Meditations and Prayers

Jared Bell Waterbury, 1840

1. THE SAINTS' REST.

"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." [Hebrews 4:9](https://ref.ly/Heb 4.9;esv?t=biblia)

The earthly Sabbath is a beautiful, but inadequate, symbol of the rest above. We lay aside our secular business, cease from worldly toil, and repair to the sanctuary, to offer unto God our praises and thanksgivings. But alas, we cannot divest ourselves of the flesh, which impedes and mars our worship; and which, in a few hours, becomes weary under the most exalted spiritual privileges. Above all, have we to lament the remaining depravity which works within us — begetting unbelief, coldness, and deadness — distracting the thoughts even in the most solemn acts of worship — and rendering, at times, the most appropriate means of grace, inefficient. What believer has not groaned over this cause of misimproved Sabbaths?

Still, there are seasons when the sanctuary seems like one of the outer courts of Heaven's glory. There are times, when we can exclaim, "How lovely are your tabernacles, O Lord Almighty!" Then, by faith, we see the glory of the Lord. The word is living and powerful. Our souls are borne upward as on eagles' wings. A sacred calm delight takes possession of us; and God appears to bow his heavens and come down to bless us.

But even such Sabbaths are not worthy to be compared with that eternal rest, where the unfettered, unpolluted soul shall worship the Lamb without interruption and without end. The body will there not impede, but augment our happiness; for it will be a spiritual body, which can no longer be the medium of temptation, and which shall experience no fatigue. Nor will sin, O blissful thought, be there, to dim our eye or to pollute our worship. We shall not only see God — but see him with unobstructed vision. We shall not only love him — but love him with unwavering affections. We shall not only praise him — but praise him in pure, exalted strains forever. Glorious rest! Let us rise and hasten towards it with renewed vigor; for "Here we have no continuing city."

PRAYER  
Blessed be your name, O God, that you have prepared and reserved an everlasting rest for your people. This poor world, You have taught us, is the scene of our toilsome pilgrimage — that we are not to expect our Heaven here. Yet O, how often are we building tabernacles on earth! We act as if this were to be our permanent abode. Enable us, O God, to cast the eye of faith forward to "The rest that remains for the people of God." Give us such views of its alluring glories, as shall make the brightest scenes of earth look dim. Let us see the enthroned Lamb! Let us see the pure company of the saints and angels. Let us have a sweet foretaste of the celestial joys. Then, O God, shall we cease to desire the honors or the pleasures of this vain world. Then shall we forsake its attractions allured by visions of so much superior luster.

Do we not feel some faint desires after you, O God? Are we not oppressed with sin's heavy load? Have we not waged eternal war against our lusts? Grant then, that the grace which has equipped us for the conflict; and thus far sustained us in it — may carry us triumphant to the close, and put us at last in possession of the heavenly rest. Then, O Lord, will we give you all the praise. Our song shall be, "Unto Him who loved us, and that washed us from our sins in his own blood!" To Him, and to You through Him, will we ascribe the glory and honor, the dominion and the power, forever. Amen.

2. THE CONFLICT.

"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son!" [Revelation 21:7](https://ref.ly/Rev 21.7;esv?t=biblia)

Although our reward is not of debt but of grace — yet the necessity of struggling against and overcoming our spiritual enemies, is constantly urged upon us. Every motive drawn from danger on the one hand, and from delight on the other — is presented in order to rouse us to a vigorous contest. How numerous, subtle, and powerful are our foes!

The world appeals most attractively to our natural susceptibilities.

Satan assumes at one time the form of an angel of light; and at another, advances boldly to the attack, in all his hellish malignity.

Our own lusts are ever ready to kindle in the soul an unhallowed excitement.

What a phalanx of spiritual enemies! Blessed be God, we have not to meet them alone and in our own strength! Greater is he who is with us, than all that are against us. The spiritual armor is offered to us; and, invested in it, we are prepared for a successful warfare. Jesus too, the great Captain of salvation, has already achieved a signal victory over these foes, and he promises to stand by us, to strengthen our weakness, and to lead us on to certain victory.

He has moreover held forth a glorious reward, "He who overcomes will inherit all things." Yes, all that Heaven has of happiness, shall be ours. God will be our God, and we shall be his adopted children. Here is an all-powerful stimulus to animate us in the conflict. Look then steadily at the crown of glory! When the world allures — remember, it is a foe in disguise. When Satan attacks — raise the shield of faith to ward off his fiery darts. When the flesh pleads — take a determined stand against its clamors. Yes, crucify it!

Soon the warfare will be over. The last enemy, which is death, being conquered — nothing will remain, but to enter upon the glorious, the everlasting reward!

PRAYER  
Surrounded by the enemies of our souls, we look upwards to you, O God, for help. You know their power and their malignity — and you are acquainted with our weakness. Within us, is a "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Everywhere around us, are the allurements of the world. Without your protecting and supporting hand — we must inevitably fall before the power of the tempter. How often indeed have we been overcome by evil! How often by our melancholy lapses, have we proved our own helplessness! The flesh has corrupted us — the world has allured and deceived us. Satan has suddenly attacked and prostrated us, and were it not that your mercy is boundless, that your love is unchangeable — we would long since have been abandoned to the powers of Hell. But thanks to your name, O God, you have made a way for our escape with every temptation. When, overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at our fall, we have ventured to cast an imploring look towards the mercy seat, you have been ready to pardon, restore, and strengthen us. We come to you anew. We beseech you to invest our souls with the armor of righteousness. O put your strength within us.

Help us to watch unto prayer. Instead of confiding in our own arm, may we make you our refuge and our fortress. In all times of temptation, will you deliver us. Uphold us by the right hand of your righteousness. Enable us to war a good warfare. May we, without presumption, look forward to the rewards of the faithful; and impelled by the glorious "hope set before us," may we, through grace, overcome every foe, and at last be invested with the privileges and honors which are promised to all your children, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

3. THE RISEN SAVIOR.

"Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus." [John 20:14](https://ref.ly/John 20.14;esv?t=biblia)

We may say of Mary weeping at the sepulcher: behold how she loved him! She came to find her Savior's lifeless body and to weep over it — but even that is gone. Her heart is broken. In the anguish of despair, she exclaims, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Mary little thought how near to her stood that very Master, whose death she mourned. He was there to console and to cheer her. No sooner had the supposed gardener uttered the word, "Mary," with all the benignant emphasis of expression with which he was accustomed to address her, than she recognized his well known voice, and flew to embrace his feet.

Thus does the weeping believer, or the heart-broken penitent often find, when all seems darkness and despair, that Jesus is near, and about to reveal himself to their troubled souls.

He loves to find us weeping. It is a state indicative of our penitence, and expressive of our desire for his consoling grace. It is in the valley of humility that our Lord seems to abide. There he would have us seek him. It is when, like Mary, we are weeping in the garden, at the cross, or around the tomb — that Jesus draws near, to speak a comforting word to our souls.

O, let us welcome afflictions, if they do but bring us near to him! It is Heaven, to behold his countenance and to hear his voice. When, borne down with the burden of sorrow, we go to some lonely spot to give vent, in prayer, to these sorrows — sweet is the surprise to our souls, to find there him, of whom it is said, "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows!"

PRAYER.  
How comforting, O Lord, is your presence! It makes afflictions light and easy to be borne. Nay, it enables us even to "glory in tribulations." But when you withdraw your presence — when, by our sins, we create a distance between you and our souls — then how heavy are our spirits! Nothing then can impart comfort or satisfaction. To a heart that has once felt your love — it is not in the power of earthly objects to afford substantial bliss. But, O Lord, though our sins have separated between you and us — yet when we return with weeping, you are ever ready to meet us, and to "restore to us, the joy of your salvation." You even hasten to embrace us, and to bestow upon us anew the tokens of your love. You look tenderly upon your penitent children. When they seek you with a sorrowful heart — you are always near. Your voice seems to say, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!" Blessed be your name, gracious Savior, that now you are risen; and have given us the assurance that you will be with your people, not only in their solitude, but where "two or three of them are gathered together in your name." O, may our souls ever live beneath the light of your blessed countenance! When we lose sight of you, our Lord, may we go weeping until we find you. Let our hearts never be at rest, when you are absent. Let it not be in the power of any creature to separate us from your love. Reign supreme in our affections, and reign there forever. Amen.

4. FRUITS OF HOLINESS.

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." [John 15:8](https://ref.ly/John 15.8;esv?t=biblia)

God's glory is the great end of salvation. The whole plan of salvation tends to illustrate the wisdom, power, goodness, justice and mercy of God. Christians are specimens of the divine workmanship. If the change which grace has wrought in them is not strikingly manifested — then God is dishonored and the gospel despised. After all that God the Father has done in sending his Son, and Christ the Son has done in dying for us — if we, who profess to be redeemed, do not exhibit unequivocal evidence of the power and reality of the gospel — then our conduct must draw contempt upon the whole scheme of divine mercy. But if, on the contrary, all men are obliged to confess the power of God in our conversion, and the purity of the gospel in our lives — then we then glorify him "who is the author and the finisher of our faith."

The more excellent is the tree — the more exuberant and healthful the fruits! If after we have borne only "fruit unto death," we begin to show the "fruit which is unto holiness" — men will be obliged to acknowledge in us the saving grace of God. Our light will then so shine, that others may be led also to glorify our Father. Then we may boldly announce ourselves the disciples of Jesus, and fear no charge of hypocrisy or inconsistency. It will be evident that we have been with Jesus, and that we bear somewhat of his image. Our usefulness will be extended — our hope become confirmed — and our zeal burn with a steady and increasing flame. God will then acknowledge us as his redeemed people, and will at last receive us with the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

PRAYER  
Grant, O merciful God, unto your servants, the filling of your Holy Spirit to enable us to live to your glory. May the same power which brought us "out of darkness into your marvelous light," assist us to "walk in the light as you are in the light." The eyes of the world, we know, are fixed upon us; yes we are watched by angels, by devils and by men. Our spiritual enemies stand ready to triumph in our downfall. Every artifice of Satan is employed to accomplish it. Wicked men would gladly find in our conduct, an argument against your cause. But, O Lord, "Hold us up — and we shall be safe!" Our trust is in your grace alone. We have no ability to secure or to advance our own spiritual interests. To you we cling as to "the strength of our heart." Never for one moment forsake us. We mourn that our life has been thus far so poor a testimony to the saving power of your gospel. We are humbled in the dust at the recollection of our sins. O, how often have we dishonored you! But, heavenly Father, let us now "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light." Let us henceforth exhibit the fruits of holiness. Yes, let us bear "much fruit." May we be enabled to gain one victory after another, until every sin shall be overcome, and every gospel grace shall adorn our souls. O make us "holy, as you are holy." All this we entreat for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. RISEN WITH CHRIST.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." [Colossians 3:1](https://ref.ly/Col 3.1;esv?t=biblia)

Risen with Christ! What can be the meaning of the sacred penman? How are Christians risen with Christ? It is evident that the language is highly figurative. "You are risen with him," says the apostle in the 12th verse of the preceding chapter, "through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead." Our faith, then — wrought in us by the power of God — disconnects our souls in a sense from "things seen," and introduces us to "things not seen."

We leave behind us as motives, and as principal means of enjoyment, the things of earth — and we walk by the light of things celestial. This is our resurrection, whereby we are likened to our glorious Lord, who, assuming a spiritual body, came forth from the darkness of the grave. Having thus risen with Christ, we must of course direct our vision to him, and to the scenes with which he is surrounded. We must "set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Our deepest interest should be concentrated on Heaven. There dwells he whom our soul loves — our Father — Redeemer — and Sanctifier. There is the congregation of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect — all sinless and dwelling in a region of absolute purity. Why then should we be enamored of earth? Why fear to cross death's dark valley?

"O if my Lord would come and meet,  
My soul would spread her wings in haste;  
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,  
Nor feel the terrors as she passed."

PRAYER.  
We acknowledge, with shame and contrition — O Lord — that our affections have been "earthly and sensual." So weak, for the most part, has been our faith, that we have seldom had a distinct and impressive view of "the invisible things of God." We have hence been criminally influenced by carnal hopes and pleasures. Alas, we have not lived as those should live, who profess to be "crucified to the world" — to have "risen with Christ." Help us truly to repent of our earthly-mindedness; and O impart to us that faith which "works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world." "Turn away our eyes, O Lord, from beholding vanity." Let us henceforth "rise to newness of life." Separating our thoughts from this vain world, enable us to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God."

Blessed Jesus! One glimpse of your ineffable glory shall draw our affections from all that is bright and attractive on earth. Disclose yourself then to our view — give us ravishing conceptions of the heavenly state — that henceforth we may be dead to the world; and that our "life may be hid with Christ in God."

6. ALL VANITY.

"Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it — and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun!" [Ecclesiastes 2:11](https://ref.ly/Eccles 2.11;esv?t=biblia)

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes gives us his experience of the unsatisfying nature of all worldly honors and pleasures. Everything that could . . .  
please the eye,  
charm the ear,  
gratify the taste, or  
amuse and enrich the mind —  
was by him, sought and enjoyed. The whole circle of earth's pleasures was tested. But in the end, all is pronounced "vanity and a striving after wind."

The disappointment results from the very nature of the soul. Its capacity being illimitable — no finite enjoyment can fully meet its enlarged desires. Nothing but a faithful discharge of duty, and the approving smile of God can make the soul happy. Give the soul whatever you will — gratify every earthly wish — it will still be wretched if it is without God. All below is vanity.

The consideration that all worldly good must so soon be relinquished, is of itself enough to cast a shadow over its enjoyment. The heart must feel that there is nothing permanent here in this poor world.

"What is your life? You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

All earth-born pleasures are transitory.

Death withers every flower as soon as it blooms.

Man too is hurried to the tomb — and then forgotten.

If then all below is stamped with vanity — then O, let us seek our all in God. Let us relinquish in desire, what we have been accustomed so much to value — that the soul may start anew in the race for a prize worthy of her struggles, and which when obtained will amply reward her toils. Let us fix our eye on the "unfading crown of glory!" Let us deliberately renounce this vain world, and take God for our only and all-sufficient portion!

Whether on earth we are known or unknown, honored or despised; let us seek after this one thing — to secure the favor of God — to enjoy His presence — and at last to be with Him and inherit His glorious eternal kingdom!

PRAYER.