



By Elder Per G. Malm
Of the Seventy

Rest unto Your Souls

To find rest unto our souls includes peace of mind and heart, which is the result of learning and following the doctrine of Christ.

In downtown Gothenburg, Sweden, there is a broad boulevard with beautiful trees on each side. One day I saw a hole in the trunk of one of the huge trees, so I curiously looked inside and saw that the tree was completely hollow. Hollow yes, but empty no! It was filled with all sorts of waste.

I was surprised that the tree could still stand. So I looked up and saw a wide steel belt mounted around the upper part of the trunk. Attached to the belt were several steel wires, and they in turn were fastened and anchored to nearby buildings. From a distance it looked like the other trees; it was only when looking inside that one could detect that it was hollow instead of having a solid, strong trunk. Many years earlier something had started the process of weakening the trunk a little bit here and a little bit there. It did not happen overnight. However, just like a young tree grows bit by bit into a sturdy tree, so we can grow step by step in our capacity to be solid and filled from the inside out, in contrast to the hollow tree.

It is through the healing Atonement of Jesus Christ that we may have the strength to stand tall and strong and to have our souls be filled—with light, understanding, joy, and love. His

invitation is extended to “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33). His promise is:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

Of this rest President Joseph F. Smith said: “To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. We know of the doctrine that it is of God, and we do not ask any questions of anybody about it; they are welcome to their opinions, to their ideas and to their vagaries. The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into ‘God’s rest’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 56).

To find rest unto our souls includes peace of mind and heart, which is

the result of learning and following the doctrine of Christ, and becoming Christ’s extended hands in serving and helping others. Faith in Jesus Christ and following His teachings give us a firm hope, and this hope becomes a solid anchor to our souls. We can become steadfast and immovable. We can have lasting inner peace; we can enter into the rest of the Lord. Only if we turn away from light and truth will a hollow feeling of emptiness, like the tree’s, occupy the innermost chambers of our souls, and we even might attempt to fill that emptiness with things of no lasting value.

In view of our existence as spirit children before we came to earth and immortality in the life hereafter, this earth life is indeed but a very short moment.

It is, however, a day of probation, but it is also a day of opportunities when we choose to follow the invitation to not waste the days of our probation (see 2 Nephi 9:27). The thoughts that we dwell on inside our minds, the feelings we foster inside our hearts, and the actions we choose to take will all have a determining impact on our lives, both here and in the hereafter.

A helpful habit is to lift our vision daily in order to maintain an eternal perspective of the things we plan and do, especially if we detect a tendency to wait until a future tomorrow to do what we know we should pursue while we have our present today.

Along our way we are aided in our choices through the sustaining influence of the Spirit. Now, if we choose to act contrary to the light and understanding that we have, we will experience a bad conscience, which of course does not feel good. But a bad conscience is a blessing in that we immediately are reminded that it is time



to repent. When we are humble and desire to do what is right, we will be anxious to act promptly to change our ways, while those who are proud and who may seek “to become a law unto [themselves]” (D&C 88:35) will allow Satan to lead “them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever” (2 Nephi 26:22) unless the spirit of repentance enters their hearts. To follow evil influences can never result in a feeling of peace simply because peace is a gift from God and it only comes through

the Spirit of God. “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

In our day-to-day actions, it is often the small and simple things that will have a long-lasting impact (see Alma 37:6–7). What we say, how we act, and how we choose to react will influence not only ourselves but also those around us. We can build up, or we can tear down. A simple and positive example is a story told about my grandmother. She sent one of her young children to buy some eggs. The trusted child was probably

joyfully walking home along the road, but most of the eggs were broken when the child arrived home. A friend of the family was there and admonished my grandmother to scold the child for behaving so badly. Instead, Grandmother calmly and wisely said, “No, that will not make the eggs whole again. We will simply use what we can and make some pancakes that we can enjoy together.”

When we learn to handle the small and simple daily things in a wise and inspired way, the result is a positive influence that will solidify harmony in our souls and build up and strengthen those around us. This is so because everything which invites us to do good “is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore [we] may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

Now, the hollow tree that I told you about no longer stands. Some youths put firecrackers into the empty space, which caused the tree to catch on fire. It could not be saved and had to be taken down. Beware of things that will destroy from the inside out, whether big or small! They can have an explosive effect and cause spiritual death.

Let us instead focus on those things that will sustain a lasting peace of mind and heart. Then our “confidence [will] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). The promise to enter into the rest of the Lord, to receive the gift of peace, is far from a temporary, worldly satisfaction. It is indeed a heavenly gift: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). He has the power to heal and to strengthen the soul. He is Jesus Christ, of whom I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■