**The Marrow of Modern Divinity**

Lesson 12 – The Heart’s Happiness (or The Soul’s Rest)

**No Rest for the Soul Till it Comes to God**

1. At the creation of our first parents, man’s soul and body were both in union and communion with God as man’s chief good and highest happiness. The soul was at rest with God even while residing within the physical body of man. However, at the Fall, the soul of man was cut off from union and communion with God. At the fall, man lost his chief good, his highest happiness, and his soul’s rest. Now mankind in his fallen state is in a restless condition. However, because the soul was originally created to be in communion and union with God, the soul in its fallen condition continues to grasp and re-gain that which it lost and for which it was originally created. And our soul will not find that rest for which it was originally created until that soul comes to God, the one who created the soul and created the soul to be happy and at rest with Him.
2. Thomas Boston notes, “The soul of man has a natural desire of happiness: nothing can make it happy but what corresponds to its desires or capable of affording it a full satisfaction. Nothing less than an infinite good is such: and God Himself only is an infinite good, in the enjoyment of which the soul can rest, as fully satisfied, desiring no more.”
3. Now, however, in our darkened condition our soul does not even know that for which it longs. It has a longing, but it doesn’t know and isn’t aware of that for which it truly longs. Evangelista likens this to a newborn baby crying for nourishment that fits its tender condition (liquids, not solids suitable for digestion), but it doesn’t intellectually know what it desires; an infant cries simply because he or she is hungry. Likewise, our souls are hungry but because we are blinded and in darkness, we try to offer our souls created things instead of the Creator. Thus, due to sin, natural man and his soul is kept from its proper aim, God Himself.
4. Evangelista says, “Oh, there are many souls in the world that are hindered from finding rest in God because their blind understanding presents all varieties of sensual objects to their sensual appetites!” People look for ultimate happiness in looking beautiful, dining on fine food every day, coveting and pursuing wealth, being distracted with all sorts of entertainments, the praise of man, and all other kinds of earthly pursuits. Evangelista then uses the imagery of fishing to vividly illustrate this for us. He says, “Satan, like a cunning fisher, baits his hook with a sensual object, to catch men with: and having gotten it into their jaws, he draws them up and down in sensual contentments, till he has so drowned them therein, that the peace and rest of their souls in God is almost forgotten. Hence, the greatest part of man’s life, and in many their whole life, is spent in seeking satisfaction to the sensual appetite.”
5. Even religious exercises can be deceitful and used by Satan. Some people immerse themselves in the lusts, drunkenness, and pursuits of this world, yet they soothe their restless soul by taking comfort in the fact that they have been baptized, or they have done some good, religious deeds, or they make a habit of going to church. In other words, these are hypocrites who have not come to Christ for rest, but have come to religious duties for rest.
6. Another group of seemingly religious people give the outward impression that they are holy and devout. They do not give themselves into the sensuality of the world. Nevertheless, their study of Scripture is not to find rest in God, but merely to find support for some opinion of theirs or to find some new way of worshipping God and the result is that they form sects and cults. Of this Evangelista says, “Men say that they are being guided by the Word of truth, when in reality they are being led by the conceits of their own wisdom.”
7. Other seemingly religious people find their rest, or lack thereof, in how well (or poorly) they are performing their duties. “If they do not read a specified amount of Scripture per day, or spend a specified amount of time in prayer each day, or carry out other acts of devotion, their souls cannot have rest.” Now, Evangelista is NOT saying that we should not do these things, rather than we should not find our rest in the doing of them. This is the problem of the legalist, and this is why many Christians struggle with assurance.
8. So, Satan can use either the sensuality and immorality of the world or the formality of religion (hypocrisy, external observance only) to keep men from rest in God because of their blind understanding. Evangelista says, “If Satan cannot keep us enslaved by the offer of Egypt’s ‘meat pots’ (Exodus 16:3), then he tries to make us wander in the wilderness of religious and rational formality: so that if he cannot hinder us more grossly, then he attempts to do it more closely.”
9. Here is where we have to be careful. God has ordained the ordinary means of Scripture, prayer, worship and sacraments, to build us up in the faith and to grow us in the graces of the Holy Spirit. But these things are means to God. God is the object of our faith and rest, not the performance of religious duties, even the ones He has ordained. Think about the animal sacrifices God ordained in the Old Testament. Both true believers as well as hypocrites brought animal sacrifices to God. Both Cain and Abel offered offerings to God. The hypocrites and Cains of this world do not have faith so in their thinking, they are trying to appease God by their obedience to religious exercises. This is legalism and trying to fulfill the demands of the covenant of works. True believers and Abels of this world have been granted faith in Christ by God so we come to God through Christ who has washed us in His blood and has given us these means to grow. The difference is this. Are you using the means of grace to acquire salvation or are you using the means of grace to grow in salvation?
10. Evangelista likens this to the wilderness wandering of Israel. Many people can wander in the external religious duties while leaving a life of sensuality before they come to rest in God. These are people who find no rest or satisfaction for their soul in external religious duties so eventually they see them as being just as empty as sensuality for finding ultimate satisfaction and happiness, and God brings them to Himself. Others can wander in the external duties thinking that by performing them they are drawing closer to God when in fact they are much further away from Him just as the 1st generation who had to wander in the wilderness away from the Promised Land.

**God in Christ the Only True Rest for the Soul**

1. Scripture is replete with references calling us to Christ to find rest for our souls.
	1. Psalm 116:7 – “Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”
	2. Hebrews 4:3 – “For we who have believed [in Christ] enter that rest [God’s rest].”
	3. Matthew 11:28 – “Come to me [Jesus], all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
2. Evangelista says, “You may be sure that we will never find our heart’s happiness and our soul’s true rest until we find it here.  A man tends to think that his heart would be satisfied if only he had this man’s intelligence, or that man’s wealth, or that man’s honor, or that man’s pleasure, or that man’s wife, or that man’s children.  But this is proven to be false by experience. For not long after we obtain the thing we so desired, we find nothing but vanity and emptiness in it.  Let a man deal honestly with his heart, and he will find that, even though he possesses many things, there is always something else that he lacks.  A man’s soul cannot be satisfied with any created thing, not even with a whole world of them.  And the reason why is because the desires of man’s soul are infinite, corresponding to the infinite goodness that it lost in losing God.”
3. He continues, “When a man comes to believe that all his sins, past, present, and future, are freely and fully pardoned, and that he has been reconciled to God in Christ, and the Lord reveals his fatherly face to him in Christ and makes known the union between him and the believing soul, then that man’s heart becomes quietly contented in God.  From this point on, peace from the God of peace comes flowing into his soul and fills its emptiness with the fullness of God.  For when a man’s heart is at peace in God and has become truly full in the peace and joy that surpasses understanding, then the devil has no hope of prevailing against his soul in the way that he had done before.  Satan knows that it would be useless to bait his hook with profits, pleasures, honor, or anything else that seems good to catch a soul that is in a state of quiet rest in God.  For the heart of the believer, being filled with joy and peace in believing, abhors base allurements.  There is nothing that truly and sincerely roots wickedness out of the heart of man other than the true tranquility of mind and rest of the soul in God.”
4. And this peace is maintained by God though it may wax and wane at times because we live in a fallen world and are assaulted by sin from without and within. Evangelista tells us, “One thing is most certain:  neither sin nor Satan, neither law nor conscience, neither anguish nor grave can fully extinguish the believer’s peace and rest in God.  For it is the Lord alone who gives and maintains this peace.  While the peace and joy of a true believer may at times be diminished, the testimony that those graces are truly present in him remain so strong that, even when it seems that God is withdrawing himself, the believer remains confident that though weeping may tarry for the night, joy will come with the morning. (Psalm 30:5)  Indeed, even if it appears that the Lord is slaying them with unkindness, yet they will put their trust in him (Job 13:15), knowing that their Redeemer lives. (Job 19:25)  They are kept in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on the Lord. (Isaiah 26:3)”
5. Thus, we are called to come to Christ and keep on coming to Christ for our true rest and happiness of soul. Christ is the one who satisfies our thirst with the living water and bread from heaven, the oil of gladness, and the new wine of God’s kingdom. We do not put our trust in good deeds for that is the path of legalism. Once in Christ, we do not relax our guard and act as if how we live does not matter for that is the path of antinomianism. Rather we use the law rightly (though imperfectly) as mediated to as by Christ who has taken us out of the covenant of works and placed us as members and participants in the covenant of grace.
6. In sum Evangelista says, “I say that if the everlasting love of God in Jesus Christ is truly made known to your souls, according to its measure you will have no need to force yourselves to love and do good works.  For your souls will be constrained by the force of that love to love God and keep his commandments, and it will be your meat and drink to do his will.  Truly, this love of God will cut down self-love and love of the world, for the sweetness of Christ’s Spirit will turn the supposed sweetness of the flesh into bitterness, and the supposed sweetness of the world into contempt.  And if you can behold Christ with unveiled face, you will see and feel things inexpressible, and be changed from one degree of glory to another, by the Spirit of the Lord.  So be happy in this life in your union with the Source of all happiness, and be happy hereafter in the full fruition of God himself in Christ.  May the Lord Jesus Christ bring us all to that point in his due time.  Amen.”