

# Rest for the Weary

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
by S. Michael Durham  
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Matthew 11:28-30

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

I'm going to take just one Sunday break from our study through First John, *Life in the Son*, that's what we're calling that series, to focus on this text this morning.

## **I. The Great Invitation**

This is a great invitation and it is bestowed to us this day afresh and anew. There is no other invitation to rival this. Not to mean that this invitation of all Christ extended is more important, not at all. In fact, the Bible seems to be one long and detailed invitation to come to God.

I mean simply that the invitation of Christ to come to Himself is unparalleled, unrivaled and unmatched. There is nothing like this. To be invited into the very presence of God to come to Christ is in fact the most amazing and the greatest of all invitations offered. It's greater than any invitation of any king, queen, president or prime minister. Far greater than a celebrity inviting you to have a meal with him or spend the day with him.

It goes beyond any other kind of invitation because this invitation welcomes a person into the presence of God Himself. It calls for someone who does not deserve to be in the presence of holy God—who Himself does not deserve to be in the presence of the unholy. Two equally undeserving situations come together to make up one great invitation. Indeed, this has to be the most wonderful invitation of all.

This invitation does not come through the lips of a courier, nor does it come by the hand of a mail carrier. No, it's given by Christ Himself, by His lips and through His hand directly to you. Is there anything more glorious than that God would invite you to come to Him right here this morning? Not two thousand years ago only in history, yes this is a historical event recorded for us, but this is the Word of God today, my friend. “Come unto Me.”

Think how wonderful it might have been to see Lazarus after his resurrection. It would have been a stellar moment indeed to look upon a body four days dead now completely whole with no sign of decay. Wouldn't it have been something to hear the voice that had been silenced by the icy

grip of death? Wouldn't it have been amazing to sit at his table and dine with him after having set at the same table and ate the meal served after the funeral? How much more exciting must it be to meet the Man who gave Lazarus life again.

This is an invitation that is stupendous by any standards, "Come to Me," so I can only pray this morning that this one sermon will be nothing more than a re-echoing, a re-institution, a re-giving of this invitation: come.

I'm asking you to come to Christ, every last one of you. If you are in this room you are invited to come to Jesus Christ this morning for what you need, for He is what you need. You don't need more finances or greater potential there. No, you need Jesus who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. You don't need more power. No, you need Christ who is the omnipotent, the all-powerful one. You don't need more love, you need the Lover of our souls: Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

What you need is in Christ. Come! In your heart of hearts run to Jesus right now and throw, cast, fling yourself upon Him. Come! Do not delay this morning. And in this message I pray that God will make it so real to you that it is as He is before you with arms outstretched calling you to Himself. Do not break His heart and refuse His invitation.

This is not an open invitation it is not to an unqualified "whosoever will", the "whosoever will" is limited to those who are weary and are heavy-laden. Who are these?

## **II. The Invitation's Intended**

The answer given most often is that the invitation in our text is extended to sinners striving to please God and be saved. Yes, clearly that is intended by Jesus, but is this all who are in His blessed mind as He utters this invite? I don't think so. The weary and heavy-laden are comprised of more than just sinners. They include some of the redeemed as well.

Incredible as that might sound, it includes some Christians. It includes some of you this morning. There are some who have come to Jesus, found His yoke and His rest but later strayed. How is it possible to find rest, what you have so longed and dreamt for only to later stray, you ask? Well this sermon is not so concerned about that question, so I will not try to give you an answer this morning. However, for you inquisitive people who will not be satisfied with that, there is something in my heart right now so I believe in a few short days you will hear a message that will deal with that question and its answer.

This morning I want to concentrate on who these weary ones are, identify their weariness and mark out the way back to the Good Shepherd, those who will lie down in green pastures. That's what I want to do this morning. Are you ready to follow, are you ready to lie down and be at rest again? Are you ready for the peace of God to flood your heart once again?

First, let's understand the words in our text, *labor* and *heavy laden*.

The word *labor* means exhaustion from hard, hard work.

If anyone had to work outdoors this past week, you know what the word *labor* here means. It doesn't mean sitting in a nice office where the air conditioner keeps it at a nice seventy-two degrees, although I must say that can be very exhausting having worked in that environment. I've said many times to be mentally exhausted is often more wearisome than to be bodily weary. Often I have been so physically tired working outside that I come in, take a shower, rest, eat a little, drink, get rehydrated again and I'm ready to go. But when you're mentally fatigued, my dear friend, you can't just rejuvenate the brain like that. Here this word means an exhaustion that leaves you without any energy or power.

The word *heavy laden* describes an animal burdened down with too much weight, too big a load. So clearly Jesus is reaching out and inviting people who are exhausted by trying to carry the weight of their sin and sanctification.

Again, I want to deal with sanctification before I deal with sin mainly in this message, although before I conclude I do want to say a little bit about the weight of sin. How is it that a Christian could be exhausted from the labor and weight of holiness? Isn't Jesus saying here, like He's said before, that knowing Him will bring rest not exhaustion? How can knowing Christ lead to exhaustion? Let me offer you three answers.

### **I. Christians are weary in their attempt to be like Jesus, to grow in grace and holiness and sanctification because they try to do the right thing or be the right thing.**

If you are busy about trying to do the right thing you will become eventually exhausted to the point of no power. It's not just trying to *do* the right thing; it's trying to *be* the right thing.

Every Christian in this room desires to not just do the right thing but to be all God meant you to be. They desire to be conformed to the image of Christ. But friend, God never ever intended for you to try to do this. Ephesians 2:10 clearly, squarely, plainly tells you, yes you are to perform and do good works, you are to be obedient, and there is certainly an act of the will in trying, but notice that the source of my trying is not me, even though I'm commanded to do good works.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

In other words, God saved you so you can live like Jesus. But not only are you His workmanship to do good works, but the good works that you were created for, saved for, have already been prepared and made.

*“...which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

God has already made all of your good works for you. They are already prepared. Every single day opportunities are going to come to you and they may not be spectacular, they may not even seem to be all that important, but they will be opportunities for you to do what God has called you to do from before the foundation of the world. What is required of you? He says simply to *walk in them*.

Not try, not labor, not weary and exhaust yourselves, simply walk in them. The implication is that basically all Paul is doing here in Ephesians 2:10 is exactly what Jesus is saying in Matthew 11:28 and following: “Come to Me and walk with Me. Just walk with Me, and as you walk with Me you will fulfill all that I’ve called you to do—good works and all.”

So if you’re trying to do in thy own strength, then yes, you will be exhausted.

## **2. It’s possible to be weary trying to walk the walk of faith.**

I am learning this. Over the last twelve years faith has become more radical, more important, more a part of my life. I don’t stray very far from Hebrews 11, it seems God always brings things back to me from that chapter that I never saw before, like He did not too long ago. I shared it at Blackey one morning in the devotional.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and as a child of God I want to please my Father. I want to do what He wants me to do and I really want to be a person of faith. I am energized when I hear of stories where people prayed and God miraculously responds to their faith. I get something great out of that, but I can also get something negative from that when I walk away from that story and I try to walk the walk of faith. I try to increase my faith, I try to build it up.

I am learning that is not what God has called me to do. God has never called me to try to have faith in Him. I think the disciples learned this as I have, the hard way. How often He would rebuke them. “Oh you of little faith.” “Why did you doubt?” “Oh you of weak faith.” finally, they had tried and tried and tried to trust God and Peter even tried walking on the water and sank, but finally, one day, completely exasperated and hopeless that they couldn’t increase their faith one measurement, one degree, they come to Jesus and said, “Lord, increase our faith.” That’s it. They finally got it. They couldn’t do that, and neither can you. You weren’t called to increase your faith so quit trying to have more faith. You’re going about it all wrong. Try to have more faith and you will become weary in soul. It will wear you out.

## **3. People can get weary of suffering, even for Christ.**

There are many things that can come to my mind to illustrate, but all I ask you is to remember that trial that seemed like it would never end. Maybe you’re in it right now. You’re enduring difficulty and it’s been a long one, it’s lasted not days or weeks, but maybe months or years, and

you see no end. You're just tired of the circumstances. You're weary of the pressure of what's going on in your life. Yes, you can get weary in trying to maintain the proper heart when you are enduring suffering, if you approach it wrongly.

In other words, a Christian only becomes weary when he tries to deal with whatever is confronting him in his own strength. The invitation today makes it very clear that you and I cannot do this on our own. We cannot grow ourselves, we cannot grow our faith or holiness or grace on our own.

### **III. The Invitation's Request**

#### **A. Come to Christ**

*“Come to **Me.**”*

Your focus is to be on Christ. Listen very closely, this is one of those statements that proceed, lead up to the point I'm trying to make. If you're not to grow weary and to have rest and perfect peace, your focus must be on Jesus, not on your suffering.

The more you focus on the problem or the probability of a problem, the wearier you will become. The focus is completely wrong. Jesus said, “Focus on Me, come to Me, let Me be the attention and you move in My direction.” Your focus ought not to be on your faith.

For those of you who are trying to grow in faith, maybe you went to Blackey and heard some wonderful things about walking by faith and now this last week you've gotten a little frustrated because the walk of faith seems so illusive, you can't seem to get a grip on it. Listen to me, quit focusing on your faith. Your focus is on the wrong place. Focus on Christ. You want to grow in faith? Then just keep your gaze upon Jesus and your faith will always grow. Faith has to have an object—Christ is the object of our faith. See Him, behold Him, look unto Christ, the Author and the Finisher of our faith.

Your focus can't be on your performance. This is where a good many of us are weary today and exhausted because all we are doing is analyzing our performance. Everyday is a new day with a new checklist that we every evening have to evaluate, and we've gotten to the point where many of us quit evaluating. We shun the prayer closet, we don't open our Bibles because it seems to be a blaring 'F' every time we do. “Failure, failure, failure.” And we're weary of failing God. My dear friend, take it from one of the biggest failures in here, I used to lament my failures, would not talk about them because it embarrassed me and I saw no good in them. Now I boast in them. Now I don't hesitate sharing them because I've learned so much from failing. I've learned. God has taught me through failing, He was in all of that.

Performance should not be your focus, for if it is you will only feel good if you perform according to your standards and you then will be tempted to be proud and you will not only be tempted, you will be. You will be as proud and bloated and puffed up as a hot air balloon. So don't focus

on your performance because if you do and you succeed then you're proud, and you certainly can't focus on Him when you fail because you'll be condemned. The problem is you shouldn't be focused on performance at all. It's Christ. "Come unto Me." That's the request.

## **B. Take Christ's Yoke**

*"Take My yoke upon you."*

What does He mean by this? Taking His yoke demands closeness to Him. Jesus is saying, "Come, get near Me. You're out there and you're all alone and you're weary, you're exhausted, and no wonder. You're so far from Me. Come, come closer, because to be yoked is to be side by side with someone."

The word yoke is referring here to a wooden instrument carved to fit two animals.

No doubt as a carpenter, Jesus made many a yoke. Many a farmer had come to Joseph and Jesus for yokes for their oxen, for their teams to plow the fields to do the kind of work needed. He was very accustomed to how a yoke needed to be made. When a farmer would order a yoke for the oxen he would often bring the oxen with him to the carpenter and there the carpenter would measure the necks and the girth of the animals to make sure the yoke fit properly. Because if it didn't it would chafe the neck and would be too burdensome that the animal would end up being plagued with sores and couldn't plow at all. So it had to be made so it would fit comfortably.

Jesus is saying, "Come to Me, I have a yoke on Me and I want it to be on you too, and it will be just right." To be yoked to Christ demands coming to Christ and walking closely to Him.

Secondly it demands walking with Christ. You can't just be close to Christ and not walk with Him. Wherever the lead oxen went the other ox had to go and that's usually how farmers trained young livestock. They would take a more experienced ox and bring the younger, green ox and pair it up. And that younger ox, not as big or as strong, would not be pulling much of the weight because he's not as strong as the old one. But as he grew and as he learned then he could pull his own fair weight.

Jesus is saying, "Come to Me and walk with Me." To be close to and walk with Christ is a classic, biblical description of fellowship with the Master. That's all Jesus is saying: I want to fellowship with you. Which tells me if I'm to be at peace, if I'm to experience rest and not be weary in my sanctification, my walk with God, I need to realize that this thing is not religious, it's not a performance, it's not a checklist, it is relationship with Christ.

This is where so many good Christians are not getting it. They see Christianity to be so many things but not a relationship with Christ.

But to be yoked with Christ means one more thing: complete surrender to Him.

While the Lord Jesus is offering freedom from weariness, He doesn't offer absolute freedom. This is a yoke. This isn't about you doing whatever you want to do, you're paired up with Christ and you've got to go where He goes which means absolute surrender. Again, that younger oxen had to be submissive to the bigger ox, the older, more mature, and where that ox went, it went. That requires surrender and that is what God is requiring from you.

Here is why most of you that are saved are not experiencing the rest and the dynamic of peace in your Christian walk. Right now for you, being a Christian is a burden is a weight. Not because Christ is too hard or His commandments burdensome, it is because you have yet to surrender the self-life. What do I mean by this 'surrender the self-life'? It is this thing fueled by self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-pride and ego that tells you that somehow you can do what God is calling you to do. And while you've heard me long enough to know intellectually that you can't, you don't believe that. So you continue to flounder and work and strive, and therefore you are today exhausted and almost faithless.

Several years ago I read an old man of God talking about what it means to surrender the self-life. He said, "Many times Christians, when they go to God, ask God, *Lord, please show me Your will, please show me Your will. Please show me what You want me to do.* That kind of praying often indicates a heart of pride."

I was shocked when I read that. I thought "How could that be? I want to know my Father's will so I can do it. The Bible talks about me being discerning of God's will. How can I do God's will if I don't know what it is?"

But then the old man went onto say, "Most people ask that not because they want to do the will of God but because they want to evaluate what it is and thereby determine whether or not they want to do it."

"Lord, show me what it is You want me to do."

"Well, I want you to teach a Sunday School."

"Oh, no, no, no, no, I don't think that's my gift. I don't think I can do that. Lord, what's Your will for me?"

Here is what everyone is afraid of except Paul and Velda: "I want you to go to Africa."

What if God did say that as He did them? Here you are praying, *I want to be absolutely Yours, I want to walk with You, I want to talk with You, I want to hear Your voice. I want to be in perfect fellowship with You, what is it You would have me do?*

"Go to Africa."

At the moment we begin to put qualifications on God is the the moment spiritual oppression, exhaustion and weariness begins.

Rather the old man of God said this, “Here is how the will of God ought to look for you. Take a piece of paper out, sign your name at the bottom and hand it in to God and say “God you put on here what You want to. I’ve already agreed to it, You’ve got my covenant signature.””

There are a lot of you that are saved in this room. I don’t doubt it. I see enough of God in you that I know you know Christ. I know Jesus is in you, but a lot of self is still in you and has not been resigned. You are at the end completely unraveled, weary with it all. Jesus said, “Come to me. Put on My yoke and go where I go, do what I do, and you will finally enjoy me and therefore you will finally have peace.”

If you are focused on ministry, or seeing your kids saved or your husband or wife saved, your neighbors, if you’re focused on doing something for God, my friend, I applaud you. I’m thankful you want to do something for God, but I’m assuring you that is not honoring the request of Christ. He said “Come to Me, take My yoke upon you. Let Me be the focus, let Me lead where we go and you will have a joyful experience. You will not find it burdensome.”

Either you believe that or you don’t. Your soul will tell you if you do. You will either be refreshed or you will be exhausted.

### **C. To learn His meekness and humility**

*“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.”*

Meek, as the King James says. I have to confess to you that getting a good grasp on the word meekness and even the word *humility*, has eluded me over the years. That statement does not surprise some of you, because I don’t ooze humility. But I just really struggle with every definition I’ve ever heard of meekness, the best I’ve heard is “velvet covered steel.” I like that, I get that imagery: something strong, but gentle on the outside, because meekness is not weakness as it’s often defined. But even that didn’t help me.

Not long ago Karen asked me a question about a statement in a book she was reading. The book was Corrie ten Boom’s *Tramp for the Lord*. “What do you think she meant when she said this?” She then proceeded to read me the following quote:

*It is easier to surrender one’s sins than one’s virtues.*

As soon as she read that I knew what I’d heard. I’d heard the definition of meekness that I’ve looked for my entire life.

Now you have to know a little bit about the story of why ten Boom said that. She was going into

a country that was a little stricter about letting people in, especially people who are Christians.

She had an invitation to preach in this particular country and at the Customs office at the airport a Customs Agent gave her a difficult time. He asked her if she had anything to declare, and she did. At that time you had to declare nylon stockings. I don't know why, but that was something they thought they needed to know. She had laid a pair on top of her suitcase and he accused her of lying when he found out she had not one pair but four.

She explained she wasn't declaring just the one pair but had only laid the pair on top of the suitcase so he would know what she said because of the language difference and the dialects and the accents. Well, he thought she was trying to smuggle something so then he took the time to go through all of her luggage, actually inspecting the hems on her dresses to make sure she wasn't smuggling something in.

This delay caused her to miss her next flight and she was quickly angered that this man insulted her honesty, her integrity, her virtue. Then God spoke to her and showed her she had pride in her virtues. She had pride in her integrity and that's why she said it is often easier to lay down sins you know are sins.

If God convicts me of lying, well, I know lying is wrong, I'm going to ask God to help me and I'm going to make a commitment not to lie but to tell the truth no matter how painful because that's sin. If I'm dealing with anger well I know I'm not supposed to lose my temper and spew forth ugly things. I can repent, I can turn loose of that much easier. But to turn loose of honesty? To turn loose of purity? To turn loose of integrity and virtue? That's so difficult. Because we like knowing that we are honest, that we are virtuous. It's the pride in that virtue that makes it very difficult to lay aside.

Why do I say this is what Jesus is saying with meekness? Because it's exactly what Jesus was. *"Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly."*

There are many examples of meekness in the life of Jesus, but the most dramatic is at the trials before Pilate. Pilate is listening to the arguments of Jesus' prosecution, he hears one witness after another give accusation on why this man should be put to death. And in Matthew 27 after being accused by the chief priests and elders, the Bible says that Jesus in His turn to rebut the prosecution said nothing.

It would be like you being arrested and not having an attorney at your trial and even rejecting the public defender and after hearing all the evidence you just stand there and say nothing. You know you're innocent. You know you've been arrested under false pretense and you're not guilty, so you stand there and say nothing. Can you imagine that?

No, you'd get the best lawyer that you could possibly afford so that you could vindicate your integrity. And here Jesus says absolutely nothing and Pilate is so intrigued by it, he asks Him, "Do

You not hear how many things they testify against You?” But He answered him not one word so that the governor marveled greatly.”

Why would Pilate marvel at this? There is only one reason. He knows the Sanhedrin and he hates them. You have to know history here. Pilate despises the Jews, especially the leadership and he doesn't believe them. He's more ready to believe this man he does not know than they, because they have a track record. He knows the man is innocent. Does he not say "I find no fault in Him"? He knows Jesus is not guilty and yet he marvels that He says nothing.

Why does Jesus say nothing? Here's the answer most of us would give: because He knows He's supposed to be there at this time, it's part of the cross, this is part of the Father's will.

That answer is wrong.

The answer is: Jesus is meek and lowly. He has no pride in His virtue. He has no sense about defending Himself because He doesn't need to. Only a proud man feels the need to defend Himself.

So what is meekness? It's to consider your Father's will and submit to Him because you know what He has planned for you is absolutely best, even if it's painful, without any regard to your own integrity or reputation.

In short, it's simply is not to take any pride in your virtues, in your righteousness, in your godliness. To take no pride in it that you feel no need to feel alarmed or offended when men attack it.

Somebody says something about us that is so contrary to our integrity and our virtue there is something compelling us to stand up and to argue, to defend, to take a stand for what's right, why? Because you're not so meek. You're not so lowly. You're not so humble.

That's Christ's invitation.

### **III. The Invitation's Reward**

#### **A. Rest**

*“And I will give you rest.”*

What does He mean?

I think you cannot understand the word *rest* without bringing the word *faith* back into the picture. Let me illustrate what I mean.

A missionary in Africa had difficulty translating the Gospel of John into the language of the people

he was trying to reach. Every time he came to the word *believe* or *faith* he just had to leave it blank, hoping he would soon find a word that would translate in the language to convey the meaning of the word.

One day a man came running into the camp to deliver a very important message, and after delivering the message he collapsed onto a hammock that was present. So tired, he barely uttered a phrase that seemed to express both his exhaustion and his contentment to find a delightful place of relaxation. But the missionary didn't recognize these words he was using so he asked another man to repeat what the man said, and here is what the translation was, "Oh, he's simply saying that I'm at the end of myself therefore I am resting all of my weight here."

Immediately the missionary understood—that's faith! "I'm at the end of myself, therefore I am putting all of my weight here."

That's what Christ is inviting you to have today. This is the experience we can all have before we leave here this day, but it requires one thing: coming to the end of yourself. Again, the invitation is not for the strong or the refreshed, but to the weary and heavy laden.

We've just come back from the mountains of Appalachia and working with a ministry of Brother Lonnie Riley. I purchased one of his books at the bookstore there at Calvary Campus and read the first one and was reading last night the beginning of the second book. I want you to hear some of this because I don't think it could be illustrated any better than what I found last night.

We all know Brother Lonnie from *Experiencing God*, we saw him on the DVDs. A modern day George Mueller, if you please. But you didn't know the entire story. In fact, the first night he spoke he opened it up for questions and you know how that is, when you open it up for questions no one wants to say anything. But I knew there had to be questions so I thought, okay, I'll start this off and maybe others will ask, and that happened.

My question was, "When you spoke about 1998 and that experience of when God spoke to you about coming back to Lynch, leaving your five bedroom house the church had given you, the Cadillac and the boats and the six-figure income, to come back to no salary, no car, no house, was that the first time you'd ever had an experience like that?" He said, "No, it wasn't. It was part of a walk of God that I've had."

Well I knew better. I knew that couldn't be right. How did I know that? By my own experience. By reading the Scriptures. Very few men from the day they're saved walk with God immediately and walk orderly from that moment on. There are very few examples of that in history or even in Scriptures. So I quizzed him about it later. I said, I don't believe that you've always walked this way with God. He said, "No, no. It all started in 1991." Just a few short years before. Listen to what happened before that.

"I must admit that my own ego played a huge role. I was where I wanted to be."

This is before God got a hold of his life to teach him about resting in Christ. This is before he heard, “Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

“I was where I wanted to be, and I pushed everyone hard. [He’s pastoring the third largest church in Ohio, by the way.] I’d heard others say, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way,” and that sounded good to me. Then the other staff members and other church members began to leave. Inwardly I was horrified, but I put up a good front and dealt with each devastating issue that arose. Belinda [his wife] and I still thought we come “make it happen.” Looking back, we realize that God was taking us to the lowest point in our ministry. He was getting us ready for something we could never have imagined.

Then came problems in our family. Our three children began to rebel and become involved in worldly things in the community. They began to live in ways that were inconsistent with what we had taught them. We were devastated.”

Let me add something here. When you’re going through those types of things you think it’s the worst thing but what you don’t know is that behind it is the hand of God.

*“The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.”*

God was working.

“Put plainly, when these crisis hit, [Now watch this, I thought this was so amazing last night how it fit with the text] we were worn out. We were spent from living twenty years in the performance mode. Even for self-confident, self-assured people, there are always peaks and valleys in the “make it happen” mode, and both Belinda and I had experienced them. The peaks come when you are doing better than those whom you admire; the valleys come when you are doing worse.

And now, for the first time in our ministry, we were “doing worse” we were worn down from failure. We were worn down from the strain in our family. In fact, I was so worn out that I decided it was time to quit the ministry and go back to engineering.”

And he had done so, even wrote out the letter of resignation.

“And then something only God could have orchestrated happened. When a pastor friend who was hosting Blackaby had to attend an unscheduled meeting, he asked us to take Blackaby back to his hotel. We peppered him with questions all the way. We told him what was going on in our lives, and for forty-five minutes he preached to us. “Your focus is wrong,” he told us. “Your focus is on yourself.” I kept talking about strategies to walk with God [isn’t that just the way the flesh works? I’ve got to find a new strategy, a new formula on how to walk, I just haven’t figured out the right one yet. Not willing to surrender self]. I kept talking about strategies to walk with God and see Him do great things, and he kept talking about God. I wanted to know if there was something Belinda and I could do that God would bless and accomplish for us. Blackaby wanted

us to know God.

After we got back home from the meeting, I was so distraught that I spent three days on the floor of my office, crying, reading Scripture, and praying. Belinda knew the seriousness of my despair and carefully guarded my privacy during those three days. God was merciful and heard my cries.”

Well, of course He did. Jesus said, “Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He met the qualification. Do you? Are you exhausted from all of your self-life yet? Here is a Christian pastor who for years worked under his own talent. But eventually, though he was more talented than most of us, more driven than most of us, it soon caught up with him. Has it caught up with you yet?

“He told me, “I want to show you you so that you can see Me.” What He showed me was not pretty. I saw the pride, jealousy, envy, and hatred that I didn’t even know I had. I confessed my sin, and God changed me. Seeing myself as God saw me was the first step to true repentance, not just the kind where we give God a shallow, “Forgive-me-I-won’t-do-it-again” nod to repenting, but repentance that brings a radical forgiveness and a radical reversal in action and lifestyle.”

This is the last thing I want you to hear. This is a quote from his wife:

“My focus, my desire was Jesus. I wanted the Spirit to fill me that when others were in my presence, they would see Jesus,” she says. “This,” Lonnie said, “was a major change for both of us. Belinda and I had done our daily devotions from the time we became Christians but we had never really experienced an intimate, personal relationship with the Father. In fact, it had been only a few years earlier that Belinda has first heard the words ‘a personal relationship with God.’ This was new territory for both of us.”

I’ll admit I was a little shocked when I read that. I mean, how could you have been in the ministry for twenty years and never heard “personal relationship with God?” How could you understand Christianity any other way? But you know what, I may understand those words and have heard them but that doesn’t mean I’m practicing it. Everyone in this room that’s been here for any length of time know it’s a personal relationship. But how many of us are relating to Christ on a personal level every day?

The Lord says if you will you will find a place of rest.

## **B. Ease of service**

You know why a single collar is burdensome? Because it puts all the weight on one animal. That animal is so happy when he’s double-collared with another because it makes the load much lighter. What you are thinking would be too devastating, too hard on you to surrender your absolute self to God, to give up your reputation, your comforts, everything you wanted God to do in your life. That’s what it requires—giving up everything you want to do in your life and all

the ways you want to be used by God.

When you give that up my friend you are going to enjoy God and the peace and rest He gives. It will be so much easier.