



## **Struggling to Rest**

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How are you doing in your struggle to rest?

What an odd notion! “Struggle” and “rest” stand in opposition to each other. The presence of one discounts the other. Am I supposed to struggle to rest?

I realize, I am supposed to rest in Christ. Nevertheless, struggling to rest is disconcertingly familiar. More often than not, my struggle is to control people and circumstances, which is to say: I harbor the deceptive belief that if I can gain control of all that affects me, I will achieve rest.

For example, I discovered that I cannot control my wife. Why didn’t someone tell me this a quarter century ago? I cannot control the weather that is delaying my flight home today—and I am so ready to be home! I cannot control the outcome of the conference I’ll be leading later this week, and there is a wild card in the hand of presenters dealt me for this conference. I cannot control the test my doctor will run in the morning. And so it goes.

The result? What the Germans call *angst*—a tumult in my stomach, a preoccupation within my mind; my emotions are tense and my sleep is disrupted. I’m distracted...and let’s cut to the bottom line: Spiritually, I am sinning.

That’s a drag. While I am attempting to be diligent and responsible across the breadth of my life, God considers my effort to be sinful.

What’s that about?

My struggle is rooted in self-belief, self-sufficiency, and self-indulgence. Therein is the source of my sin: self. Anytime we operate independently of the Holy Spirit, we sin. Consider that for a moment. This creates a spectrum of sinfulness that cuts across the history of human kind and places simple acts of independence alongside the degradation we associate with only the most egregious of sins.

To believe in myself means I discount my identity in Christ. To depend upon myself means I fail to depend solely upon Christ to live through me. To indulge myself means I continue to invest my energies in the failed notion that I can be god, instead of abandoning myself as the ultimate resource and turning my undivided attention to Christ, who said, “Come to me all of you who struggle.”

For those who harbor the belief that they can conquer enough of the world to control their fate, relinquishing the resources of their abilities is a challenging proposition. Texas wisdom says, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!”

At the other end of the human struggle are those whose self-efforts have proven ineffective. This group is eager to trade their failed attempts for anything, even the sufficiency of Christ. After all, anything would be better than the bludgeoning of failure.

Once we abandon the resource of our self-sufficiency as the primary means by which we approach life, the real struggle begins. For the conquerors, the danger is relapse into their resourcefulness when struggles arise. For those whose resources have proven lacking, the challenge is to believe that the promise of God's grace is really true when facing a daunting struggle.

There is a lie told that the rest spoken of in Scripture is synonymous with tranquility. If you have been reading closely, you gather that I have often adopted this lie as truth. As a result, I have labored to control my struggles and create rest. This is not unlike the fable of searching for the pot of gold at the base of the rainbow.

Here is my discovery, and the point of my note to you: Rather than struggling to rest, I have realized that I am to rest within the struggle.

Jesus did not promise tranquility, but tribulation. This being the case, it is imperative that I anchor myself in the safe harbor of being in Christ Jesus. In other words, He is my rest, not the momentary tranquility I create. As a man in Him, while struggle and tumult and storms rage, I am secure in Christ and therefore, I rest.

This means I rest in the awareness that I am in Him. Nothing comes my way, but that it finds me filled and sealed with the Spirit of God. Herein, I rest within the inescapable struggle.

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