaration; "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." How unspeakably refreshing is his promise; "In me you shall have peace." Here, under all circumstances, we must expect to meet with trials. It is therefore our wisdom to fortify ourselves against them, by flying to the

Strong for strength, and to the Comforter for Consolation.

What we need is faith, that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit, that faith which is called "the faith of God's elect." Without this faith it is impossible to please God; because, whatever springs not from this true faith in Christ, is sin. The indwelling of this holy principle is known by its fruits. It transforms the whole inner man, through the power of the Holy Spirit, into a likeness to Jesus Christ. It purifies the soul through the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It works by love through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It enables the believer to renounce the vanities of a world at enmity with God. It opens to his view eternal glories, and gives him a foretaste of that rest which remains to the people of God. What a blessing then is faith, and yet how rare a gift to man; and why? because he desires it not; he asks not for it; he refuses to return.

Awful, indeed, are the words of Jesus; "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" We seem to be approaching a time of trial. At this moment there is a restlessness, a desire for change, not alas! from sin to holiness. The minds of men are anxious to throw off ancient restraints and to breathe what they term the air of freedom. Delusive expectation! so long as the heart is enchained by sin. The political freeman is too often Satan's bondman. While he throws off the salutary bonds of social order, he puts on the galling yoke of unbridled passions, and wild licentiousness. Infidelity revels in the storm, and tracks its path with blood!

The Church of Rome has long held the world in spiritual bondage. She has studiously withheld the light of truth from her members, and thus has fostered infidelity in her bosom. To elevate her traditions, and enforce her decrees, she lowers the book of God. She raises doubts and mistrusts respecting the blessed Scriptures. She starts difficulties of interpretation, and obscurities without number, that her members may blindly follow the Church, hear the Church, and believe nothing but what the Church teaches. By this means she raises her priesthood above the oracles of God, for to deny the decretals of her Popes, Cardinals, and Councils, is the way into the dungeons of the Inquisition, to the fires of the Auto de fe. (The following are extracts from a Defense of Roman Catholic Principles, in a Letter to a Protestant Minister, by Gallitzin.)

"We believe that Jesus Christ has established the holy Catholic Church as the supreme tribunal to regulate our faith, or, in other words, to keep the precious deposit of Revelation unaltered, to explain to us (without any possibility of error the meaning of every part of holy writ necessary for salvation, and likewise to preserve and transmit to posterity undefiled, all that part of Christ's divine doctrine which was only delivered by word of mouth either by Christ or his Apostles."

"We believe that the unwritten word of God, transmitted to us by tradition, is entitled to the very same respect as the written word."

"When the Church has pronounced, the controversy is settled, doubts vanish, and we are as certain as if Jesus Christ himself had spoken!!"

"Holy writ (although certainly God's word) was not intended to be our Supreme Judge in matters of faith."

"We believe that the Catholic Church is this living, visible, and supreme Authority."

"We believe this authority resides in the body of Christ's Ministers, the pastors of the Catholic Church, and the lawful successors of those pastors whom Jesus Christ appointed and invested with full authority to

discharge the functions of his ministry. To that body of pastors we look for heavenly instructions, in them we see the successors of Jesus Christ, invested by him with the same authority which he himself had received from his heavenly Father."

"The Spirit of truth never has, and never will depart from the pastors of Christ's Churches."

Such are the dogmas of the Church of Rome, founded on her infallibility. And woe be to those who (when she has power) dare to resist her authority. The venerable Bishop Hall by a familiar simile strikingly shows the folly of these Popish tenets, which would substitute the decisions of fallible men for the infallible wisdom of God- "The Scripture is the sun; the Church is the clock, whose hand points to, and whose sound tells us, the hour of the day. The sun we know to be sure, and regularly constant in his motion; the clock, as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. We are used to look at, and listen to the clock, to know the time of the day; but where we find the variation sensible, to believe the sun against the clock, not the clock against the sun. As, then, we should condemn him of much folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun, so we cannot but justly tax the miscredulity of those who will rather trust to the church than to the scriptures."

If this conclusion, which the pious Bishop of Norwich draws from his simile is correct, it cannot be consistent with sound Protestantism, with the doctrines of the Reformation, or with the Articles of the Church of England, to assert that there is an infallible interpreter of Scripture, the Holy Catholic Church, since Churches and Councils have erred and do err to this day. Witness the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, and other Christian Communions.

When a ray of light darts into this region of darkness from the torch of human reason or philosophy, by which her members are led to see the craft of her priestly domination, and the mummary of her services; then a spirit of emancipation is created, and being ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, they fly from superstition to infidelity, from the despotism of Popery to the anarchy of atheism. Witness France and all her revolutionary horrors, the offspring of an infidel philosophy, bursting the barriers of Papal despotism, and plunging into a sea of blood. The Church of Rome, it has been said, may perhaps, die from the sting of infidelity, that viper which she has nurtured in her own bosom. Such is often the retributive justice of God. How remarkably was her power weakened, for a season, by the reign of infidelity in France.

Nothing but heavenly truth can guide men aright through this tempestuous world. If once we leave our divine Compass, the Word of God, we are at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, we are carried here and there, as the tide or storm may drive us, and at length are dashed against the rocks and perish. Lord! graciously preserve your true Church amid every tempest. Increase the light of Truth, and bring all nations to the obedience of faith. Preserve our Protestant nation from the dangers which threaten it; from the united efforts of Popery, infidelity, and anarchy, which are now assuming an attitude of fearful aspect, resembling the three unclean spirits, like frogs, which John saw in vision to come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. Oh! that your warning voice may be effectual in awakening our slumbering churches- "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

It seems evident, both from prophecy and the signs of the times, that the millennial glory will be preceded by awful convulsions. The dragon that old serpent, who is the devil, will not be chained, without a desperate, permitted, struggle. But this conflict with the Church of Christ will end in his confusion, and the Church's triumph. "And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on

behalf of the beast--miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And all the vultures of the sky gorged themselves on the dead bodies. Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon--that old serpent, the Devil, Satan--and bound him in chains for a thousand years. The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he would be released again for a little while."

The glorious predicted period will then dawn upon the world, like the sun shining without an intervening cloud. All will be holiness, happiness, and security. Yes, holiness will be universal, and true piety enter into all the minutia of life. "On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: 'Set apart as Holy to the Lord.' And the cooking pots in the Temple of the Lord will be as sacred as the basins used beside the altar. In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to the Lord Almighty." Thus all the Lord's people, with all their powers and possessions, shall be consecrated to the glory of God. True religion will not be confined within the precincts of the temple, but extend itself through every habitation, and sanctify every occurrence and occupation.

This glory will be preceded by a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For this we must constantly pray, in accordance with the written word of God. While seeking after this blessing, saying, "Lord Jesus, come quickly; hasten your work of glory," we must seek after personal holiness, that we may be ready to meet the Lord at his coming.

Great revivals in religion, and an extensive increase of it, have generally been a period of outward trouble. At such a time how often may it be said, "A man's foes are they of his own house." Then, not infrequently, have "the rulers set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed." So long as the sun shines, and the waters flow smoothly, the human mind is naturally satisfied with present things. It is when the sky darkens, and the waves swell, that men's fears begin to operate, and to make them feel the uncertain nature of earthly things. Times of great trouble are frequently employed as means for awakening men out of their death-like slumbers, and causing them to cry out with the trembling Jailor, during the earthquake, "What must I do to be saved?"

Happy, indeed, when this is the case. We seem to be drawing near to some portentous crisis. The period seems to be fast approaching which will try men's principles, of what sort they are. It will be a touchstone to try the faith of many, who now wear the garb of sanctity. The Lord is about to put His church into the furnace, and when it is tried, it shall come out as gold. We have had a long season of outward ease. Profession has grown profusely, but true piety, is still, as it ever was, a rare plant. It grows not in nature's soil. It is an exotic. Our defiling, chilling world, is little congenial to its growth; but He, who plants it in the prepared ground of the heart is Almighty; He waters it by his Spirit, casts upon it the warm beams of His love, and renders it fruitful to His glory.

Oh! how soothing are the words of Christ "Come unto me and I will give you rest. Come unto me and you shall find rest unto your souls." The believer only can tell the blessedness of this invitation, and of the rest to which he is invited. It is a rest from guilty fears, from sinful desires, from vain pursuits. It is a rest in the love, faithfulness, and truth of Christ. It is a rest in his Atonement, Righteousness, and Intercession. It is a rest in his sovereignty, power, and willingness to save. It is a rest which yields to his soul comfort and peace. It is the foretaste of that Rest which remains for the people of God.

How comforting also are the words of Christ- "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me." Oh! that I had a heart to believe in Jesus, with the full assurance of faith. Then, like the Apostles of old, I might take up serpents, and they shall not hurt me. The keenest stings of slander, the most poisonous rancor of malice, endured for Christ's sake, shall no more harm me, than the viper did Paul, when it fastened on his hand at Melita.

"Let not your heart be troubled." Blessed words! On that memorable night, when the winds and the waves seemed ready to consign the infant Church of Christ to a watery grave, the disciples were filled with fear, and awoke their Master, exclaiming, "Don't you care that we are perishing?" How majestic, how godlike, was the conduct of Jesus. He calmly arose, rebuked the wind and the sea, saying- "Peace, be still." And then, turning to his disciples, gently reproved them; "Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?"

The winds of disorder are now beginning to soar; the waves of discord are now beginning to swell. The Church of Christ, like the ark of Noah, and the little vessel of the disciples, may be tossed on the tumultuous waters, but He who is with his Church is Almighty! But with Christ in the vessel, we smile at the storm.

A heart under the influence of pride and passion, envy and jealousy, can never enjoy rest. Such a heart resembles the troubled sea, which casts up mire and dirt. How different is the heavenly rest. An angel's bosom is a stranger to conflicting passions. In that holy residence, dwells nothing that opposes the purposes of Jehovah, or disturbs the celestial harmony. There, all is obedience, purity, peace, and love. It is only in the breast of fallen man that rebellion is found, in conjunction with his tempters, the apostate spirits of darkness. The new creature in Christ Jesus is a restoration to pristine excellence. Much, indeed, still remains to be purged away; yet notwithstanding these remnants of corruption, the true believer is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

O! happy change. Oh! blessed transformation. The work is inward and unseen, but its effects are visible; just as the sap which, rising unobserved by man, diffuses itself throughout the tree, producing leaves, and flowers, and fruit. How wonderful are the operations of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Have I experienced their efficacy and blessedness? Has the Lord drawn me to himself by the cords of love? Has he manifested himself to me, as he does not unto the world? Am I a follower of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises; dwelling in the smiles of the Redeemer, and enjoying a Sabbath of eternal rest?

Jesus, the ever-adorable Jesus, is the fountain of this felicity. His precious blood is the purchase price of our redemption. The claims of justice are satisfied, and mercy encompasses the believer as with a shield. Streams of undeserved blessings are continually descending upon him from the throne of God and of the Lamb, filling his heart with joy and peace.

Whatever holiness we possess, whatever peace we enjoy, all must be traced to Jesus, the purchaser and bestower of every good and perfect gift. All the spices of Arabia cannot equal in sweetness the fragrance of his sacred name. It is as ointment poured forth. It is a balm for every wound. All that we can conceive of excellence and beauty, of glory and perfection, is to be found in Jesus, who is the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One. He is the Believer's Rest.

Dear Friend of friendless sinners hear,

And magnify your grace divine;
Pardon a worm that would draw near,
That would his heart to you resign
A worm, by self and sin oppressed,
That pants to reach the premised Rest.
With holy fear, and reverend love,
I long to be beneath your throne;
I long in You to live and move,
And entrust myself on You alone.
Teach me to lean upon your breast,
To find in You, the premised Rest.
You say, you will your servants keep
In perfect peace, whose minds shall be
Like newborn babes, or helpless sheep,
Completely stayed, dear Lord, on thee.
How calm their state, how truly blessed,
Who trust on You, the promised Rest.
Take me, my Savior, as your own,
And vindicate my righteous cause;
O be my portion, Lord, alone,
And bend me to obey your laws;
In your dear arms of love caressed,
Give me to find your premised Rest.
Bid the tempestuous rage of sin,
With all its wrathful fury die
Let the Redeemer dwell within;
And turn my sorrow into joy.

Oh! may my heart, by You possessed,
Know You to be my promised Rest.

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