

Rest at Work

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Abstract

This article explores the biblical and theological concept of rest as an essential dimension of Christian life and work. Beginning with creation, where God establishes rest as a divine pattern, it traces the theme through Israel's history, the Sabbath command, and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Rest is presented not as inactivity but as a dynamic spiritual state rooted in relationship with Christ, who invites believers to find relief from life's burdens. The paper argues that true rest requires transformation, disciplined practice, and active participation in God's mission. While physical rest is necessary, spiritual rest is sustained through faith, obedience, and evangelism. The study unveils rest as both a present experience and a future hope, culminating in eternal communion with God.

Keywords: Rest, Sabbath, Jesus Christ, Spiritual Formation, Work, Evangelism, Theology of Rest, Christian Life.

Introduction

God is the creator of the whole universe, and on the sixth day, he created Adam and Eve in His image. On the seventh day, he created rest. Adam and Eve were resting with God before falling into disobedience. It has become a continuous struggle for all of us to enter His rest. Israelites entering the promised land is an allegorical simulation of entering rest. But Israelites are seen falling again and again into disobedience. Therefore, God was sworn into His wrath that they will not enter His rest (Psalm 95). Sabbath is another allegorical event based on eternal rest, given as a law (Exodus 20:11). When Jesus performed miracles

on the Sabbath, it reminded the conservative Jewish union of those times that He was the Lord of the Sabbath.

Our God is not stagnant; His divine project to restore man to His rest is to bring His Son into this restless world. Every beginning has a beginning, and that beginning has an end; likewise, every end has a beginning, and that end has an end. Debt has been paid; Christ has risen; Satan is defeated. The restoration process has started, the clock is ticking, restlessness will end soon, and we will be entering his rest again, and he will be there forever. But before that, we are obligated to bring more souls to the feet of Christ. Nee says, "If the Church is not in a state which corresponds with Christ, God will not rest, and His work will not be completed. Not only is Adam in the image of God, but so also is Eve. Not only does Christ have the life of God, but the Church also has God's life."

In composing this discussion, I intend to ensure that the rest is not a stagnant condition but a constant challenge for believers to bring more people to His sheep pen.

Let the Thinking Work

Thinking harder and deeper to understand any situation is fundamental to getting what we want, but, in most stances, the real need lies in action instead of thinking. However, an act sustained with planning is a real act. In other words, a point of action should be based on doing something whenever the action is possible. So, there is always a plentiful supply of what is expected in the creativity of work. Let me give you an example of thinking before action; "...And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2), and the action comes up with; "...Let there be light, and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). And formless comes to the formation.

The Essence of Rest?

God so loved the world that he chose to leave His resting place and be born in this restless world. Now, believers can share their burdens with Jesus to feel a deeper rest. But it takes a true transformation of mind, soul, and determination. Softly and tenderly, Jesus is crying out.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Thus, Jesus is the Essence of rest.

Why is Rest Important?

If there is a remedy that claims to solve all the world's problems, and it is not Jesus, let us apologize for it. To rest deeply is a bind of heart with Jesus. But do we find time to come to Him? “This has not become one of the world’s more pressing problems. Everybody everywhere seems to be busy. In the corporate world, a perennial time scarcity problem afflicts executives all over the globe, and the matter has only grown more acute in recent years.”¹

Lack of rest and running without a break can cause mental, emotional, and spiritual strife. Physical and mental weakness can also sprout up the emotional disorder, as a poorly rested person easily becomes tense and angry. This lack of rest could lead to more serious problems, i.e., relationships can damage a

¹ “Why is everyone so busy?” Time poverty is a problem partly of perception and partly of distribution. The Economist, December 20, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/christmas-specials/21636612-time-poverty-problem-partly-perception-and-partly-distribution-why> (accessed on December 20, 2020).

person's spiritual life and can go astray. Often, the deepest sense of pleasure and meaning of living is lost.

The Bible talks a lot about rest. It is a recurring theme in the Scriptures, starting with the creation week (Genesis 2:2-3). God created for six days; then He rested, not because He was exhausted, but because He set the pattern for humanity to follow. On the Sabbath, the Ten Commandments made a condition of the rule (Exodus 20:8-11). Note that God said, 'Remember the Sabbath.' It was nothing new; it has been around since it was founded. Land wanted to relax, too (Leviticus 25:4, 8-12). In the Jewish context, the Sabbath is observed as a God-given command. In the Christian context, Sunday is a Lord's Day in the remembrance of resurrected Christ. Dawn writes in her book that When we cease striving to be God, we learn a whole new kind of contentment, the delight of the presence of God in our present circumstances. When we give up our silly rebellion against God's purposes, we discover that he provides the security we were searching for.²

Why and When Should We Rest?

Mackenzie and Kirkland have maintained that good outcomes are impossible if they are not ready to work productively. The consequence would be a life-depleting loss of motivation.³ It could be one picture to observe the rest. But why did God rest on the seventh day? He rested not on the first six days of creation but the seniventh day. It uncovers that God accomplished what His heart desired. He was happy to create this universe, so he rested on the seventh day with contentment.

God would not have rested before completing His work. And this thought has given me a great deal of restlessness with an

² Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 56, 61.

³ Alistair Mackenzie and Wayne Kirkland, *Where's God on Monday?* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 98.

obligation to carry on. As Paul also mentioned in his letter, "...And God rested on the seventh day from all his works" (Hebrews 4:4).

The above statement has given us a clear picture of how and when we should rest. It illustrates that the life of a believer is always at work; it may cease to work physically, but the vision to work with the mission for the extension of the Lord's kingdom never ceases. Evangelism is a perpetual task that a Christian must perform daily through our words and actions (living in a society within the family, relatives, Church, workspaces, and especially living with the other dominant religion).

How Should We Rest?

It is important to know that work is not a curse; it was the earth God cursed (Genesis 3:17). Humans are granted free will (authority, as Christ has authority, so does the Church) to choose wisely. Another God-given grace that believers are granted is the personality of Jesus and an opportunity to serve Him. There is always a future for God's people (Jeremiah 29:11). So we always hope to have a more rewarding job and a more enjoyable rest. Christians should follow the example of God and pour themselves completely into both work and rest.

Keller says, "Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have."⁴ A very important part of going through deep rest is being mindful of what thoughts fill our minds. Letter to the Philippians urges people to care for things that are good and real and perfect (Philippians 4:8). The Letter to the Colossians invites Christians to envision a glorious world that waits for those who look to Christ (Colossians 3:1-4). The letter to Corinthians advises believers to recognize the present troubles

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters* (Dutton Adult, 2009) ONE - All You have Ever Wanted - You Walk into the Mountain.

and challenges as temporary afflictions compared to the eternal peace that awaits (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

I suggest that living close to Jesus and waiting upon His second coming would be the best way to rest in any cultural setting, including praying, fasting, and reading scripture. Spurgeon, in the light of Matthew 11:28, describes, "If you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ - Come! Come! You will be longing for His second advent; you will say, come quickly; even so, come Lord Jesus. You will be panting for nearer and closer communion with Him. As His voice to you is Come, your response to Him will be, Come, Lord, and abide with me. Come, and occupy alone the throne of my heart; reign there without a rival and consecrate me entirely to Thy service."⁵

Conclusion

The concept of rest, as depicted in the Old and New Testaments, is integral to God's mission to restore humanity. It is not just a cessation of labor but a spiritual state reflecting God's creative fulfillment. The Israelites' journey, the Sabbath, and Jesus' teachings all point towards an eternal rest that believers are invited to enter. This rest represents contentment in God's presence and the culmination of His redemptive work. Jesus Christ is central to this rest, offering spiritual relief from life's burdens and a relationship based on love, humility, and purpose. Achieving this rest requires active transformation, prompting Christians to let go of worldly struggles and find peace in Christ. Rest is not a passive state but an ongoing spiritual growth and evangelism process. Christians are called to be at work, spreading the Gospel, living in accordance with Christ's teachings, and anticipating His second coming. True rest is found in surrendering to God's will and aligning with His divine plan.

⁵ Charles H Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*, (SAGE Software, Albany, USA, Version 1.0, 1996), 704.

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