

1. Soul Rest Corresponds With Humility

- a. Soul rest corresponds with humility of heart
 - i. The poet says nothing about his circumstances
 - ii. He does mention the reality of what his heart desires
 - iii. Soul rest begins with recognizing the proper ordering of our heart’s desires, that our desires, while good in themselves, become trouble when they are disordered
 1. The Greek word for “lust” is a compound word meaning “overdesire”
 2. Greed (not just for money, but an ‘overdesire’ for anything) is the epitome of the *exalted heart*
 3. It sets its affections on “great” things, not sufficient things
 - a. Greed is always craving “greater” and “more” and thus is wracked with anxiety about never having enough
 - b. Greedy people are always dissatisfied
- b. Soul rest corresponds with humility of eyes
 - i. What he observes does not determine the condition of his soul
 - ii. This man knows that his understanding of his circumstances is limited – he cannot see everything, but he is not trusting in his ability to understand everything before he rests
 1. It is not that he does not see them, or that he does not ponder them, but they are not the ‘greatest’ thing, the ‘highest’ thing – he does not ‘overvalue’ them
 2. In fact, he uses a preposition “more than” at the end of v1
 - a. Thus, he values what he sees, but not overvalues what can see
 - iii. There is a danger of myopathy, of singular vision, of only seeing the problems in our lives, when our minds become trapped in a swirling vortex of trouble beyond our control – we feel the danger of getting sucked in, but we cannot take our eyes away
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- c. Soul rest corresponds with humility of lifestyle
 - i. This is a word, *walk*, which describes a consistent and situated pattern of life, not a little here or a little there, but of *living*
 1. So, what the poet is saying is that he does not make a habit of getting involved in things that are great or marvelous or confusing to him
 2. Marvelous things belong to someone else, not him, so he does not seek to do great things in order to make himself somebody
 - ii. He is not walking, making a habit or lifestyle, in the ‘great things’ or the things ‘too marvelous’ for him
- d. You can see a progression in the words:
 - i. The feet walk in the paths which lead to what our eyes are fixed upon
 - ii. Our eyes are fixed upon the things which our hearts adore
 - iii. Our hearts adoration dwells upon the things which we believe will give us peace
 - iv. The poet says that what calms his soul is “the LORD”, so his heart is not set upon things he cannot figure out – His loves, his looking, and his lifestyle are entrusted to the LORD’s understanding of all things
 1. Therefore, the key to obtaining inner peace is to know the LORD and His promises *and to believe them to be more real than anything we feel or see*
 2. “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened down, 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.” (Matthew 11:28-29)
 - a. This promise is precluded by the knowledge of the LORD, for Jesus first said, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one

knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matt. 11:27)

- e. This is difficult for us because our natural bent is to place our security and satisfaction in our own *ability and adequacy* to control our own circumstances
 - i. We assume that the things which our hearts desire: to be acceptable, significant, and special, are *achieved* by our own ability to be good people
 - 1. This idea of “achieving” leaves us always striving restlessly, relentlessly, and without peace
 - ii. For example:
 - 1. The soul says, “I can rest because I am beautiful.”
 - a. But what about when your beauty begins to fade, or someone questions or attacks your attractiveness?
 - 2. The soul says, “I can rest because I am wise, healthy, or strong.”
 - a. Money can be lost. Entropy always wins.
 - b. You can deny the certainty of death while you are young and strong, but reality has a way of infringing upon our delusions
 - 3. The soul says, “I can rest because I am a good person.”
 - a. What if someone questions your goodness or points out your deepest flaws?
 - iii. How often are we worried, or anxious, about these things? How often do we *notice* our dissatisfaction, or are we ruled by our *lack*?
 - 1. You don’t notice your stomach until it’s hungry.
 - 2. Your soul does the same thing: it is always drawing attention to its dissatisfaction, about how it looks, how it was treated, how it feels.
 - 3. This “drawing attention to itself” is the inner turmoil of worry, anxiety, and despair
 - iv. We fret because we cannot control our circumstances, and these times prove how powerless and incapable and inadequate we actually are
 - 1. If we are loving, looking to, and living upon our own ability and power to control our lives and make us something, we are delusional
 - 2. Hunger heralds that. Sleep states that. Aging argues that. Pain proclaims that. Concussions communicate that. Every vomiting virus violently tells us that.

2. Soul Rest Begins With Consoling Ourselves With the Sufficiency of God

- a. Soul rest is something recognized by me and obtained by me
 - i. That is, we can have all the requisite ‘ingredients’ for contentment, for calm, for safety, but still not have inner peace because our heart, eyes, and feet are in the wrong places
 - ii. The poet clearly says, “I have quieted my soul,” as something which he has worked out for himself
 - 1. He does not work it alone, or in isolation, but it is something which he does
- b. Soul rest is the smoothing out of the soul, the inner person
 - i. It is the soul which is smoothed, not the circumstances
 - ii. “Calmed” (ESV) is a word which means “to make level”
 - 1. The poet is relating his soul to something which is out of level and needs to be brought in line with a standard: truth
 - iii. Discontent, worry, anxiety, fretfulness are all examples of uneven hearts and minds out of level with the truth
 - 1. When our circumstances are weighed too heavily, to the practical exclusion of the revelation of God’s Word (His promises, His explanations, His will), they ‘tip the scale’ toward restlessness rather than restfulness

2. When we have not taken into account what God has revealed to be ultimately true, and fit our circumstances into His explanation, then the life-giving rainfall of God's promises and encouraging words don't fill us up, but run off us without watering our thirsty souls
 3. Humility of heart, eyes, and feet means that my soul entrusts itself to God's ability to see and know infinitely more than me and that His direction of my circumstances is sufficient for my good – so my soul weighs His Word more than my own heart or my own eyes.
- iv. One way in which our souls become “out of level” is by exalting our eyes and measuring ourselves with other people
1. I lack gentleness because my exalted eyes are comparing myself with superiority over another. I look down on them and treat them as lower than me, even puffing myself up if I help them and appear kind (Galatians 6:1, 14-15).
 - a. Test: Gossip, Boasting, Demeaning Talk, Harshly Critical spirit, talking about your success in the midst of another's success
 2. We lack patience with each other because our exalted eyes have compared ourselves to others and found ourselves lacking. We feel that we must defend that we are worthwhile, righteous, good, lovable.
 - a. Test: Irritability, Complaining, Gossip, Critical Spirit, Expecting people to make retribution for their sin against you (unforgiveness), etc.
- v. We're still trying to present evidence to everyone (including ourselves) to quiet that tumultuous assumption that I am only OK if I *have performed successfully*.
1. We are operating out of our flesh's desire to prove itself worthy of respect.
- vi. When we feel a bubble ‘higher’ than others, we become proud, and our soul's only find their ‘rest’ if we can compare ourselves in a superior way
1. Yet, this is unbalanced and not truly inner rest, it only lasts as long as I'm looking at someone worse than myself, or weaker than myself
- vii. When we feel a bubble ‘lower’ than others, we become anxious, self-pitying, and desperate, for our rest is upended and we are low, desperately low
1. This unbalance is clearly not rest, and the kind of discontent which we usually feel as discontent and worry
- viii. Too often, we Christians give advice to someone in this place, of lowliness, that consists of moving their eyes to look at people who are not as successful as them
1. “You're doing better than most of them” or “you're just like everyone else”
 2. The soul that rests in the LORD is unconcerned about its recognition and glory. It leaves its honor in the hands of the God.
- c. Soul rest is the quieting of the soul's fussiness because it knows that it has *been given* all that it needs
- i. The image here is of a child who is able to rest upon its mother without feeling compelled to root around for food.
 1. Knowing that it is has what it needs, it rests contentedly upon his mother's chest
 2. It is, having everything that he needs, the feeling of safety, security, and sustenance which enables a child to overdesire good things
 - a. Though the milk is there, he does not crave it, or fuss for it, for he is full and no longer ruled by the anxiety of finding food
 3. The word translated “weaned” is actually the word “ripened” or “full”.
 - a. I modern English “weaned” means a child who no longer needs its mother's milk to satisfy its hunger

- b. But the image here is not on independence from the mother, but from independence from worry - on the fullness and restfulness upon the mother because it is not consumed with concern about its next meal
 - 4. It's a word of *satisfaction* and *contentedness*
 - ii. Have you ever seen a young infant who is hungry, who is dissatisfied?
 - 1. Fussy, Flailing, Furious, Panicked
 - 2. Often unweaned children will do this even if they have eaten enough
 - iii. Our souls become like this when we do not believe that we have achieved all that we need to be OK or that what we think we have achieved can be lost
 - 1. Fussy
 - a. Irritable, agitated, feelings of angst and we may not even know why
 - b. Loud, complaining, frustration with things not going our way rules us
 - 2. Flailing
 - a. Attempt to grab anything to satiate this hunger
 - b. We try more food, more recognition, more pleasure, more work, etc.
 - c. Spasms of fruitless and aimless efforts to find something that will satisfy
 - 3. Furious
 - a. When those don't deliver on their promises, or they threaten to expose my failures, I get furious
 - 4. Panicked
 - a. When our fury doesn't achieve our souls' satisfaction, we panic
 - b. We lose all hope, all expectation of good, any idea of survival
 - 5. Powerless
 - a. DESPAIR! – Nothing but darkness ahead!

3. What Does This Soul Rest Look Like?

- a. This person is never fussy because of criticism (doesn't bother him, isn't devastated, doesn't keep him up late)
 - i. Putting too much stock in what other people think
 - 1. When criticized: "I know what I think and that's what's important."
 - 2. Or: "I am a nobody! I am hopeless! I need to protect myself"
 - 3. Both are FUSSY souls!
 - ii. So, you have either a person devastated by criticism (thinking too much of what others think) or a person who can't accept criticism (thinking too much of what they think)
 - 1. The problem is that we don't know how to heal low self-esteem except with pride, and they are both devastating nuisances to our souls and therefore to our relationships, families, communities, cities, nations, the world
 - iii. Think about this: Why do you worry?
 - 1. You worry because the threats of life are "more real" than the authority of Christ.
 - 2. But when the authority of Christ and His love for you are "more real" than the threats of life, you are peaceful, at rest.
 - iv. Think about this: Why do get bitter?
 - 1. You get bitter because what people have done *to you* is "more real" than what Christ has done *for you*.
 - 2. When what Christ has done for you is "more real" than what people have done to you, you forgive and love self-sacrificially – new life in the power of God's Spirit
 - v. Think about this: Why do you pity yourselves?

1. You pity yourself because what people have said about you, or what you say about yourself, is “more real” than what Jesus says about you and to you, i.e. “I love you.” “In me you have great glory and nothing to be ashamed of.”
 2. But when the words of Jesus to you and about you become more real to your heart, the more they rule your self-thoughts and the more free you are from self-pity to become more and more joyful
- b. To the progressing degree that the doctrines of the gospel become “more real” than all other claims upon your heart, mind, and affections, the more you take on the shape of Jesus Christ and live the life of God...with a restfully active soul
- i. It looks like Jesus: full of grace and truth, love and justice

4. How Do We Get This Soul Rest?

- a. We all place our hope of satisfaction, of deep soul rest, in something
 - i. Getting that...recognition, appreciation, achievement, etc. from the thing which we believe that we MUST have in order to be OK
- b. “Wait in hope upon the LORD”
 - i. This means to put our hope of life, of true and full living, upon the LORD
 - ii. When our souls are filled up with the promises of God and of His goodness, then they, too, are contented, at peace, restful...like a filled-up infant on his mother’s chest
- c. We all tend to strive to prove ourselves worthy, important, to be somebody
 - i. Religious do it through “good works of righteousness” by trying to meet God’s standards, i.e. “I am a good person because I am right, kind, loving, obedient, go to church, fight for truth, not sexually immoral...”
 1. Secular do it through “good works or ‘positive ethics’”, i.e. “I am a good person because I am tolerant, compassionate, nice, considerate of the environment, non-judgmental...”
 2. Either way, we are striving under a fussy soul because our dependence is upon our own works and our own ability to prove our righteousness
 - a. **BURDENED and RESTLESS FUSSY SOULS!!**
- d. Putting your hope in Jesus, by faith, means that you rest from trusting in your striving because you find that God finds utter satisfaction in His striving!
 - i. There is nothing left for you to do by which you must build your reputation, prove your mettle, or determine your worth.
 - ii. Your soul is filled with the approval of God, of His deep and abiding love for you and care for you and sovereign designs for you...and your soul can go to sleep against His chest, His heartbeat giving you peace, “It is finished. It is finished. It is finished.”
 - iii. He who knows your wicked desires and actions, weds Himself to you as His beloved Bride!!
 1. You don’t have to make up for your sins before He weds Himself to you
 - a. “Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give rest to you.”
 - b. Only through Me will you find true rest, the deeper rest of the soul and the inner rest like the filled child on his mother’s chest.
- e. Apart from His satisfactory works, you will always be striving under your own, and even if you are content with works occasionally...there’s always tomorrow looming over you.
- f. But Jesus does all things well and He calls you to come to Him for your rest, to trust in Him, to make Him the center of your life so that all your works are complete in Him, and you will find the ceasing of striving.

Conclusion:

How Can Jesus Do This?

Why was Jesus so restless in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating blood, and why did He cry out so restlessly upon the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Isa 57:20-21 - But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." 2 Cor 5:21 – God made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him

On the cross you see Him burdened, His soul flailing, as one unclean in the fiery presence of the Holy God, crying out under a crushing weight - yours

Jesus was experiencing eternal burden, the weight of our sin and wickedness, so that when He died He was able to say, "It is finished!"

You are clean because He was made unclean for you

You are saved because He was condemned for you

You are honored because He was made shameful for you

You are beloved because He bore the hatred of God for you

You can rest from your restless striving because He achieved your acceptance for you

Jesus lived the life that you should have lived and died the death that you should have died, so that when God looks upon you who believe in Jesus and entrust yourself to His completed works

Everything necessary for the satisfaction of the most exacting conscience, God's, was completed and fulfilled and finished by Jesus upon that Cross . THAT is REST!

To be a Christian is not to try hard to be like Jesus, or to move the moral line so that it is more amenable to my own heart, eyes, and lifestyle; so that I could justify myself.

Rather, it is to come to God saying, "I rest not on my works, but on His! God, accepts me not because of my works, but because of His, not my record but His record!"

And everything necessary that you've got to do and be is finished for all of eternity! In Him you are complete from this time forth and forever. The only eyes that matter look upon you, united to Christ by faith alone, and say, "This is my beloved child in whom my soul delights."

So, people of the cross: Wait in hope for the LORD from this time forth and forever!