

clared that he usually found that ‘failure in the higher stages of the Christian life was due to imperfect understanding and acceptance of the gospel of salvation in its fundamental principles.’ It is a rare thing to be able to sit down and teach, because in most settings today one is limited to dealing with ‘the first principles of the oracles of God,’ and can go little further than the basic facts of the new birth. You cannot deepen spiritual life that is not there! You will only build askew if the foundations are not properly laid! A lack of appreciation of the wonder of a full salvation in Christ opens the door to every kind of overbalance and spells continual frustration and failure” (J.C. Metcalfe).

Often believers manage to trust God for truths they need, only to slip from grace over into the legal realm in seeking to produce the particular truth in their life or service. Once in possession of a truth, we are to rest—He will produce.

“In actual experience, when we have apprehended our deliverance through death with Christ, the self-life often appears more alive than ever! Just here God would have us stand firm (rest) upon His written Word. The increasing revelation proves the surrender to the cross to be real, because the Holy Spirit takes us at our word and reveals all that He has seen lying underneath—reveals it that it may be dealt with at the cross. Our part is to yield our wills, and take God’s side against ourselves, whilst the Holy Spirit applies the death of the cross to all that is contrary to Him, that it may be really true that we who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24).

“The faith that receives from the hand of the Father is in two stages, and we are not to give up just because the struggle-and-labor phase

does not produce the prize. ‘According to your faith be it unto you.’ And, do not let us forget, faith begins by being a labor (Heb. 4:11) or fight (I Tim. 6:12), although it is consummated in a rest (Heb. 4:3). That is to say, the first stage of faith is always the battle of taking hold by the will, heart, and intelligence of some truth or promise which is not real to us in experience, and declaring it to be ours in spite of appearances. We do not appear to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. We are told to believe it, and so we dare to do so and declare so. A thousand times, maybe, faith will be assaulted and fall: unbelief will say ‘nonsense,’ and we shall belie our declaration of faith; but the labor of faith means that we deliberately return to the assault. Once again we believe and declare it. This we persist in doing. As we thus follow in the steps of those who ‘by faith and patience inherit the promises,’ a new divine thing will happen within us. The Spirit will cooperate with our faith (as He is invisibly doing all the time), and to faith will be added assurance. Labor will be replaced by rest. The consummation of faith has been reached” (N. Grubb).

“True activity is that which springs out of, and is ever accompanied by, rest. It is only as we know what it is to be ‘still,’ that we are ready to ‘go forward’ ‘We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go’” (E. H.).

“Let us take care lest we get out of soul-rest in seeking further blessing. God cannot work whilst we are anxious, even about our spiritual experience. Let us take Him at His Word, and leave the fulfilment of it to Him.”

This article is taken from the wonderful little book, Principles of Spiritual Growth, authored by Miles J. Stanford.



Principles of Spiritual Growth Series - Lesson 15:

REST

By Miles J. Stanford

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” (Heb. 4:9-11). So many of the life-giving truths in the Word consist of two intertwining halves that are inseparable. “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.” As for labor, it is true that there is a great deal of struggling and searching and pleading and agonizing in the process of discovering and understanding truths fitted to our needs. And much of the same pathway is trod (or crawled) in an effort to appropriate and enter in. All this is not in vain; it is necessary. But it is not the key that opens the door to reality. Rest is the key to entering into rest!

In the important but exhausting labor process we come to see the needed truth; we become sure of our facts; we begin to realize something of what is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. The appropriation of, the resting in, the reality must be on the basis of faith, not struggle and labor. We are told to reckon, to count on, what we now know to be true of us in Him as set forth in the Word. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isa. 30:15). We are told to quietly and steadily look to our Father in confident trust and thankfully receive that which He has given to us in His Son. “These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest shine hand, they are filled with good” (Ps. 104:27, 28).

Norman Grubb shares a good word on the principle of labor and rest: “Take as an example the learning of a foreign language. You are faced with a series of hieroglyphics in a book, you hear a mealy of sounds around, which mean absolutely nothing. Yet you know that it

is a language that can be learned. More than that, you have gone there to learn it. Now that is the first rung in the ladder of faith. However weak or waveringly, in your heart you do believe that you can and will get it. Otherwise, obviously you wouldn’t try to learn it. So you plod on. Many a time faith and courage fail, the mind is weary and the heart is heavy, and you almost give up. But not quite. To give up is faith’s unforgiveable sin. On you go at it. Months pass. It seems largely to go in one ear and out the other. Then—the length of time depends on the difficulty of the language and the ability and industry of the pupil of course—a miracle seems to happen. The day or period comes when, without your hardly realizing it, what you are seeking has found you; what you are trying to grasp has grasped you! You just begin automatically to speak the language, to think it, to hear it. What was an incomprehensible jumble of sounds without, has become an ordered language within the mind.

“So, in the spiritual labor of faith, the moment or period comes when we know. Every vestige of strain and labor is gone. Indeed, faith, as such, is not felt or recognized any more. The channel is lost sight of in the abundance of the supply. As we came to know that we were children of God by an inner certainty, a witness of the Spirit in our spirits; so now we come to know that the old ‘I’ is crucified with Christ, the new ‘I’ has Christ as its permanent life, spirit with Spirit have been fused into one; the branch grafted into the vine; the member joined to the body, the problem of abiding becomes as natural as breathing.”

Thank God for the needs that just will not allow the hungry heart to stop short of finding them met in Him. It is necessary to remember a fundamental principle in the spiritual life: that

God only reveals spiritual truths to meet spiritual needs. How many rest on the initial stage of the new birth: “Born again ... of incorruptible [seed] by the word of God” (I Pet. 1:23) and fail to press on to know “Begotten ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... to an inheritance” (vv. 3, 4).

Through the years the hungry-hearted believer finds that he has been brought a long way, and each step of the way has been personally experienced. This is reality which springs from faith founded on the facts of the Word. “The more clearly we enter by faith into objective truth, or what is true of us in Christ, the deeper, more experiential, and practical, will be the subjective work in us, and the more complete will be the manifestation of the moral effect in our life and character” (C.H.M.).

Yes, brought a long way, walking a step at a time, by faith: The rest of faith concerning our justification; the rest of faith concerning our acceptance; the rest of faith concerning our position in Christ Jesus; the rest of faith concerning our identification with Christ in death, resurrection and ascension. Each step established in the rest of faith brings us to the next one. Each must be settled before the next can be rested on.

It cannot be too strongly stated that unless the believer is firmly established in the steps of Romans 1-5, he cannot truly enter and rest on the truths of Romans 6-8, no matter how many special meetings and conferences he attends or so-called revivals he becomes involved in.

“Dr. James of Albany, who was used to bring hundreds into the deeper truths, de-