

A man named Frederick Taylor worked for a large steel mill in 1898. He was an ambitious executive and was one of the first to apply scientific methods to study the productivity of manual labor. Here's what I mean: In those days there were no cranes to load steel bars onto railroad cars. It was backbreaking work, and after some experimentation, Taylor concluded that men could do more if they took rest pauses at definite intervals. He got some of the workers to try this new method by offering them a dollar a day more and flattering them by calling them his "high-priced men." Under this system, a whistle was blown after the men had carried iron for 12 minutes. At the whistle, they were to sit down and rest for three minutes. At the next whistle they would resume working. The result: the amount of iron carried increased from 12-and-a-half to 47 tons a day. This seeming miracle ushered in the era of rest pauses, which just might be the forerunner of today's coffee breaks.

Thoughts of work and rest dominate our lives, don't they? Our work and our identity are intertwined. Soon after meeting someone for the first time, you'll probably ask or be asked, "So, what do you do?" The Bible reminds us, from the very beginning, that we were not created simply to exist. We were created to do something. A careful reading of Genesis chapter two shows God giving Adam jobs to do. Tasks to complete. This was before the fall into sin and death. Before the fall into sin, work was not "work" as we think of it. It was a joy. It gave purpose. But after the fall into sin, everything changed. That was one of the curses that God pronounced—the nature of work would be drastically different. Work might still have a good result, but it would be hard, toilsome, even exhausting, something you could easily come to resent. If your labor wears you out, there's a reason for that. What happened in the Garden of Eden changed the nature of work in this world. And we find ourselves in need of relief.

In other words, we need rest. It is a necessity. We need to pause periodically and rest from our labors. Our bodies need to catch up with our tasks and the great mechanisms of our bodies can't do without some downtime. As Frederick Taylor's steel mill experiment pointed out, we are more productive when we rest and replenish our vital strengths. But the Bible goes far beyond the idea of rest from physical labor. What Jesus says is that there is a deep soul rest that is available to you; an inner, spiritual rest that you really can have. He says:

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

There's the invitation. Come to me, Jesus says, take my yoke and learn from me and you will find rest for your soul. What does that mean? How does that work? Well, listen. Most of us live our lives trying to prove to everyone that we're good enough. We try to prove, and sometimes this is very subtle, we don't even know we're doing it, but we work really hard to prove that we're lovable—to prove that we're worthy of respect—to prove that we're competent and productive. In essence, we're trying to justify our own existence, and we push ourselves to the limit in order to do this. And why not? It's the way the world works, after all. The world says "prove it," then you'll be rewarded. So we try, and while you may get some rest and relaxation once in a while, deep, abiding rest of the soul is hard to come by. That's hard enough. But then, again, without even being aware we're doing it, we bring that "prove it" attitude into our spiritual lives; into our relationship with God.

We think and act as if we've got to prove to God that we're good enough. We try to prove to Him that we're lovable, that we're worthy of being blessed. We try to justify our existence before Him by producing our list of accomplishments; a track record that we believe should count

for something. But do you want to know the truth? There's no rest in that! God's rest enters you and fills you when you stop making your works your trust; when you stop trying to work your way into God's good graces because you realize that work has already been done.

Jesus came down to earth precisely to do that hard work on your behalf. His perfect life; His sacrificial death; His resurrection; His ascension back into heaven, has all been applied to your record. It counts for you. That's why He did it. There is nothing you can add to what He has done. True peace of the heart, mind, and soul is yours when you rest from your works and trust in the work Jesus did for you. That's why Jesus, nailed to a cross, struggling for breath, said in his dying moments, "It is finished." Trying to justify yourself before God is finished. He justifies you by giving you His performance record. Trying to prove to God that you're lovable is finished. Jesus proved He loves you already by going through suffering and crucifixion to settle your account with God. Do you hear that? Do you believe that? That's the Gospel—the news of a new reality! The announcement that changes everything! Can you work that into that self-talk that goes on in your mind every day? I think you can, with prayer and help from the Holy Spirit.

Rest from your works. Don't make them your trust. Don't make yourself your trust. Make Jesus your trust, and you will experience rest in a whole way. Make Jesus your trust, and the nature of work itself gets transformed. What Jesus accomplished for you needs no finishing touches. It's done. When you understand that, when you get that, the daily work you've been given to do takes on a higher purpose. It becomes the easy yoke Jesus was talking about. With nothing to prove to God, your daily work can be done as a service to your neighbor, not to get anything from them, but just to serve them. It's a means through which God grants your daily bread. It's a daily thank you letter written to your Lord and Savior. It's there for you. You can have this. God's Word promises it.