

Chapter 2 - And You Shall Find Rest for Your Souls

"Come unto me, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; and ye shall find rest to your souls MATT.11:28-29

REST for the soul: Such was the first promise with which the Saviour sought to win the heavy-laden sinner. Simple though it appears, the promise is indeed as large and comprehensive as can be found. Rest for the soul--does it not imply deliverance from every fear, the supply of every want, the fulfilment of every desire? And now nothing less than this is the prize with which the Saviour woos back the wandering one--who is mourning that the rest has not been so abiding or so full as it had hoped--to come back and abide in Him. Nothing but this was the reason that the rest has either not been found, or, if found, has been disturbed or lost again: you did not abide with, you did not abide in Him.

Have you ever noticed how, in the original invitation of the Saviour to come to Him, the promise of rest was repeated twice, with such a variation in the conditions as might have suggested that abiding rest could only be found in abiding nearness. First the Saviour says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest"; the very moment you come, and believe, I will give you rest--the rest of pardon and acceptance--the rest in my love. But we know that all that God bestows needs time to become fully our own; it must be held fast, and appropriated, and assimilated into our inmost being; without this not even Christ's giving can make it our very own, in full experience and enjoyment. And so the Saviour repeats His promise, in words which clearly speak not so much of the initial rest with which He welcomes the weary one who comes, but of the deeper and personally appropriated rest of the soul that abides with Him. He now not only says, "Come unto me," but "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me"; become my scholars, yield yourselves to my training, submit in all things to my will, let your whole life be one with mine--in other words, Abide in me. And then He adds, not only, "I will give," but "ye shall find rest to your souls." The rest He gave at coming will become something you have really found and made your very own--the deeper the abiding rest which comes from longer acquaintance and closer fellowship, from entire surrender and deeper sympathy. "Take my yoke, and learn of me," "Abide in me"--this is the path to abiding rest. Do not these words of the Saviour discover what you have perhaps often sought in vain to know, how it is that the rest you at times enjoy is so often lost. It must have been this: you had not understood how entire surrender to Jesus is the secret of perfect rest. Giving up one's whole life to Him, for Him alone to rule and order it; taking up His yoke, and submitting to be led and taught, to learn of Him; abiding in Him, to be and do only what He wills--these are the conditions of discipleship without which there can be no thought of maintaining the rest that was bestowed on first coming to Christ. The rest is in Christ, and not something He gives apart from Himself, and so it is only in having Him that the rest can really be kept and enjoyed.

It is because so many a young believer fails to lay hold of this truth that the rest so speedily passes away. With some it is that they really did not know; they were never taught how Jesus claims the undivided allegiance of the whole heart and life; how there is not a spot in the whole of life over which He does not wish to reign; how in the very least things His disciples must only seek to please Him. They did not know how entire the consecration was that Jesus claimed. With others, who had some idea of what a

very holy life a Christian ought to lead, the mistake was a different one: they could not believe such a life to be a possible attainment. Taking, and bearing, and never for a moment laying aside the yoke of Jesus, appeared to them to require such a strain of effort, and such an amount of goodness, as to be altogether beyond their reach. The very idea of always, all the day, abiding in Jesus, was too high--something they might attain to after a life of holiness and growth, but certainly not what a feeble beginner was to start with. They did not know how, when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy," He spoke the truth; how just the yoke gives the rest, because the moment the soul yields itself to obey, the Lord Himself gives the strength and joy to do it. They did not notice how, when He said, "Learn of me," He added, "I am meek and lowly in heart," to assure them that His gentleness would meet their every need, and bear them as a mother bears her feeble child. Oh, they did not know that when He said, "Abide in me," He only asked the surrender to Himself, His almighty love would hold them fast, and keep and bless them. And so, as some had erred from the want of full consecration, so these failed because they did not fully trust. These two, consecration and faith, are the essential elements of the Christian life--the giving up all to Jesus, the receiving all from Jesus. They are implied in each other; they are united in the one word--surrender. A full surrender is to obey as well as to trust, to trust as well as to obey.

With such misunderstanding at the outset, it is no wonder that the disciple life was not one of such joy or strength as had been hoped. In some things you were led into sin without knowing it, because you had not learned how wholly Jesus wanted to rule you, and how you could not keep right for a moment unless you had Him very near you. In other things you knew what sin was, but had not the power to conquer, because you did not know or believe how entirely Jesus would take charge of you to keep and to help you. Either way, it was not long before the bright joy of your first love was lost, and your path, instead of being like the path of the just, shining more and more unto the perfect day, became like Israel's wandering in the desert--ever on the way, never very far, and yet always coming short of the promised rest. Weary soul, since so many years driven to and fro like the panting hart, O come and learn this day the lesson that there is a spot where safety and victory, where peace and rest, are always sure, and that that spot is always open to thee--the heart of Jesus.

But, alas! I hear someone say, it is just this abiding in Jesus, always bearing His yoke, to learn of Him, that is so difficult, and the very effort to attain to this often disturbs the rest even more than sin or the world. What a mistake to speak thus, and yet how often the words are heard! Does it weary the traveller to rest in the house or on the bed where he seeks repose from his fatigue? Or is it a labour to a little child to rest in its mother's arms? Is it not the house that keeps the traveller within its shelter? do not the arms of the mother sustain and keep the little one? And so it is with Jesus. The soul has but to yield itself to Him, to be still and rest in the confidence that His love has undertaken, and that His faithfulness will perform, the work of keeping it safe in the shelter of His bosom. Oh, it is because the blessing is so great that our little hearts cannot rise to apprehend it; it is as if we cannot believe that Christ, the Almighty One, will in very deed teach and keep us all the day. And yet this is just what He has promised, for without this He cannot really give us rest. It is as our heart takes in this truth that, when He says, "Abide in me," "Learn of me," He really means it, and that it is His own work to keep us abiding when we yield ourselves to Him, that we shall venture

to cast ourselves into the arms of His love, and abandon ourselves to His blessed keeping. It is not the yoke, but resistance to the yoke, that makes the difficulty; the whole-hearted surrender to Jesus, as at once our Master and our Keeper, finds and secures the rest.

Come, my brother, and let us this very day commence to accept the word of Jesus in all simplicity. It is a distinct command this: "Take my yoke, and learn of me, " "Abide in me. " A command has to be obeyed. The obedient scholar asks no questions about possibilities or results; he accepts every order in the confidence that his teacher has provided for all that is needed. The power and the perseverance to abide in the rest, and the blessing in abiding--it belongs to the Saviour to see to this; 'tis mine to obey, 'tis His to provide. Let us this day in immediate obedience accept the command, and answer boldly, "Saviour, I abide in Thee. At Thy bidding I take Thy yoke; I undertake the duty without delay; I abide in Thee." Let each consciousness of failure only give new urgency to the command, and teach us to listen more earnestly than ever till the Spirit again give us to hear the voice of Jesus saying, with a love and authority that inspire both hope and obedience, "Child, abide in me." That word, listened to as coming from Himself, will be an end of all doubting--a divine promise of what shall surely be granted. And with ever-increasing simplicity its meaning will be interpreted. Abiding in Jesus is nothing but the giving up of oneself to be ruled and taught and led, and so resting in the arms of Everlasting Love.

Blessed rest! the fruit and the foretaste and the fellowship of God's own rest! found of them who thus come to Jesus to abide in Him. It is the peace of God, the great calm of the eternal world, that passeth all understanding, and that keeps the heart and mind. With this grace secured, we have strength for every duty, courage for every struggle, a blessing in every cross, and the joy of life eternal in death itself. O my Saviour! if ever my heart should doubt or fear again, as if the blessing were too great to expect, or too high to attain, let me hear Thy voice to quicken my faith and obedience: "Abide in me"; "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; ye shall find rest to your souls."