

REST FOR YOUR SOULS

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Karoshi is Japanese word which means "death from overwork." The syndrome is now so common in Japan that it claims as many as 30,000 victims each year. It's increase has caused such concern that since 1990, the government's Labor Ministry has been forced to provide restitution to *karoshi* widows.

There's also a worldwide syndrome of "overwork of the soul." It afflicts everyone who has not accepted Jesus' offer in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my load is light"

ARE YOU SOUL-WEARY?

When Jesus invited to Himself "all you who are weary and burdened," He was speaking primarily of weariness of the soul, for the rest he offers in v. 29 is "rest to your souls."

What makes the soul "weary and burdened"? The ultimate cause is our sin and its consequences, not to mention the impact we feel from the sin of others. Specific factors contributing to soul-weariness and heaviness include such things as grief and sorrow, daily responsibility, conflict with others, even physical weariness.

I once met a zombie-like Brazilian woman who hadn't slept in ten days. Just as she craved sleep but couldn't find it, so weary souls seek soul-rest. Ecclesiastes is the classic illustration of man's frustrating search for soul-rest "under the sun," i.e., instead of in the One who is above the sun.

In 1:13-15 for example, the writer sought to explore things in the past, but concluded that "What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted." Similarly, today some seek individual or group counseling to explore things in their past in hopes of *correction*. Despite all the help they may get, however, they discover that they can neither change the past nor find rest for their souls.

Notice how many of the ways people seek soul-rest are found in Ecclesiastes and what each promises:

Ways people seek soul-rest	What each promises	Seen in Eccl.
Individual or group counseling	Correction	1:13-15
Education or self-help	Transformation	1:16-18

Entertainment	Diversion	2:1-2
Alcohol and drugs	Stimulation	2:3
Work	Contribution	2:4-6
Buying, possessing, collecting	Satisfaction	2:7-8a
Sex	Gratification	2:8b
Greatness	Recognition	2:9
Religion	Elevation	3:11 (& all Eccl.)

Most of these offer something legitimate, but none can give the soul-rest which many try to find in them. Each promises "real fulfillment" if you get *more* of it than you have now. But there is no soul-rest because you never get enough to fulfill you, and when you do get what you want, you find it isn't fulfilling after all. The only man who ever got all of these he wanted declared, "All things are wearisome" (1:8).

JESUS CHRIST OFFERS YOU SOUL-REST

Jesus' offer is, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. . . you will find rest for your souls."

Soul-rest can never be found in anything "under the sun." It can be found only by coming to a Person, a Person who came to us from *above* the sun—the man Christ Jesus. We must come to *Him* first, not to baptism, the Lord's Supper, or the church, for they cannot give us rest. Have you found rest for your soul in this Man, this Man who is God? As the British Baptist preacher of last century, C.H. Spurgeon put it, "The soul is insatiable till it finds the Savior."¹

He invites "all who are weary and burdened" in soul to come, regardless of age, morality, education, social background, church experience, etc. But you must come for yourself. No parent, friend, or pastor can come for you. And you must forsake all other ways of finding soul-rest. Your soul cannot find rest by running between two masters.

How do you come to Him for this soul-rest? You come to Him in your soul. Through prayer you approach Him and open your "weary and burdened" soul to Him. Then He enters. And there is rest, rest for your soul.

When Christ gives you soul-rest, there is rest for your *conscience* because He removes its sin-caused guilt. His soul-rest also includes rest for your *mind* because He reveals

Himself as the truth of God. He ministers rest for your *heart* since it no longer has to frantically search for a haven of rest. There is rest in Him for your *fears* since your soul is in His loving, omnipotent hands for all eternity. Christ also provides rest for your sense of *purpose* now that you have Him to worship, love, and serve.

CHRIST CAN GIVE YOU REST BECAUSE HE HAS DONE THE WORK

He has done all the work of paying for sins. He paid for sins on the cross and died saying, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Full payment for sin has been made. No payments have been made or needed for two thousand years. No further payment can be made or accepted. When something is finished with God, "It is finished!"

Jesus has done all the work of making peace with God. The Apostle Paul announced in Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." For a Christian to be anxious about peace with God is as needless as anxiety about the peace treaty for the War of 1812. Because of Christ, there is no more peace to be gained.

Further, He has done all the work of fulfilling the requirements of God's Law. Christ came "to be a sin offering. . . . in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us" (Rom. 8:4). He not only removed our guilt for breaking the "Thou shalt" of God's Law, He provided us with the credit for keeping all the "Thou shalt" as well.

Believer, even with all your obedience to God, your devotional habits, and Christian deeds, you have no more forgiveness, no more peace, and no more credit for fulfilling God's righteous requirements than when you first believed. You have been delivered from spiritual *karoshi*. Rest in the payment. Rest in the peace. Rest in the fulfillment. Rest in the work of the only One who gives soul-rest.

¹C.H. Spurgeon, "Rest for the Laborers," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 22, (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1876; reprint ed., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), page 616.

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