

TBC – 2/23/03 p.m.

## **FINDING REST**

Matthew 11:28-30

**Intro:** These three verses are like so many verses in the Bible in that they stand out by themselves, and seem to commend themselves to the people of God, or to those who desire to be the people of God, so that from generation to generation they are favorites which we turn to again and again. These are verses that you may never have had to memorize just because you have heard them so much that you have learned them just from hearing them over and over. They are about finding rest, and this is a subject which is always welcome. These verses also are timeless in the sense that children like them, young people like them, and adults of all ages like them. They are so simple that a child can understand them, and yet at the same time they are so deep that the most mature saints feels like he can never full comprehend their meaning.

The first thing to be noted about them is that they are words which the Lord Jesus spoke. All of the words of Scripture are the words of Deity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But somehow there is something very special about the words of our Lord. Skeptics have raised questions about different parts of the Word of God, but for some reason they seem to have left these alone. They strike a responsive chord in human hearts, and seem to convey to us that they are not only true, but that they are very important.

Let us notice some of the details of these verses.

First of all, we note that the Lord issued three commands in them. They are “come,” “take,” and “learn.”

Second, the verses are addressed to a particular group of people, those who “labor and are heavy laden”; in fact, to “all who labor and are heavy laden.”

Third, there are two promises. The first is in verse 11, “And I will give you rest.” And the second comes at the end of verse 12, “And ye shall find rest unto your souls.” I would remind you again at this point that we need to remember that these are the words of the Lord Jesus. So there can be no question about the validity of the promises. They are absolutely true and irrevocable.

Fourth, there is a description of the Speaker, the Lord Jesus Christ: “I am meek and lowly in heart.” This is one of the many statements that the Lord made about Himself while He was here on earth to help us to understand Who He was. For Him to be “meek and lowly in heart” did not mean that He had become that way as a result of experiences that He had gone through, such as we might say about some other person. But He meant that this was His nature. He has always been “meek and lowly,” and He always will be “meek and lowly.” That cannot be said about any other person who has ever lived on this earth. By God’s grace we may become “meek and lowly,” but by nature we are anything but “meek and lowly.”

Fifth, and finally, the Lord describes the yoke and the burden that He was telling people to take. “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

Now to look into the verse more closely, let us focus our attention upon the word “rest.”

## **I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD “REST”?**

The word has many meanings. It can mean a resting place. It can mean lying down to relax, or to sleep, a time of quiet. It can mean resting after some work is done. Peace and tranquility are synonyms for rest.

However, in these verses the Lord sets rest over against laboring and having a heavy burden. And the fact that He called upon those who come to Him to take His yoke upon them, does not suggest that the Lord is calling us to some situation where we don’t have anything in particular to do, although rest for our bodies, even to the point of sleeping, may be a part of the answer we are looking for.

But it seems that here the Lord is calling those who will come to Him to a life in which the burdens and care of life no longer rest upon them, but upon Him! When we carry the burdens ourselves, and our lives are full of strain and tension, there is no rest! We are under the load even when we may be sitting down to relax for a few minutes.

So in order to understand “rest” we need to understand what it means to “labor” and be “heavy laden.” To “labor,” as you might think, means to work, and to work hard, even to work to the point of exhaustion. To be “heavy laden” is to be overloaded, to be carrying more than you are cap-

able of carrying. Some people don't know that there is any other way in which to live. Some Christians don't know that there is any other way to live. And the promises of these verses were meant to open people's eyes and hearts to the realization that life doesn't need to be like they are living it.

It seems to me that the Lord was addressing Himself to people who were trying to do everything for themselves, and they were finding life a great burden rather than a "rest." And the result is that while people are doing a lot of things and going to a lot of places and getting many possessions, down deep in their hearts they know that they are not happy. They may spend their lives seeking one particular goal, and when they reach it, it isn't at all what they thought it would be. It doesn't bring the "rest" that they have been looking for all of their lives.

The main reason for the lack of "rest" in the lives of people is sin. Sin deceives us. Sin makes us think that we are sufficient for ourselves. Sin fills our lives with all kinds of burdens. Sin leads us in all of the wrong directions. And so sinners need to learn that the "rest" that they desire, the peace, the enjoyment that we all want, can never be experienced as long as our sin is upon us, and has not been forgiven.

But even Christians can be in need along this line, and what we need to do is to learn to trust the Lord with our cares and burdens rather than to try to carry them ourselves.

Now let us turn to:

## **II. THE COMMANDS OF OUR LORD.**

As I have said, there are three in these verses. The Lord began by stating the first one:

### **A. "Come unto Me" (v. 28a).**

That is an invitation, but it is more than an invitation; it is a command. If we are to enjoy not just times of rest, but a life of rest, we need to look to only one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That sounds very easy and simple, doesn't it? But it is neither easy, nor simple. And that is because we are so reluctant, so stubborn, so blinded, that we just can't understand why we have to come to the Lord. And we won't come unless He draws

us. But He draws us with His Word. The Lord meant that they were to come *now*. They were not to delay. There is no time to lose. He was pressing upon His hearers that they had an urgent need, and that the need that they had could not be met in any other way.

We are always inclined to wait even though He says come. Sinners need to come, and often believers who have lost sight of their constant need of the Lord, need to turn to Him again. Why would we even think of going to anyone else when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself says to us, “Come unto Me.”

What is the second command (because remember that these three verses are a package)?

### **B. “Take my yoke upon you.”**

Here we see that the Lord is not defining “rest” as a life of idleness. What is a yoke? It is a bar or a frame of wood by which two animals are joined together for the purpose of pulling a load. The Lord Jesus spoke of “My yoke,” that is, His yoke. He was calling people to Himself for the purpose of making them His servants in which He would be by their side pulling the loads of life, where we would be working together with Him. To take His yoke calls for surrender to the Lord, to His will, to His Word. And what a difference this makes in every detail of life. We are joined together with Him, and He becomes our strength, our wisdom, and everything else that we need.

In 1 Tim. 6:1 Paul wrote of servants as those who were “under the yoke.” And so to take the Lord’s yoke upon us is to recognize that we are by our salvation servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. What more exalted position could we have?

This is the second thing. And this is the place where we need to give plenty of our attention. Life has its burdens. Life has its trials. We can’t escape them. But it makes all of the difference whether we are facing them alone and in our own strength, or side by side, united with the Lord, trusting Him instead of ourselves.

And don’t overlook the fact that our Lord added, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” How different things can be for us when we are trusting the Lord, really trusting Him, and waiting upon Him, instead of

trying to carry the burden of our sins and the burdens of life by ourselves!

But then there is a third command.

### **C. “And learn of Me.”**

We are to come to the Lord. We are to submit ourselves to Him and to His will as expressed in His Word. And then we have that which really brings us to a life of “rest.” We are to spend the rest of our days learning of Him. There is nothing more delightful for a Christian to do than to spend his days getting better and better acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the One Who said, “Learn of Me.” So He will teach us. He will make Himself known to us. We will learn about His wisdom. We will learn about His power. We will marvel at His patience with us, and at His grace. Day by day we will be learning that the Lord is far more wonderful than we ever thought that He could be. But do you know something else it will do? You and I will find as we learn of our Lord, that the Spirit of God is working in our hearts to make us like the Lord.

How did the Lord describe Himself here? He said that He was “meek and lowly in heart.” The Lord is meek and lowly by His divine nature; we are to become “meek and lowly in heart” by God’s grace as we learn more each day about our blessed Lord.

I was speaking about Moses this morning whom God said was the meekest man on earth in his day. The Lord Jesus was the meekest Man on earth in His day, and we could go on to say that He was the meekest Man Who ever lived. He was gentle, humble, patient, and yet strong in His desire to please the Father. The meekness and lowliness of our Lord is to be seen all through His life here on earth. He was not weak, but meek, and there is great strength in meekness.

Isn’t it wonderful that the Lord said, “Learn of Me,” and then that He went on to say that what we need to learn was meekness and lowliness. The Lord was unswerving in His loyalty to the Father, and never did He fail in trusting the Father.

Now what about the promises:

## **IV. THE PROMISES OF REST.**

The Lord Jesus said, “I will give you rest.” And He assured us that in following His words given here, we would without doubt “find rest for our souls.

Notice the certainty of these promises. I don’t know how it is with you, but I have learned that my big problem through the trials and testings that have come to me throughout my life, has been in *finding rest*, finding the rest that needs to be characteristic of our lives. These words which the Lord spoke have their application to those who do not know the Lord as well as to those of us who know the Lord. The Lord does not just want us to have restful periods in our lives, but He was us to live restful lives. This is not possible apart from what the Lord said in these three wonderful verses.

**Concl:** As I close, will you look at the context with me? This is Matthew’s account of the passage we had in Luke for our SS lesson this morning. (Review it briefly.) Then follow as I read from verse 25 through 27. (Read.) Those who heard these words of the Lord, had reason to expect much from the Lord after His prayer in verses 25 and 26, and the teaching He gave in verse 27.

We all need to ask ourselves after examining these wonderful verses, where am I in relation to what the Lord said. Do I live a restful life? Am I daily coming to the Lord, turning to Him throughout each day, determined that by His grace I will do His will in a “meek and lowly” manner? Be sure you are obeying the commands, and then fully expect that the Lord will fulfill these promises that we might be restful people and so be able to live to glorify our Lord Who has done so much for us.