

The Rest-Giver

Over the past week the Lord has been dealing with me regarding the connection between Trust and Rest. Most of the time our Trust in God is an active, deliberate intention that requires much effort. And as a result, “trusting in God” often becomes demanding and stressful. However, the truth is, there can be no real Trust without it being accompanied by true Rest.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus made this statement, **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”** The Amplified reads, **“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease, relieve and refresh your souls.] Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart, and you will find rest (relief, ease, refreshment and blessed quiet) for your souls. For My yoke is wholesome (not harsh, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne.”**

Compare this with these Old Testament verses:

- + *“My presence shall go with you, and I will give you **rest**”* (Exodus 33:14).
- + *“I will feed My flock and I will lead them to **rest**”* (Ezekiel 34:15).
- + *“I will give you **rest** from all your enemies”* (2 Samuel 7:11).

Frequently (in the Bible) God promises to give his people “rest” and this includes: *a place of serenity and a ceasing from effort*. But it also includes safety and security. This is made clear by the several references to giving *“rest from enemies on every side”* (Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19; Joshua 23:1; 2 Samuel 7:1, 11; 2 Chronicles 14:7; Esther 9:16, 22; Isaiah 14:3). God promises to provide relief from any threat or attack. So He not only intends to give His people a place to settle, He also intends to protect them. Let’s now examine what God provides **rest** from:

(1) **God’s rest** is from “enemies” and “threats” on “every side”.

*“He gives you **rest** from all your enemies around you so that you live in security”* (Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19). *“And the Lord gave them **rest** on every side, ...and not one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand”* (Joshua 21:44). *“Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him **rest** on every side from all his enemies”* (2 Samuel 7:1). *“The Lord my God has given me **rest** on every side – there is no adversary or disaster”* (1 Kings 5:2).

(2) **God’s rest** is from “difficult people”.

Moses said to the Lord, *“You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favour with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people. The Lord replied, “My **Presence** will go with you, and I will give you **rest**.”* (Exodus 33:12-14).

(3) **God’s rest** is from “pain, sorrow and harsh toil”.

*“Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall **rest**”* (Exodus 23:12). *“When the Lord has given you **rest** from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve”* (Isaiah 14:3). *“For the one who has entered His **rest** has himself also rested from his own works, just as God did from His”* (Hebrews 4:10).

(4) **God’s rest** is from “fear”, and leads to “security / safety”.

*“When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you **rest** from all your enemies around you so that you live in security* (Deuteronomy 12:10). *“The Lord your God gives you **rest** from all the enemies around you in the land He is giving you to possess as an inheritance”* (Deuteronomy 25:19).

(5) **God’s rest** is the “refresher”.

The Greek word for **rest** implies - 'to become physically refreshed after ceasing activity or work'. Mark 6:31 says, "You will find rest for yourselves." Here, the focus of the meaning is on the 'restorative' character of rest rather than the mere ceasing of activity. **Rest** was built into the natural rhythms of life by the Creator Himself, who 'rested' on the seventh day. An important part of the meaning of rest is suggested by the mystery of this divine rest.

Rest draws a boundary around work and exertion and takes a legitimate delight in celebrating what has been accomplished, without any urge to keep working. The rest of God even includes an element that is crucial for humans who rest (**refreshment**). Exodus 31:17 tells us that God not only rested on the seventh day but also "was refreshed".

We can see in this weekly **rest** the satisfaction of both a physical need (a prescribed rest so people and animals "may be refreshed") and a spiritual requirement to set time aside for the worship of God.

(6) **God's rest** is "promised" to all God's people.

*"Blessed be the Lord, who has given **rest** to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant" (1 Kings 8:56).*

(7) **God's Rest** is accomplished by the "presence of God".

In Exodus 33:14 the Lord says, "**My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.**" Psalm 95:11, which is important to the author of Hebrews, belongs to this tradition. 'Rest' here is a tangible good (rather than a personal entering into God); so also in the closely related Psalm 81:13-16). The psalm therefore sums up the blessings promised to God's people - which were bound up with God's presence among them. Hebrews 4:3, *For we who have believed enter that **rest**, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My **rest**," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

(8) **God's rest** is a "tradition".

A very important Old Testament theme is Yahweh's gift of 'rest' to his people - from journeying or to warfare Israel had a 'resting place'. This theme constitutes a powerful affirmation of God's continuing faithfulness - and is a summary of His good gifts to His people. And note, the Garden Rest is also linked to the Sabbath rest. In the Bible willingness to engage in such **rest** is nothing less than a covenant sign - "a perpetual covenant" between God and His people (Exodus 31:16-17). Yet another part of the symbolism of **sabbath rest** was that it pictured the release from the bondage of Israel in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15).

(9) **God's rest** is "freedom from anxiety".

Rest is a form of freedom from stress, from human striving and from worldly preoccupations. If willingness to rest is a sign of commitment to God, it is elsewhere viewed as a freedom from anxiety. Moses paints a picture of "the beloved of the Lord" as someone who "rests in safety" and rests also "between God's shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12). Here is a picture of what rest ultimately involves in the Bible - a relinquishing of human self, and an assertion and a trust in God. And trust can only be accompanied by **rest** - in Him!

(10) **God's rest** is an "internal experience".

Rest is not only an external state, but it is also an internal experience - close in characteristic to "inner peace" or "feeling soothed". It will nourish your spirit, soul and body.

So what else does rest mean?

1. Rest means being in your God-designed place.
2. Rest means forgetting any struggles needed to get there.
3. Rest means not worrying about any threats.
4. Rest means freedom from distraction and agitation.
5. Rest means new energy and new joy.
6. Rest means the removal of destructive elements.
7. Rest means you can see the Bigger Picture better.

Application.... If "rest" flowed from the Temple to others, and we are the New Testament temples, then surely **rest** should also flow from us to those around us.

Back to our opening verse: *"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* From heaven Jesus still offers this tender invitation; but do we really understand or appreciate the Lord's loving gesture.

I. TO WHOM DOES JESUS EXTEND THIS INVITATION? To everyone who is burdened! But sadly many are too proud to admit their burden, or that they need Divine help to be freed from their burden.

II. WHAT IS JESUS OFFERING? Jesus is offering **rest** for our souls! What is the "soul" in this context? It is *the animating and vital principle in humans, credited with the faculties of thought, action and emotion and often conceived as an immaterial entity.*

Note the side effects of being burdened are things such as anxiety, depression, fear and doubt. For many of you, who have lived so long under a heavy burden, it may not be easy to lay aside those negative feelings which often accompany anxiety, fear and doubt. But the Lord Jesus will certainly provide what ever your soul needs to find **rest**.

III. WHAT DOES JESUS EXPECT OF THOSE WHO WISH TO RESPOND? He simply says, **"Come to me."** Then He asks that we do two things, (a) that we take His yoke upon us, and (b) that we learn from Him.

IV. HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO ACCEPT HIS INVITATION? Firstly, Jesus says He is gentle, therefore, we should all feel comfortable in His presence. Then He states that His yoke is easy to put on and that His burden is light. Implying that the burden you are already carrying is much heavier than the one you can share with Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Do you really desire the **rest** for your soul that is being offered by "the Saviour's tender invitation"? And, have you accepted the yoke of Jesus? Finally, are you prepared to live under this yoke?