

Entering Sabbath Rest. No Fourteen

We all want to be happy. Where do we find happiness? Many seek it in material possessions.

They shop until they drop. They are engaged in a frenzy of activity, straining for success and prominence. They are restless, always looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The state of the unbeliever is the state of restlessness for "there is no peace," or rest, "for the wicked," says God in Isaiah 57:21. True happiness and satisfaction can only be found in the pursuit of God. This is what Augustine meant in his famous Book One of Confessions: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." The rest we need comes through reconciliation with God. We repent of our sin, cease to trust the false securities and vain promises of the world, and learn that God has reconciled us to Himself through the atoning death of His Son on the cross. He has done all the work. We learn, by faith, to rest in His grace.

A growing number of Christians seem to have forgotten that God has set aside one day out of seven to celebrate our rest in Christ. Sunday observance and resting are not a dry duty or an oppressive obligation. It is a delight, an anticipation of heaven. As John Newton put it:

Safely through another week God has brought us on our way,
Let us now a blessing seek, Waiting in His courts today;
Day of all the week the best, Emblem of eternal rest.

Someday we shall know this rest in all its fullness. As Hebrews 4:9 says: "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." Although we have peace with God, we are still in the midst of spiritual warfare. Here we have no pure rest. We are tossed like a vessel on the ocean waves. "We are troubled on every side"(2 Cor.4: 8). The Bible does not teach sinless perfection on this side of the grave. The future state of glory is all rest, a perfect rest in Christ, in His love. In heaven temptations are unknown. We will be free from all that is evil, from all the allurements of the world which so often assault the Lord's people and cause them to stumble. The devil will no longer have a chance to harm us. But eternal rest does not mean doing nothing. We won't be idle. But the activity of the saints is no longer burdensome "toil" or "labour." The idea of rest carries with it the idea of accomplishment, satisfaction and enjoyment. The heavenly life is one of ceaseless activity. The saints, although in heaven are without bodies, are in the service of God. They "are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev.7: 15). However, the Bible does not reveal the exact nature of their service. May we look forward to the day when our once-week Sunday observance will be transformed into the eternal Sabbath feast in the presence of our covenant God.