

The Concept of Rest - And How We Give it Up

Believer's Fellowship - March 10, 2024

Genesis 2: 1 - 3

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God **rested** from all his work that he had done in creation.

Transliteration: shabath: to cease, desist, rest

Exodus 17: 1 - 7

1 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, **but there was no water for the people to drink.** 2 **Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."** And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Psalms 95: 7 - 11

7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my **rest.**"

Transliteration: mēnuwchah: resting place, rest, quietness

Matthew 11

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest.** 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Transliteration: anapausis: intermission, cessation of any motion, business or labor rest, recreation

Questions to Ponder:

Do you desire rest? If so, what typically keeps you from experiencing it?

What is the difference between "rest" and "rest for your souls"?

What is required of you to truly experience "rest for your soul"?

What makes that difficult?

What do you have to accept?

The promise to Israel had been peace, prosperity and rest in the Promised Land in exchange for obedience to the old covenant and Law of Moses. The New Testament "rest" is a rest in Christ. It is the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit and a spiritual rebirth that leads to eternal life in the kingdom of God. This is the ultimate "rest" of God. God's purpose in Genesis 2: 2 – 3, not completely understood under the old covenant, is now revealed and fulfilled in its final sense through Christ. (Grace Communion International)

It is important for us who have been made free in Christ not to allow ourselves to be held captive by our disordered desires. For many years now I've prayed a specific prayer each morning. It's a prayer that helps me declutter my mind and allows me to connect with the Lord in a focused way. I learned this prayer from other wise spiritual guides. However, I have modified it a bit. In a seated position with my arms extended and my palms opened upward, the prayer goes something like this . . . "Lord, as I begin this day, I want to let go of . . . my need to be in control of the people in my life, a disordered need for approval from the people in my life, any disordered need for security, comfort, or convenience.

In each of these three areas of my life I name and visualize the specific people or things that I need to let go. Sometimes I can mentally quickly turn loose of these, as if I were tossing the petals of a flower in a gently flowing brook and watching them float downstream. But at other times it takes a bit longer; more emotional and spiritual work is needed. Because I am prone to be intercepted by disordered desire, I make sure that I pray this prayer before I start each day.

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"To be in control" means I must have outcomes go my way or there will heavy price I will have to pay. I tell myself, "I know what's best; I need to come out on top, or others will take advantage of me." Control is my disordered need for power; it often comes from a place of anxiety.

A disordered need for "approval" comes from Gospel amnesia. I forget that I am united to Christ, that my identity is in Him—that I have already been approved and that I am His Beloved. Still, I find within me a twisted need for others to like me, honor me, and value me.

My disordered need for "security, convenience, or comfort" comes from an exaggerated desire for self-preservation. There is nothing wrong with wanting to live in a secure environment. Convenience is a gift; as is comfort. These are understandable human preferences. Yet, when I *demand* that these be mine I begin to realize that something is misaligned in my soul. I begin to sense that my priorities aren't necessarily the Lord's.
(Gary and Denise Nebeker of LeaderCare)