

Christian R & R

R and R is generally understood to mean rest and rehabilitation. It is commonly used to identify that break which soldiers are given to temporarily leave the area where fighting is taking place in order to somewhat restore their mental and physical health before returning to the war zone. R and R is also an enterprise vital to all Christians. But it is in the spiritual realm where rest and rehabilitation are most needed by Christians. While most of us seem to be oblivious to the fact, there is a deadly vicious and all encompassing spiritual war going on every moment of every day, and it has been so from the beginning of time. The reason that most are unaware of it is that the enemy operates in secrecy, and in such clever and deceptive ways that very few are even aware, much less understand, what is going on. I submit that it is only the Bible believing, Bible literate, genuine born-from-above Christian who is capable of understanding any significant portion of what is really happening out there. Even many who fully accept the notion that Satan is a real active personage, who is actually the present owner and ruler of the earth, find it difficult to understand how he directly affects our lives. Scripture tells us that his demon agents are the principalities and power, which govern from behind seats of power of every governmental, corporate and institutional entity on earth. God, through the Holy Spirit, acts as the Restrainer, limiting this otherwise nearly ubiquitous and totally evil supergovernment. During this very late portion of the end times we see Satan's strategies and their implementation become ever more clear and frightful as man's natural propensity to sin is increasingly nourished through progressively more compelling and universally accessible avenues. Sources available through the computer, along with the always-in-your face TV, theater, magazines, clubs, bars, video games etc., provide every manner of opportunity and seductive inducements to what Satan hopes will lead to full time sinning. These, along with governmental, legal, and educational institutions, are all working feverously and sometimes not even with subtlety, to remove God and promote godlessness wherever possible.

Is it any wonder then, that being in such a perpetual war zone, every genuine Christian needs R and R? But what kind of R and R can be effective under such circumstances?

Because this is a spiritual war, the rest and rehabilitation needs to be in large part of a spiritual nature. All redeemed Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts; therefore, Satan and his demons are powerless as far as being able to drag their souls away from God and into hell. They can, however, harass and make life miserable for them. The more fruitful and dedicated to Christ we become, the more temptations, stresses and other spiritual stumbling blocks Satan will use to impede him or her in their spiritual growth, and especially in their usefulness for the Lord, as well as in their witnessing to souls who might choose to be saved. Satan cannot take away one's salvation, and so it angers him to see a saved soul, especially one who is leading others to God. He wants all to perish, as he will one day. So the best he can do, from his perspective is to cause Christians to suffer and to tempt them into backsliding so as to discredit and diminish their effectiveness as witnesses.

Under these circumstances, rest and rehabilitation for a Christian must necessarily and always have worship, prayer and Scriptural study as primary resources. Christian rest, as with the soldier's rest, must be at a safe place away from the battlefield. Thus, it must be away from the world, away from all of the satanic devices, which Satan uses to mislead, deceive, divert and tempt. That eliminates a great deal of what the world views as pleasures and amusements. Sorry, but if one is serious about his or her service to the Lord, that's the way it is! This doesn't mean that a good Christian cannot experience pleasure. It simply means that our pleasure should be among the many, which are at the same time pleasing to God. Those who live closely to God and continually seek to obey Him will find through prayer and careful attention to what the Holy Spirit tells them, exactly what the acceptable ways are. It's amazing how, if we let Him, the Holy Spirit can transform our desires, pleasures, joys and even our needs in ways we never thought possible, in ways perhaps strange to the world, but quite pleasing to Him and most satisfying to us.

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus tell us “*Come unto all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*” There is an offer no one should refuse! It’s God’s offer of rest for all who will come to Him in faith. Literally, it says, “I will rest you.” These three verses, when understood, tell us all we need to know and to do in order to find rest and not only survive, but also to thrive and prevail to the end in this increasingly ugly and tiring war. Jesus tells us to come to Him with our heavy burdens so that He can take the load off in order that we may rest through Him. What burdens do we have which He offers to rest us from? It’s clear that He is speaking not to the believers but to sinners, and it is the burden of sin, which He is speaking of, although with the removal of sin, numerous other burdens are also lightened. Isaiah 1:4 and Psalm 38:4 use this concept of being laden, or burdened with iniquities. The “rest” He refers to is the rest of conscience and of salvation as can be found only in Christ Jesus. Then there is also the rest of the heart, which can calm the fears and anxieties under severely adverse circumstances. These two aspects of rest are the equivalent of the two forms of peace found in John 14:27, Romans 5:11 and Philemon 4:6, 7. Then Jesus tells us that He is meek and lowly in heart. What does that mean? How can the King of Kings, Lord of Lords be meek and lowly? Remember, His kingdom is not yet; He came the first time, when He wrote this, as a humble servant. The King role will come later when He comes again. Here is “The Son of Man,” a person to whom one can talk to and readily relate to. The Christian role model is Jesus. Here He describes Himself as meek, lowly, and, therefore, that is what all Christians should be. Forget the worldly deceptive rubbish about self-esteem, which so many false teachers spew from the pulpits and the media. Self-esteem is a phrase right out of Satan’s manual entitled “How to Neutralize Christians and Prevent Redemption.”

Remember, meek doesn’t mean weak. It is simply a lack of pride and having nothing to prove while being patient and without resentments. His lowliness was His chosen position as a servant, as should be ours. Even though He was God Himself, He “*made himself of no reputation and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likenesses of*

men and being found in the fashion as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death on the cross.” (Philemon. 2:7, 8).

Jesus also uses the analogy of a yoke. This word has several meanings, but I believe the one here intended as a symbol, is a wooden bar or frame by which two draft animals such as oxen are joined for working together. After offering rest, Jesus says, “take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” How does that work, rest in the yoke? The yoke has but one purpose and that is to fasten two workers together so they can share the burden that needs to be dealt with. This terminology causes many to shrink away from submitting to His yoke for fear that it may involve greater sacrifices than they are ready to make. Jesus is saying in effect “put on this My yoke which I want to share with you. My burden is light, yours is heavy, but yoked together, with My help, the two of us can do anything – no sweat and as a result you will get rest.” I know that’s a lot of paraphrasing, but might that be what the Creator of the Universe is offering? As long as we “stay in the yoke” with Him our burden will always be light, because He already paid the price and has lifted the burden of sin, the burden too great for anyone to carry. What’s left is easy, as long as we are yoked with Him. For the yoke by design curbs a variant and independent will, and brings it under a single divine control which we gratefully accept. We have genuine rest, that spiritual rest along with that incredible “peace which passeth all understanding” When the world is out to get you, and it always is, only the genuine Christian has any real place of refuge and rest and that’s in Jesus, and in His yoke, under His protection and control through our willing submission. How foolish can one be not to accept this incredible offer found in Matthew 11:28-30?

What is hereinabove is addressed to born-again Christians, and as such, they are already alive in that rest, and have been firmly yoked with Jesus since their re-birth. Jesus’ invitation in Matthew Chapter 11 is a call for the unsaved to become saved by the One and Only One who can save. Thus, the rest we seek as Christians is already ours, but we must continue to claim it if it is to rest and rehabilitate us in the here and now. It comes from the eternal security for His faithfulness, not yours. Yet the war continues, and battles rage with relentless and exhausting fury, and thus we grow weary even though we

have His blessed spiritual rest. Rehabilitation is analogous to getting our batteries recharged, that is, getting renewed energy to continue the fight. His amazing grace, which accomplishes this, is always available through genuine deep felt worship and prayer, prayer of the intensity, passion and sincerity of a heart filled with love of God as David repeatedly expressed in his Psalms.

As noted, up to this point this has all been about true Spirit led born-again Christians. But what about the rest of humanity? Surely, they are in even greater need of R & R. But initially, that need is not the same R & R. That need is Repentance and Redemption. The dictionary definitions of repent is to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life; to feel regret or contrition; to change one's mind. From a Biblical perspective that's a very light-footed dance around what repentance really means. Repentance is far more. It is a sea change, a transformation, a complete turn around and a focus on, and belief in, Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. It results in a new attitude, and a new first order of priorities in one's life without which the other "R," redemption, can never be had. Redemption, the result of having been redeemed is what happens when one genuinely accepts Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, and He thereby becomes the top priority in one's life. Any form of repentance that fails to result in redemption is not repentance in the true biblical Christian sense. But what does it mean to be redeemed? The dictionary tells us that redeem means to bring back, repurchase, liberate by purchase, ransom, release from blame or debt, to free from bondage of sin, remove the obligation of by payment, etc. When placed in the context of Jesus being the One and only One who redeems, this is excellent as a biblical definition as well.

So now what? Every redeemed Christian has a "built in" full time access to Rest and Rehabilitation through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the "hot line" direct connection to the throne room of God through prayer, petition and worship. But that R & R is not available to the rest of humanity until they partake of this other R & R, Repentance and Redemption. Through Scripture, God answers all who are willing to study and accept His Word, acknowledging that He is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2Peter 2:9). Repentance is a

fundamental necessity and a theme word throughout Scripture. It is the essential first step toward redemption. One who is redeemed is with certainty heaven bound. One who is redeemed has automatically been qualified to have the first noted R & R as the blessed means by which one can get through this life with the always renewable strength to overcome whatever this world and Satan choose to inflict.

Do you have that blessed R and R, that rest and redemption which our Lord has promised to all who genuinely believe in Jesus? Do you feel His rest deep within your soul, the rest you can always call upon to calm the waters around you no matter how violent the storm? If not, look carefully into the meaning of repentance, apply it, believe in Him, and accept His yoke, and begin your eternal life as one of His. Then be assured, He will never deny you rest.