

Rest

Matthew 11:28: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

These are simple words to read and seem straightforward, but are they? What does it actually look like to do so, to put these words into action? Is it as a heavy load we are carrying in our arms, seeking a place to lay down the weight? What does the rest spoken of here look like? A nap under an old oak tree, a quiet place to think; We read and study about the praying of our Christ Jesus, how He would go off to be alone with the Father. Who did Jesus share all His fears with but the Father, setting an example for us.

Rest here in Matthew means, “to refresh the soul of anyone.” This could be viewed as any problem where bonds are to be broken and removed, since it refers to the soul, it goes deeper than a superficial idea of changing one's mind. It is a peace that has to do with the turmoil we often allow ourselves to be facing. Those feelings that reach our hearts and our stomachs and cause irritation. Put this together with “Heavy Laden” meaning, “(figuratively)” to overburden with ceremony or spiritual anxiety, with the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law and tradition, and with the consciousness of sin. We find Jesus addressing the people, pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, demonstrating that they required others to carry burdens they were unwilling to bear. Matthew 23:4.

King David had many problems and made many poor decisions, yet God said he was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22, Isaiah 66:2). David reached a point of complete brokenness before he turned to God with a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17) and came to Him on his knees in surrender.

We far too often fail to bring our mistakes and the problems to God in humility, I believe, because of feeling ashamed and embarrassed. We would rather not expose our faults or take responsibility for our ignorance and pride, but that is not God's way; God provides a way out for us by relieving us of our faults. Trying to shrug off the problem and set it aside instead of going to God with it, we act as if it will eventually go away, as if it were passing in the wind. When we repeat the same mistakes, we are not entrusting them to the Lord's care. This practice has a problem; it never gets cleaned up, and we turn and walk away, still dragging that same old sack of stones. How heavy is the weight we place upon ourselves?

We examine the verse and see what Jesus says about taking our load, and perhaps this is the more important issue we need to address. What are these burdens? Heavy laden - φορτίζω phortízō, for-tid'-zo; from G5414; metaph. to load one with a burden (of rites and unwarranted precepts). (figuratively) to overburden with ceremony (or spiritual

anxiety); 'heavy laden' (with the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law and of tradition, and with the consciousness of sin),

“And with the consciousness of sin.” Does this imply it is only in attempting to fulfill the law that we acknowledge our sin? Not at all, **Romans 7:7: What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”**

Covetousness becomes a reality as we spend more time wanting what others have, which often leads to a more profound jealousy as we place our focus on the desires of this world. Does covetousness place burdens on us? It surely does, it is the difference in focusing on the things of God or on the world.

12:15 But the Lord did use this incident to warn His hearers against one of the most insidious evils in the human heart, namely covetousness. The insatiable lust for material possessions is one of the strongest drives in all of life. And yet it completely misses the purpose of human existence. “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”¹

There are many things we do that we are often unaware of doing wrong. Paul addresses young believers and the issue of food offered to idols. **1 Corinthians 8:7: However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.** What he is saying is that we, who are mature in the message and understand that we should not eat food in front of a brother or sister if they believe it has been offered to idols. This may seem foolish to many, but there are many eyes on a believer, and causing one who is trying to be true to the law may become confused, thinking that most food bought in the square was offered to idols, may be detrimental.

1 Corinthians 10:13: All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

It may be lawful for me to eat in front of others, knowing what I am eating was not offered to idols, but this is not the point; the issue is, what of those you are attempting to set examples for believe it was offered to idols? Think of it this way, you stop off at the bar on your way home one night with a few friends, as you get ready to leave you begin to open the door to go outside as a woman happens to be leaving at the same time, one of your friends sees you walking out of the bar with this woman who is not your wife and

¹ MacDonald, William. Believer's Bible Commentary: Second Edition (p. 2576). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

things look inappropriate. You know you are innocent, but what about your friend? The things we often do can confuse others who only see a part of what is happening.

This is a reminder that we must be aware of and consider many things that happen in and around us, that we are mindful of those around us, and that we see ourselves from God's vantage point, not our own.

What of the burdens we carry: shame, unforgiveness, hostility toward others, anxiousness, jealousy, and grudges. Why? Why would any of us have reason to carry grudges toward others? Yet we do, and we justify our reasons even if they are wrong. Although we act as though we have let go, we really haven't, and there can be awkward times when a group of friends is gathered together, and others feel the conflict between two of their friends. Talking with someone you are at odds with, as just rendering common pleasantries, is not making amends.

Samuel is dealing with Saul before he becomes king. 1 **Samuel 9:20: "But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?"**

Luke 12:26: "If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?"

When I am unable to give to others or I am incapable of doing the least to help someone, why am I then anxious about doing more? We again place a burden on ourselves; God does not.

Luke 12:22-31: 22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. 23 Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?"

29 "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

Anxiety is a thief, a villain that seeks to rob us of peace; we overburden ourselves with things we have no power to change. When we come to our Lord in prayer over these

situations, we can rest knowing He will gladly take the load and release us of the burden.

Paul gives us a list of things that bring about judgment on themselves by not doing what is right in the eyes of our Father God.

Romans 1:28-32: 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Who put the burden on these? It was not God, for it says, “and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” Why do you think they did not like to retain God in their knowledge? When we act this way, it is because we like what we are doing; despite knowing it is wrong, we still enjoy the way it makes us feel. We can feel powerful and free, unhindered by rules and so-called good conduct. Rules, what rules, whose rules?

Paul goes on to make it clear, “**who knowing the righteous judgement of God**”. There is no crying innocent when judgment comes; there is no 'get out of jail free' card. There is only one payment to be made, the payment for neglecting what they knew to be right.

James 4:17: Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. Paul makes it very clear here that these people knew what was right but chose not to do it.

Does our lust for the things in the Carnal life allow us to nullify God's purposes for us? Not at all. We know what is right and wrong through an intuitive understanding given to us when we are born. Yes, we are born sinful, but we still know right from wrong.

Romans 1:20: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”

Our list goes on, helping us to see how, when the simple truth is not addressed, it places an unnecessary burden on us. It is we, and not God, who put the weight and burden on our shoulders. Blaming others, including God, for our faults is a common problem. God, if you knew what I was going to do, why did you let me do it? Didn't God create me the way I am? Didn't God allow me to make so many mistakes? Many people argue that God created sin, but God did not create sin; He allowed it, and He will use it to teach us.

The importance of eliminating burdens.

1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We can place the issues we may have against others on the back burner of our minds, pretending no one will discover them, but God knows, and from time to time, you struggle against them. When we confess, we find a freedom that cannot be purchased; it is for us to address that we are in battle with.

Luke 11:14: Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

Matthew 6:12-15: And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Forgiveness is not an option; it is a requirement for entering the Father's presence.

To be continued.