

TBC – 3/5/06 p.m.

FINDING REST Matthew 11:28-30

Intro: The three verses of my text which I have chosen for tonight are verses which I have known for a long time. I don't remember that I ever sat down to commit them to memory, but like many other verses which we all know, they are verses which I have learned just by reading them over and over again, and by hearing others quote them. Recently they have been in my thoughts, and I don't know how many times I have said them over to myself as I have gone about doing various things. Have you had that happen to you, not necessarily about these verses, but about any verses, verses that you know and have become a treasure that you draw from, from time to time. We all are interested in rest, rest of mind and rest of heart. This rest is very close to the word "peace" which we find scattered through our Bibles in both the OT and the NT. I doubt if you can find many people who are not interested in peace, or rest. This is a subject which is especially dear to those of us who know the Lord.

The Lord gave His invitation, or should we call it a command, to those who are "labor and are heavy laden." The word "labor" speaks of working hard to the point of exhaustion, and the words "heavy laden" (which is one word in the Greek) are illustrated by loading an animal, say a donkey, with more than it can possibly carry. And often both of these are our own doing.

But as we look further into this word "rest," Archbishop Trench in his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, says that the word that our Lord used for "rest" in Matthew 11:28, and again in verse 29, speaks of ceasing from our own toils, so that we will no longer, in the words of Isaiah 55:2, "labor for that which satisfieth not." And you will possibly remember that Isaiah 55 is a chapter which speaks of salvation. It speaks of the Gospel.

We see this every day in people who are in the world. They are running here and there, doing this or that, in search of that which will give them rest. But we know that true rest can only be found in one place, and that is in Christ. It is in salvation. But often we are guilty of doing what the people of the world do because we have forgotten the true source of the "rest" that we all desire so much.

Now whenever we look at just a verse, or a few verses, anywhere in the

Bible, it is always helpful for us to look at the context, especially the verses which have led up to the verses that we are interested in, because they often give us a clue to the meaning of the verses we are studying. What led the Lord to say what He said in Matthew 11:28-30? Practically all of Matthew 11 contains words of the Lord Jesus, but it seems that at verse 25 He had finished His message given in the preceding verses, and He started to pray. His prayer is in verses 25 and 26, and then in verse 27 He made a very important statement about *knowing God*. The Lord Jesus was perfectly satisfied about the way the Lord had revealed truth to those whom He called “babes,” instead of to those He called “wise and prudent.” It was enough for our Lord that the Father thought this was best. And this is consistent with the way the Lord has called people to Himself as we read in the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 1.

It is interesting to see what people do to find “rest” for their souls, which means an inner rest, which, in turn, they think is largely dependent upon their circumstances. So millions are spent every year as people go to psychologists. Others seek “rest” in pleasure. Still others will move to another part of the country looking for rest. Some seek rest in education. People will work for years getting another degree to add to their names, thinking that this will bring them the contentment that they so much desire.

The list could go on and on. Perhaps you and I can add what we have sought to find “rest,” maybe some of the ideas that you might be working on right now. Peace is not to be found in anything that we do for ourselves, and so when our Lord said to the “multitudes” (v. 7) to whom He was speaking, His disciples included, “Come unto Me,” He meant that if they were to come to Him, they would have to leave all of their own ideas and ways behind them, actually forget about them, because none of them will work anyway.

But this is a hard thing to do. We don’t usually give up our ways and ideas easily. We know that haven’t worked, but we tell ourselves that if we persist in seeking “rest” where we think we will find it, it might eventually work. But we can’t come to Christ unless we are willing to give up on ourselves, and begin looking to the Lord, and to the Lord alone for “rest.” If you are willing to admit that you have worn yourself out trying ideas that have had, or trying ideas that other people have suggested to you, then there is hope for you – and me! If you see that you have loaded yourself down with a lot of ideas that haven’t worked, and won’t work,

then you, and I, are beginning to make progress. But as long as we hang on to our ways, and hope to get some help from the Lord, we will continue to be fatigued and burdened down. And instead of finding “rest,” we find more disappointment and discouragement.

Let me take you back again to Isaiah 55. Look with me at verse 8 and 9. They have everything to do with “rest.” Let me read these verses to you:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

If we are going to find rest it will not be in our ways, but in God’s ways. And the only way we can know God is through His Son. Isn’t this what Matthew 11:27 says? There is no possible way of knowing God except through Christ: “he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

Now there are two reasons why we come to Christ. We have to come to Christ, first of all, if we are going to be saved, saved from sin, saved from judgment. Salvation is only through Christ. Christ died to satisfy God concerning our sins. But those of us who have come to Christ for salvation often realize that we have drifted away from Christ as far as our daily living is concerned. And so we need to return to Him, not to be saved again, but to get our eyes back on the Lord and to depend upon Him to give us that “rest” which at one time we enjoyed, but then we drifted and started again to do for ourselves what we could never do before. We come to Christ; He has promised that HE will give us rest. And the Lord always keeps His promises. He never revises them. He never forgets them. If He says that He will give us rest, then we must not look to anyone else to give us that rest. But weak as we are in ourselves, we often turn away from Him to try something else.

But now look with me at verse 29 here in Matthew 11.

The Lord said, “Take my yoke upon you. Rudolph Stier, a German doctor of theology and a pastor, in his eight volume set on *The Word of the Lord Jesus*, in Volume 2 and page 122 says that this expression, “take my yoke upon you,” “was used proverbially among the Jews for the receiving of instruction, and discipline.” So the Lord Jesus was calling upon people to come to Him with the specific purpose of learning the truth from Him, and how to live the truth. That is what discipline is. The Lord knows the

way to rest, and He has offered to be the Teacher of each one of us, to show us where and how to find peace. Specifically it amounts to *learning of Him*. And what is it that the Lord specifically wants us to learn about Him. It is that HE is “meek and lowly in heart.” And then the Lord gives another promise: “and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Again, this promise is very clear. By coming to the Lord, leaving my own ideas and plans behind, submitting to His teaching, doing what He says for us to do, and not doing what He says not to do, we see Him not only as our Teacher but also as our Example, and there in Him we find our rest.

Whenever I speak on a passage in the Gospels, I always like to read what Bishop Ryle had to say on that passage. And he didn't disappoint me on these verses that we are considering tonight. Speaking of that description that the Lord gave of Himself, “meek and lowly in heart,” Bishop Ryle said this:

How true that is, the experience of all the saints of God has often proved. Mary and Martha at Bethany, Peter after his fall, the disciples after the resurrection, Thomas after his cold unbelief, all tasted the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.

And then Bishop Ryle added this:

It is the only place in Scripture where the “heart” of Christ is actually named. It is a saying never to be forgotten.

And then the Lord concluded by saying: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” His yoke is gracious, and his burden, light, or easy again. What a difference between what we do for ourselves in verse 28 as compared with what we experience with the Lord in verse 30.

This does not mean that there will be no struggles, no trials, and even some times of failure, but it does mean that we have put ourselves in the hands of the only One Who can give us rest.

But let me take this one step further. When we learn from our Lord, and when we learn about our Lord, how else does He give us rest? Go back to verse 27. When we submit ourselves to the teaching of our Lord, and we are learning about Him, His meekness, His lowliness of heart, at the same time the Lord Jesus is teaching about our heavenly Father. All that we find in Christ, we find in God. Our Lord said to His disciples in the Upper Room, “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

So, when the trials come, and come they will, we turn first to the Lord,

and we remember what He has taught us about Himself and about our heavenly Father – Their love for us, Their power in meeting our needs, Their wisdom in ordering our circumstances, Their mercy and grace, and all of Their other glorious attributes.

And although I don't need to say this to you, yet I must say it in case there is anyone here who has not yet learned what I am about to say. It is this: And what is the source of all that the Son will teach us, and especially of all that He will teach us about God. *It is in the book which you hold in your hands, the Bible.* Remember: the Bible is not only a revelation *from* God, but it is a revelation *of* God. If you come to Christ, seeking to leave your own ideas behind, and seek to learn from Him and about Him, you are going to spend the rest of your life reading and searching and meditating and loving and obeying this precious Book.

Concl: Let me give you just a couple verses from the OT, and one from the NT in conclusion. From the Old Testament: Isaiah 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isa. 26:3-4).

And from the NT where our Lord told His disciples:

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

So if you don't have the Lord's yoke on, put it on before you go to bed tonight. You'll sleep a lot better.