

Seeking Rest and Finding None

"Learn of me, I am meek and lowly, and shall find rest unto your souls" — Matt. 11:29.

There is small need to speak of the desirability of rest. Its abiding sweetness is acknowledged. It is sought for in many and varied ways. We may take it for granted that it is a thing desired. All through the ages have men wandered, hungry and thirsty, *"seeking rest but finding none."*

We seek its attainment, and wonder at its elusiveness. The fault is our own: the means are shown, and plainly enough when once the idea is grasped, but the knowledge of the means is not sufficient unless *practical use* is made of the knowledge. It must be grasped fully, not in mystic vagueness, but with a robust grasp, for it is a material good, not a spiritual abstraction. We can attain to rest not in the future only, but now. It is held out to us in Scripture as a promise for the present as well as the future.

We live in the midst of unrest. Disquietude is on the sea of national life: all the elements of storm are present, and ever and again it seems that the tempest must burst and the pent-up passion and mistrust rage forth in war.

We are not blind to the meaning of these signs, nor do we wonder at this tempestuous sea. "How can it be quiet," seeing the Lord hath raised its billows? But though the world were drenched in blood, and the stability and continuance of the country in which we live threatened, and even if the sounds of strife were around us—*even then there should be peace in the hearts of all who through faith can see through the battle-smoke to the peaceful end*, when the power of armed man shall be broken, and righteous law go forth from Zion, from a King against whose word, declarations of war would be of no avail.

The unrest of our surroundings is contagious. It becomes more and more necessary to live closely to the guiding Word, through which we can abide without fear, the thought of the coming evil. Without this support, in the face of coming terrors the faith may weaken and the understanding waver. *And now, before the storm increases, is the time to strengthen foundations*, and buttress the weak places of our defences, saying to the fearful— "Be strong of heart."

—and encouraging one another by example and precept. Calmness begets calmness, as anxiety begets anxiety. There is such a thing as the calmness of despair, but the calm of the Christ-life is founded on pure reason, and on hope that will be justified. Then, though the waves roar and are troubled—

"Rest on the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

"Let not your hearts be troubled!"

It is *not* "resting on the Lord," when foreboding and anxiety fill the breast. It is not resting on the Lord if thoughts of "wherewithal shall we be clothed and fed?" in the coming troubles are permitted to hamper the hands and heart in the service of God. It is not resting on the Lord if the actions of brethren and sisters are made excuse for negligence and slackness on *our* part.

Sink all personal differences; bear and forbear. Incompatibility of temperament, and all its accompanying little exasperations and petty slights, often more imaginary than real, are inevitable. They are part of the enemy that *must be overcome* before the goal can be reached. They are coals in our furnace of affliction, from which the true gold shall come forth purified. Cast out the obstruction to progress in the paths of peace, and find rest.

In ordinary everyday life, apart from higher things altogether, *there is no rest without labor*. We may do nothing, throwing off all feeling of responsibility, and exist like insects in the sunshine, without care or anxiety. But *this is not rest*, it is stagnation. Stagnation for any length of time is

impossible with most things and all men: if we do not move forward, we move backward, there is no standing still. We must improve or deteriorate. We have knowledge of only One who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; One who is above all our conceptions of perfection. But for ourselves we know that without work there can be no rest.

So in relation to rest of a higher kind; we may seek for it, pant for it as the hart for the water brooks, but *never will it come to us save through labor*. Even Christ in his invitation tells us it must be worked for—

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But not for the mere asking will rest be given; read further—

"Take my **yoke** upon you, and **learn** of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

We must *work* for (and in the spirit of) Christ, before his rest can descend upon us. And he outlines, or shadows forth, the spirit of the work, the spirit of humility—

"I am MEEK AND LOWLY, **learn of me**."

The absence of this meek and lowly attitude is at the root of the restlessness that we find among the brotherhood of Christ. Pride is an insidious thing, and creeps unrecognized into the heart.

What is the reason of the heart-burning at the supposed slight? *A sense of wounded self-esteem.* Banish the undue self-esteem, and there can be no wound. Let each esteem another better than himself to be. Christ made himself of no reputation: slights could not hurt him. He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, made himself the Servant of servants. His indignation was never for himself, but for the outrage or dishonor of his Fathers name.

In the midst of his murderers, when Peter denied him before the assembly—denied him, declaring with an oath that he never knew him—Peter, who had seen his works, and followed with him—the record says,

"He turned and looked upon Peter."

Only a look. And what was in that look we may learn from Peter's after life—from the bitter and disgraceful hour when he went, weeping and repentant, from the room, to the time of triumphant suffering years afterwards, when he shared the cruel fate of the Master he had slighted.

No sense of personal wrong was with Christ. Peter was the man for the work, and to him he entrusted the keys that opened to us the Kingdom of God. Not till he had tasted the humiliation and entered on the work of Christ did he taste of the Rest that comes with the consciousness of peace with God. His own words tell us that he recognized the principle—

"Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and **be clothed with humility**: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

"**Humble yourselves**, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

True humility—not the humility that is in itself pride—*true* humility, and true work, are the things that make for rest. Rest apart from these antecedent causes is an impossibility. More and more as we ponder this do we find it true; we long for rest, but till this Christ-declared principle is grasped and applied, our longing will be ungratified, our thirst unquenched.

Following up to its first source the reason of unrest in ourselves—going *truthfully* (for self-deception is fatally easy) to find causes of unrest, we find them rooted in *selfishness and pride*. Ugly names, but gloss them over as we may, the names must stand. Unrest arises from petty personal mortification, small disappointments, the trivial pressure of our ordinary daily affairs, discord in the home—all the little unnameable crossings and jarrings and *unsatisfied selfishness* of life.

Petty they sound, and petty they are, but great is their power in the life of men—of *good* men and women, too; for who is above their influence? Their very smallness is an irritation; great trials are not nearly so powerful for evil and for sorrow. We can judge best the meaning of rest by thus dwelling upon its opposite, which is, unfortunately, so familiar.

Consider the effect of Meekness, Lowliness, Humility upon these causes of unrest. As we apply them to each one, it vanishes away. Where is mortification, when self is put aside? Where is wounded vanity, when self-esteem is not prominent? Where is disappointment, when the lowliness that expects no recognition is present?

The invitation is open for all to learn the secret. It cannot be bought, it cannot be given, it cannot even be earned—*save in one way*. And for that way we must go to the fountain of peace. Christ himself will teach us, not so much by word, as by example—

"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

Christ was the embodiment of self-forgetfulness. Enduring the pangs of the cross, he commits his mother to the care of a disciple. He gives gracious words to the dying thief. He asks forgiveness for his murderers. Learn of him, and find from his own lips the open secret of his rest; for though his life was, for those last years, outwardly one of tumult and distress, yet *within* was peace.

Even in his hour of agony in the Garden—even then we can see peace and rest with God, that triumphed over weakness of flesh.

"*Father, not my will, but Thine, be done.*"

This is the peace of a perfect trust, the rest which he said he could not give save in the way in which he received it. He had it through meekness and lowliness. What could touch him, thus clothed with humility? He had no wealth: the troubles of the rich were unknown to him. He had no honored position: none could abase him, he had abased himself. All that the world could do, could not take from him the rest that he had won.

What could they do with such a man, but kill him?—blot him from life—blot him from remembrance. And they attempted both. They did kill him; but, blot his name from remembrance? *Never*. The very means they took, have in the hands of God been turned into lasting memorials of his fame. And the end is not yet. Servant of servants he has been, washing the feet of his disciples. Insulted, persecuted and slain—he *has* been. King of kings, and Lord of lords, he *will* be. Praised and honored, every knee bowing in reverence before him.

The life of Christ is our example. And the life of every perfected being that sings the "new song" of the redeemed on Mount Zion will be in some degree the life of Christ. In deprivation, contempt, and self-abnegation endured in lowliness and meekness; in work done for the Master—work tempered with the rest which he even in sorrow enjoyed. This is the portion of each saint.

Not now the crucifixion and the crown of thorns, but the crucifying of the fleshy desires, the ambitions and the pleasures of this mortal state. The present reward is that rest and peace which Christ has declared the world cannot give—

"My peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27).

But though we may rest on the Lord in patience, and though we have rest now, when we fulfil the conditions, this is not Rest in perfection. There is a peace that passes our present understanding, such as Christ tasted to the full when he ascended to the Father. All the pain and humiliation behind him; before him love, light, and joy unspeakable, on the right hand of the Eternal King.

And in the future, brightly and clearly seen, the hope and certainty of the coming triumph of the work of God on earth, with himself the leader and head, the chief among ten thousand, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, come again to vindicate the words he had spoken to the unheeding world. What perfect peace is his now—the prize of his high calling with him—his work before him, work which none but he can do.

This is the peace to which we stretch our hands; the peace that floweth like a river in the presence of the Father. This is the Rest that remaineth for the people of God. For the Rest of Christ is the Rest of his people. In the body of Christ, one member cannot suffer or rejoice without the others, and in the day of the Apocalypse of Rainbowd-Angel—the multitudinous Christ—we shall be one with him, even as he is one with the Father.

Let us enter into the rest that is available now; *for if we fail in this, we shall fail in attaining the Rest of the Aions*. This present rest born of meekness and lowliness is but a foretaste of this sweetness, a mere glimpse into the unspeakable possibilities of the beyond. What pure and lasting peace can there be for any earthly being while the practices of Jezebel corrupt the court?

We cannot rest in perfection now, for we cannot fit ourselves truly to our environment, for the environment is false and hollow. Not till this state of things has faded away can we expand our correspondences with the true environment that produces peace.

The final rest will not be stagnation; there will be work in plenty. Even then the present law will hold, that is the outcome of work, the two cannot be separated. What work may mean then, we can only faintly see and realize; but weariness will not be connected with it. Are we not promised a—

"... strength renewed as the eagle's"?

Strength is renewed by rest. We can but dimly see visions of a state in which Work is Rest, and Rest is Work, a glorious commingling and blending, to which nothing we experience now can be likened—a time of joy unspeakable and full of glory.

There is another Rest—apart from the partial rest of the present, and the perfect rest of the future—the rest to which Daniel went, according to the angelic word—

"Go thy way, Daniel, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

This rest holds many a shining ruler of the future age. It is not to be desired save as a brief release from present evil; there is no real rest in the grave—that is, no intelligent rest. Non-existence has no pleasures and no pains. The sweetness of this cessation from toil is realized only by the living, who perceive that the righteous have been taken away from evil to come.

"The dead know not anything."

But when they stand upon their feet again, and are received into the ranks of the deathless multitude of the chosen, then will they know how the weary years have been shortened for them by this gracious "bridge of silence." It is possible, if Christ's appearance is near, that many of us may not taste death, but be of those:

" . . . changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

But whether or not, is of small consequence, *provided that we neglect not the present work*. Let us learn to follow Christ, humbly and diligently, not cumbering ourselves with unnecessary weights, but casting aside all that would impede.

We cannot afford to do otherwise. Consider the price to be paid if we indulge our selfishness and our petty inclinations to self-esteem. Man at his best, now, is but a poor thing; we have little of which to be proud. It is unpleasant to be pitied and despised by our fellows, *but better that than to be despised at the judgment!*

How very insignificant then will seem the things that ruffle us now. Cannot we, for our own benefit, take this view of it now? Has anyone offended by action or word? Do not brood over the slight—embittering a life that is already bitter enough, but cast in the fountain this healing branch—

"How will this appear when looked back upon from the standpoint of the bar of judgment?"

Surely, in this light, the thing will shrink to its true dimensions and disappear. Let us use the thought as a weapon—

" . . . casting down imaginations and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity **every thought** to the obedience of Christ."

This is Paul's word. And again, he warns the Hebrews against the possibility of losing the rest promised to them that overcome—

"Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

—C. L.