

## **The Foot of the Cross**

### **The Repose of the Cross**

By [Octavius Winslow](#)

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." John 13:23

There is but one place in this fallen world where perfect repose is found. It is where God rested in the harmony of His perfections, and where Jesus rested in the completion of His work- the cross of Calvary. The world is peopled with a race which has lost its spiritual center- God! and, so displaced, is as the troubled sea, ever moving, ever restless. All are inquiring for some good, all in search of some repose- they cannot tell what, and cannot tell where. The schism in the soul which God's departure created is a schism still, and will remain so until He returns, re-enters, and makes it once more His abode. And so long as that void remains unoccupied and unfilled by God, restlessness and dissatisfaction will be man's heritage and woe. Man, ever since his fall, has been building his happiness and his hope below God; and he who builds his present and his future being below God, builds upon the sliding, sinking sands, which must, eventually, involve the fabric they sustain in irremediable and woeful ruin. "And great was the fall of it."

But there is within this circle a smaller one, composed of individuals brought, by the gracious influence of the Spirit, to an enlightened, spiritual consciousness and conviction of sin and condemnation; and who, sighing for that rest which the world, itself a troubled sea, can never give, are, with but dim perceptions of the truth, with vague ideas of salvation, and still dimmer views of Jesus, searching for it where it never can be found. To them this chapter of our work is devoted. Its object will be to show where the true rest for the sin-distressed, sorrow-stricken, weary soul is found-even in the cross of Christ. We cite a touching and expressive incident in the history of John as illustrating this. It is true, it transpired before our Lord's passion; nevertheless, His death was virtually an accomplished fact, for He could say, in His memorable intercessory prayer, "Father, I have finished the work which you gave me to do;" and in thus presenting the portrait of the beloved disciple- a picture inimitable in its beauty, and touching in its pathos- we present figuratively the portrait of a weary and sad, yet confiding and loving disciple, seeking and finding his perfect repose on the bosom of his Divine and loving Lord. The two points which arrest our devout study are the expressive attitude, and the perfect rest.

There is in the posture of this disciple an implied weariness, which speaks to us volumes. We portray a large class of our species. We hold up a glass in which every individual of the human race may see himself reflected. We speak advisedly when we limit our picture to the earth's inhabitants. The angels in heaven are not weary, and therefore need no rest. Their only burden is the burden of doing God's will, and this is to them as the wings of a dove. Nor do the glorified spirits of heaven need repose. They have cast off the burden of the body of sin and death, and, emancipated from all ill, delivered from the bondage of the flesh, weeping and sighing and sorrowing no more, "they rest from their labors," and the only burden they feel is the burden of God's love. Who would wish to recall them to earth's sin and woe and weariness? What love so selfish as to disturb that unruffled peace, mar that deep joy, taint that perfect purity, becloud that bright sunshine, to which their happy spirits have fled?

But we return to the world, so full of weary ones. First, there is social weariness. We cannot move in human society without experiencing those woundings and slights and disappointments which contribute so much to the weariness of our spirit. Then there is what may be termed the political weariness of our race- the oppression of tyrants, the crushing cruelty of despots, the bonds and imprisonments, the tortures and bloodshed of human governments. It is impossible to cast our eye over the continent of Europe and not feel convinced that there exist, apart from the restlessness common to our humanity, masses crushed beneath political bondage and despotism. Life to them is a burden from which they pant to be delivered. Again, there is a religious weariness to which many nations are subjected. Look at the crushing burden of heathenism, with all its vile and degraded rites; Mohammedanism, with its oppressive ceremonies; Popery, with its galling, senseless mummery. Contemplate millions of our race wearing the oppressive chains of ignorance and superstition, ground down by religious thralldom, ceremonies, and rites, and say if there exists not a large portion of our race groaning beneath the weight which false religion everywhere imposes, and from which many sigh to be delivered.

Need I quote the myriads of the world's weary ones? The world is like an ever-troubled sea- all who cleave its restless waters, more or less, partake of its restlessness. "There are many who say, Who will show us any good?" They travel from continent to continent, from spring to spring, from flower to flower, and then comes the deep, deep sigh, and the mournful exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Oh what restless beings are earth's sons and daughters! "The wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest."

But are the Lord's own people totally exempt? Is there no weariness, no restlessness among them? Far from it! It is the existence and the consciousness of this which brings them to the only repose found on earth- the repose of the cross. We turn to the Church of God. We would first refer to the physical weariness and suffering of which numbers of God's people are the subjects. This may at first sight seem insignificant; and yet they who have traced the

close relation of the mental with the spiritual, and the spiritual with the physical, in Christian experience, will give this part of our subject a prominent place in their study. God does not overlook the bodily infirmities of His saints. He "knows our frame;" He "remembers that we are dust." And, when spiritual despondency is occasioned by mental depression, and mental depression by physical disease; He who constructed our frame can trace to their subtle and mysterious influences the spiritual infirmities of His saints.

Not less conspicuous or painful is the legal weariness of those who are striving for gospel rest by an earnest and sincere, but mistaken and fruitless attempt at the obedience which the law imposes, but which Christ alone can give. Oh the sad, sickening feeling of the soul disappointed a thousand times over in its strivings after perfect obedience! The hopelessness of the task no tongue but inspiration can adequately portray. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Work, work!" is the cry of the soul longing for salvation; and as each duty is followed by yet more disastrous failure, and each round of legal observance followed by disappointment yet more bitter, the heart sickens and dies.

But let us speak of a class more limited, as it is more blessed. We refer to those who are burdened with a spiritual conviction and sense of their sinfulness. Talk of the burden of political oppression! talk of the burden of religious ceremonial! talk of the burden of a suffering body! The burden of burdens is the burden of sin! When the Divine Spirit removes the moral cataract from the soul's eye, uplifts the veil from the heart, and all that looked so lovely and so fair and so commendable now appears nothing but sin and darkness, and loathsome, then comes the true soul- weariness- just the weariness Jesus delights to meet! But one word of encouragement. Are you sensible of your sinfulness? Are your sins weighing down your spirit to the dust? Is there the felt burden you cannot carry? Then, we reply, there is spiritual sensibility; and spiritual sensibility is the evidence of spiritual life, and spiritual life is the breathing of the Holy Spirit in your soul. Lay the heaviest weight upon a dead body, and it is insensible of the pressure; pierce it, and it feels not the wound. From where does spiritual feeling spring? From where but from spiritual life in the soul. Thus, then, may your faith gather down from the thistle, extract honey from the gall, and glean food from the eater! These spiritual exercises, through which, as a sin-convinced soul, you are passing- sad and mournful and despairing- are among the most conclusive and hopeful evidences that God has breathed into your dead soul the breath of life. Saint of God, you need not to be reminded of this. In many a stage of past experience, in many an hour of weariness and rest, of depression and hope, you have learned this truth- that none know the plague of their own hearts, none see their sinfulness, and seeing deplore it, and, deploring, seek unto Christ for rest, but those who are the happy subjects of the Holy Spirit's quickening grace. You have been instructed, therefore, to accept a broken and a contrite heart as one of the Spirit's most precious gifts, and God's most acceptable sacrifices. Such is the

spiritual state of the soul expressed by the attitude of John. It is one of weariness and need, of weakness and sorrow. In a word, it includes whatever condition of life, mental and spiritual exercise, through which the child of God may pass, who, like the beloved disciple, lays down his weary head upon the Savior's bosom.

This conducts us to THE DISCIPLE'S POSTURE.

And who was that disciple? Emphatically described as, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus loves all His disciples, and all alike; though John, from a closer assimilation of the human copy to the Divine Original, seemed an especial favorite of our Lord, winning to himself the distinctive and honored appellation of the "the beloved disciple." But such are all the disciples of Jesus. All alike share in His love. There may be degrees of manifested love, but no degrees of love itself. The small vessel and the large vessel may partake of different quantities, but the same love supplies and fills them both. Bind, then, this precious truth to your believing heart, and accept the comfort, the assurance it gives- that you are a disciple whom Jesus loves. Do you ask, How does He love me? He has chosen you- He died for you- He bore your sins- He has called you by His grace- He keeps you by His power- He comforts you with His love- He has gone to prepare a place for you in heaven- and by all His present leadings and dealings and teachings, through adversity and temptation and sorrow, He is preparing you for this prepared place. Oh, then, doubt that the sun shines, that the earth moves, that seasons revolve, that you yourself exist, but, in view of blessings and achievements like these, doubt not that Jesus loves you! If love derives its inspiration from itself- if affection begets affection- then, your simple, unquestioning belief in the marvellous and free love which the Lord Jesus bears you, will enkindle in your breast, in return, love to the Lord Jesus.

Nothing more tends to damp and chill and check our responsive affection to Christ, and consequently to render our obedience and service defective, than the latent suspicion in our hearts of the Savior's love to us. Cruel unbelief! to suggest a thought so dark, a suspicion so cold, a doubt so Christ-dishonoring! Where on earth or in heaven, where within this illimitable universe, will you find a being who loves you like Jesus? Oh, challenge every being whose eye has beamed love, whose lips have breathed love, whose hands have conferred love, and see if there be love like unto the love with which Christ has loved you! Summon the peopled universe to listen to its story, and exclaim, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul."

"What You have done, my God, for me,  
Is more than I can tell;  
This world had closed my heart to Thee,  
But You did break the spell.

"I cannot tell one-half Your love,  
Which daily, Lord, I See;

Countless Your tender mercies prove,  
Wondrous Your love, to me.

"But I would tell to all around  
That Jesus died for me;  
That when in sin's dark bondage bound,  
He set my spirit free.

"Yes, I would tell how His pure love  
Unchanging does remain;  
And how He pleads for me above,  
In His most precious name.

"Would tell how, in my heaviest grief,  
He calms my soul to rest;  
How He can give that heart relief  
Which leans upon His breast.

"Would tell, how in life's loneliest hour,  
When every joy below  
Seemed withered like the fading flower,  
He soothed me in my woe.

"Would tell, how in perplexing care  
He turns my thoughts above;  
And makes me see that He is there,  
Appointing all in love.

"Would tell, when weary often with sin,  
And pressed beneath the load,  
He, by His Spirit's voice within,  
Points to my peace with God.

"Lord, I would tell- how loudly tell  
There is no love like Thine!  
You ever will do all things well,  
You Mighty One, Divine."

Upon WHOM did the beloved disciple lean? He leaned upon a personal Savior. He reposed on the bosom of the incarnate God. The truth here taught to us is of marvellous moment. We can only deal, in the great matter of salvation, and in the minor matters of everyday life, with a personal Savior- and a personal Friend. The world is too replete with the unrealistic, to meet the real needs of our humanity. All is shadowy, except our present being, our sin, and our woe. These are solemn realities! We have personal needs- we crave a personal sympathy. We have personal yearnings- we crave a personal love. The "great mystery of

godliness, God manifested in the flesh," just meets our case- is just the provision a God of love has made. We need repose; we cannot find it in a dogma, in a principle, in a mere fact- we find it in a person- the person of the Son of God. It is from ourselves, we wish to be detached from. Our happiness and repose are found, not in or from ourselves, but, extraneous

to ourselves- only in Christ. As the solar beam is absorbed in the sun, and the dew-drop is lost in the ocean, so, with all his sin and woe, his neediness and weariness, the believer sinks into Christ, and is absorbed in the infinite plenitude of His power, in the fulness of His grace, and in the boundless ocean of His sympathy and love. Not more truly did the gentle and loving John lean upon the yet more gentle and loving Savior, than by faith do we, with all our mental and spiritual thoughts, and feelings and needs.

Here, in the cross of Christ, or rather in the Christ of the cross, perfect rest is found for every species of weariness of which the believing soul may be the subject. Here is rest from the galling yoke of sin- for the power of the cross

breaks it. Here is rest from the dreadful guilt of sin- for the blood of the cross cleanses it. Here is rest from the condemnation of sin- for the death of the cross has slain it. Here is rest from the obedience of the law- for the work of the cross supplies it. Here is rest from the sting of death- for the death of the cross extracts it. Here is rest from the dread of hell- for the love of the cross has closed it. And here is rest from the chafing of sorrow- for the sorrow of the cross soothes it.

It was in the cross of Christ that the Divine perfections found repose. Until that cross was reared, and the Divine Victim impaled upon its wood, there was no rest or harmony in the attributes of God concerning the salvation of the sinner. But when the Son of God was affixed to the accursed tree, and gave Himself up as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor," "then, "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other;" and so God rested in His love when He rested in the cross of the Son of His love. There must we rest, beloved of God, leaning upon Jesus the crucified; and so the sin-pardoning God and the sin-forgiven soul meet in affection, friendship, and fellowship in the same Divine and glorious center- the "Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world."

Come, then, sin-distressed, self-weary, world-wounded, sorrow-smitten soul, and lay down your weary spirit upon the bosom of the Savior. There is room enough and love enough and sympathy enough for you. The heart of Jesus is as capacious as the infinitude of His being. There can be nothing in your case- take the most gloomy, despairing view of it you may- which interposes a real objection to your rest in Christ. The cross, while it unveils the soul's repose, supplies both its merit and its plea. Jesus provides all, is all, and is in all. We have nothing to do but to receive out of His fulness grace upon grace- grace to answer all the present demands of grace- grace commensurate with all the past

communications of grace- and grace to meet all the future requirements of grace. Yet again and again we repeat the Savior's gracious invitation- unconditional and unlimited- and, oh! heaven's belfry breathes not a sweeter chime- "Come unto Me, All You That Labor and Are Heavy Laden, and I Will Give You Rest." Accept the invitation- it is for you. "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

"My Savior, You halt offered rest,  
Oh! give it, then, to me;  
The rest of ceasing from myself,  
To find my all in Thee.

"This cruel self, oh! how it strives  
And works within my breast,  
To come between You and my soul,  
And keep me back from rest.

"How many subtle forms it takes  
Of seeming verity,  
As if it were not safe to rest  
And venture all on Thee.

"And yet it was no little price  
That bought this rest for me;  
'Twas purchased at the mighty cost  
Of Jesus' agony.

"I only enter on the rest,  
Obtained by labors done;  
I only claim the victory  
By Him so dearly won.

"And, Lord, I seek a holy rest,  
A victory over sin;  
I seek that You alone should reign  
Over all, without, within.

"In quietness, then, and confidence,  
Savior, my strength shall be;  
And, 'Take me, for I cannot come,'  
Is still my cry to Thee.

"In Your strong hand I lay me down,  
So shall the work be done;  
For who can work so wondrously  
As an Almighty One?

"Work on then, Lord, until on my soul  
Eternal light shall break;  
And in Your likeness perfected,  
I, 'satisfied,' shall wake.'

This subject will at once meet the inquiries of the earnest searcher for truth. All truth essential to our eternal well being is embodied and presented in the cross of Christ. He who was crucified upon it was Essential Truth- gospel truth- divine, saving, sanctifying truth. Let there be but a believing sight of the cross, a spiritual perception of its doctrine, a simple, unquestioning, child-like reception of its God-like scheme- salvation by its Divine expiation, heaven by its one sacrifice- and every theological difficulty will be met; and out of the chaos of the mind- tortured with doubt, enshrouded with gloom, agitated with fear, perplexed with difficulty- will arise a divine system of truth, a perfect scheme of salvation, a sure hope of heaven, reasonable and harmonious, as suitable to man's necessity, as honorable to God's government.

Approach, then, you who are earnestly asking, "What is truth?" and find your answer at the cross. Take your place, a lowly disciple, at its foot, and listen to the soothing words uttered amid its dying agonies, its streaming blood, its deepening gloom, its supernatural wonders, "I Am the Truth," -repent, believe, and be saved!

Once more we invite to this rest, the spirit of the weary- weary with sin, weary with sorrow, weary with the creature, weary with self. Imitate the beloved disciple, and recline your head upon Christ. It is the attitude of confidence, it

is the expression of love. Come and bury your heart in the heart of Christ. Repose in Him your profoundest secret, unveil to Him your deepest grief. He has revealed to you the secret of His covenant- reciprocate this marvellous act of His friendship- tell Him all, trust Him with all, draw upon Him for all. Not more dear to Christ was the disciple who nestled in His bosom than are you. Precious and lowly as was his attitude when he literally bowed his head on Christ, your repose of faith upon Christ is a yet more precious and honoring act. Blessed as was John, more blest are you. "Jesus says unto Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Let this be your believing posture when partaking of the communion of the Lord's Supper. It was at the Supper the beloved disciple leaned on Christ; "who also leaned upon His breast at supper." What a befitting season does this Feast of love and fellowship present to rest in Jesus, reposing every thought, feeling, and want- every trial, temptation, and sin- in His heart. The Lord's Supper brings us closely beneath the shadow of the cross, in the immediate presence of the Crucified. It is a source of especial inter-communion between Christ and His



people. If the weary, languid head ever truly reposed upon the loving bosom of the Lord, surely it is at the festival that commemorates His love. Hasten to disclose all to Him, and be eager to receive all from Him. The hallowed hour is short, the holy season brief- waste not its favored moments in vagrant thoughts, in wandering affections, or in listless gaze; but concentrate all on Christ, who, at this precious moment, concentrates His whole heart upon you. While the King sits at the table, present and urge your petition. "Ask what you will, and it shall be granted unto you."

Above and beyond all, seek closer manifestations to your soul of "the King in His beauty," for your eyes shall then see Him. He presides at the feast to grant especial discoveries of His loveliness and love. And there is no window of His

grace in which He more delights to reveal Himself to His saints than in the uplifted window of this expressive and precious ordinance.

"Happy the ones that eat this bread,  
And doubly blest was he  
That gently bowed his loving head,  
And leaned it, Lord, on Thee.

"By faith the same delights we taste  
As that great favorite did;  
And sit and lean on Jesus' breast,  
And take the heavenly bread."

And where, in sickness and in death, can we, would we lay our head but on the bosom of Christ? We carry the cross with us in the embrace of our faith to life's last, closing hour. On the cross death was conquered for us, and with the cross we shall conquer death in us, and like our Lord, in dying, live; and by death, overcome death. Oh, the sweet, the perfect repose found in the cross of Jesus on a sick and dying bed! The cross has made the bed of suffering a bed of roses, and the pillow of death a pillow of down, and the gate of the sepulcher the door of heaven! And if ever the aching, restless, languid head of the saint of God finds repose, it will be when heart and flesh are failing, Jesus approaches, unveils His bosom, and soothes our departing soul to perfect rest in His ineffable love.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, you weary one, lay down  
Your head upon my breast."  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad,  
I found in him a resting place,  
And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one,  
Stoop down and drink, and live."  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in him.  
I heard the voice of Jesus say,

I am this dark world's Light;  
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
And all your day be bright."  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Until traveling days are done. (Bonar)

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