

## HEAVEN'S REST

### Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7

"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief (rest) to you who are troubled...This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven..." (2 Thess 1:6-7).

Paul used the Greek word *anesis* which meant freedom from persecution. They would be free from trials and persecution when Christ came and caught them away out of the world to be with Him forever in heaven (1 Thess 4:16-18).

There will be no rest as we know it in heaven. The great multitude of saints that stood around the throne of God "served Him day and night in the temple" (Rev. 7:15), which is the Holy City (Rev 21:1-2).

All sixteen references to "the temple" in The Revelation use the word *naos*, the inner sacred place where only the High Priest was allowed to enter. Also called "the Holy of Holies" where God's presence dwelled. We will all enjoy that presence of God and the closeness of fellowship of "a kingdom of priests."

### TALK ABOUT

1. What will the saints be doing in heaven?
2. What did Jesus do when the disciples cried out, "We are drowning"?
3. What do you do when you feel you are 'drowning' in this world's troubles?

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5.14.2010

*The Meaning of . . .*

# *The Sabbath Rest*

*[Hebrews 4]*

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**To the Reader:** *Keep your Bible beside you. Read the Bible verses as you study. Most of the Bible verses are from the New International Version. You may have a King James Bible or another translation, so the words may be a little different, but the meaning will be the same. Ask God to guide your mind to know His truth. He has promised to do this for you (John 8:32).*

*Ask a friend to join in the study with you. You may be able to help each other with something that you do not understand. Talk together about the questions. You will be blessed and so will your friend.*

## THE SABBATH REST

### Read: Hebrews 4:1-11

**“Since (God’s) promise of entering His rest still stands... let none of you...fall short” of it (Hebrews 4:1-11; Luke 13:10-17).**

God created the heavens and the earth in six days. On the seventh He **ceased** from His work (Gen 2:1). This does not mean that God took a siesta or a rest from His work. But He ceased His work of creating this world. He looked at this vast creation and said it was all very good.

God did not rest because He was tired. He did not need to rest. God never gets tired and never stops working (Psalm 121:3). Man must stop and rest or he will get tired and sick. God said that man needed a daily rest, a weekly rest and an annual rest.

Under the Law, God commanded Israel to keep one day of the week as a Sabbath rest (Ex 20:8-11).

What happened when the people did not keep this command (Jer 17:21; Neh 13:15-21)?

God promised His people a Sabbath-rest that went beyond the Law as it was stated in Exodus 20:8-11. God has never changed or taken back His promise of rest. He will never fail us if we do our part and keep His Sabbath rest (Joshua 21:45).

### TALK ABOUT

1. Why did God tell us it took Him six days to create the heavens and the earth? Or did God set the record out in six-day parts to make it easier for man to understand?
2. “Sabbath” means many different things to different people. What does it mean to you?
3. What was this rest looking forward to (Heb 4:6)?

attack comes to all spiritual leaders. If we don’t put off all the old ways and address and deal with all the old temptations and habits (Eph 4:22-30), he quickly gains a foothold.

Satan deceives and destroys. Jesus said he is a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He tells us “you can be anonymous; no one will know!”

You cannot overcome Satan in your own strength and wisdom. The God of peace and rest will do it for you. You will “tread down” the enemy, according to the promise God made to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:15).

Christ has overcome Satan for us (Heb 2:14-15). We accept His victory by faith. But there is more; we “put on Christ” like a soldier puts on his body armor. We do this every day. No soldier would be dressed for battle until he had put on his full battle gear.

We put off the old ways (Eph 4: 22-30).

**Q.** Does God always warn us when we are getting off the path?

**Q.** In what ways was Solomon failing? How could God put David, Solomon’s father, up as an example (1 Kings 9:4)?

God said, “Rebellion is like the sin of divination (witchcraft), and arrogance like the evil of idolatry” (1 Sam 15:22-23).

### TALK ABOUT

1. What reasons did Solomon have for being proud?
2. Who came to visit him (1 Kings 10:1-13)?
3. What did God say about sacrifices and offerings made at the temple (1 Sam 15:22-23)?
4. Why did God allow Solomon’s temple to be destroyed?

In a world of disasters and confusion, men and women look at the believer, to see how he or she is handling their life and the disasters that come their way. We grieve for a season, but joy comes in the morning.

## REST IN SUFFERING

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...” (Matt 5:11-12).

There is a rest in midst of persecution. Some think of this as peace of heart in the midst of the storm. Jesus had it. He slept in the stern of the boat while the storm raged. The disciples did not have that peace in their hearts. They cried out: “Lord, don’t you care that we are drowning?”

But Jesus was there for them. He only needed to hear their cry for help. He waits for you to cry out to Him.

tithe commanded under the Law. It is more in line with what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously...for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor 9:6-8).

"Cheerful" comes from the Greek word *hilaros*, from which we get our English word hilarious. The word suggests a heart ready to share, a joyous spirit waiting for an opportunity to do good.

The tithe has no place in today's churches. It comes from "storehouse tithing" which is taught by greedy pastors. This is not taught anywhere in the New Testament and does not apply to the New Testament Church where God demands "all that you have."

## TALK ABOUT

1. How did the Christian Church come to embrace this doctrine of a tithe?
2. Does God want only 10% of our income?
3. Do you remember the hungry crowd (Mark 6:30-44)? Jesus told the disciples, "You give them something to eat." What do you think He meant?

## GIVE YOUR ALL

Jesus and the apostles spoke of giving all to God – our time, our talents, everything! If we think of everything we own belonging to God – we hold it in trust – we will be less concerned about how much we should give, and far more concerned about how much we should keep for ourselves.

## REST'S WITNESS

### Read: 1 Kings 5:4-5

"The Lord God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple to the name of the Lord..." (1 Kings 5:4-5).

It is Solomon's testimony that God had given him and the people of Israel rest. But he made a big mistake when he said, "and there is no adversary." What was wrong with this statement?

Solomon succeeded in the big things, but he failed in the moral dimensions of life. He built a temple and dedicated it to God, but..... (1 Kings 9:6-7).

The temple was not Solomon's but God's house – did God accept it?

Satan throws grenades at us. He wants to blow us out of our places of service. And he threw a mortar shell in Solomon's direction .....This sort of

## JOSHUA LED THE PEOPLE INTO THE LAND

When Joshua led the people of Israel into Canaan, they had no rest. They fought God's enemies on every side. When they overcame the enemy in one place, they had only a temporary rest from war.

If Joshua had been able to give God's people true rest, Israel would have had it in Canaan. But again and again, God spoke of another rest (Hebrews 4:8-9; Psalm 95:11; Jeremiah 6:6).

The land of Canaan, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8) was a picture of the believers' rest of faith. We enter the rest of faith and possess it by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. We don't stop fighting the enemy who attacks us at every turn, but we cease from our own labors and trust God for victory.

When we overcome Satan in Christ's name, we have Sabbath rest. We can enjoy this rest now and, later on, we will enjoy eternal 'rest' in heaven forever. God has "reserved" heaven's rest for every believer. It is ready and waiting for you when you leave this world (1 Peter 1:4 KJV).

**TALK ABOUT 1.** What was the "other rest" God spoke of (Heb 4:1)? **2.** Do you have God's rest in your spirit? **3.** Is it the same as the "peace" Jesus spoke of (John 14:27)? **4.** What do you understand by "a rest of faith?" Does this mean 'putting your feet up' and doing nothing?

## MAKE EVERY EFFORT

### Read: Numbers 14:13-35

The writer continued, "Let us make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11; Num 14:13-32).

The people of Israel did not obey God. They grumbled against God and against Moses, their leader. So God said, "They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die" (Numbers 14:35).

All that generation died and "blowing sand quickly covered their bodies."

We fall on the battlefield of our own wills? Adam's will vs. God's will brought disaster for Adam and Eve and for the whole human race.

Israel's will vs. God's will brought disaster to the nation of Israel. Our will vs. God's will brings a life of unhappiness. To be happy in Jesus, your will and my will must submit to God's will for us.

Yes, God has a will or plan for each one of us. No one else can do what God has planned for you to do. Paul told the Christians, "You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10).

## DON'T BE LIKE THEM

The rest-of-faith message is a warning not to be like the old generation of Israelites. They did not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief (Num 14:26-34; Heb 3:18-19).

Believers enter into God's rest by faith in Christ's finished work. They rest from their own works (Heb 4:10; Ps 46:10). We are often tempted to think our works make us worthy to stand before God. This is a big mistake. Instead, we must trust God to work in us every detail of His will and purpose and give Him space to do it (John 6:28-29).

### TALK ABOUT:

1. What was the Word that Israel heard and did not believe (Heb 4:1-2)?
2. What promise did God make to His people, Israel (Ex 23:10-17; Heb 4:1, 9)?
3. How did the people of Israel respond? (words used about their hearts, their words, their deeds).
4. Have you rested from your own works? (what about complaining; refusing, going the wrong way)?
5. Can we be at rest while working hard? What is "diligent labor?" Is this how to rest?
6. What does it mean to "make every effort" or "strive" to enter into God's rest (Heb 4:11)?
7. The heart full of faith tells the hand what to do and when to do it \_\_\_ True \_\_\_ false?
8. So the believer rests in faith and serves with actions at the same time \_\_\_ True – False (Luke 10:10-17)?
9. Who fell? Where did they fall? Why this judgment (Num 14:26-34)?

## HE WILL LEAD US INTO THE LAND

### Read: Numbers 14:8-9

"If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into the land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and He will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people..." (Num 14:8-9).

We who love the Lord with all hearts, rest in what Christ has done for us on the cross.

The Bible divides people into two groups and only two groups:

1. Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. They overcome every temptation and obstacle by trusting God and going forward in faith. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7).  
Joshua and Caleb are good examples of men who trusted God (Num 13:30-33).

glorious and it results in us being 'more than conquerors' through Christ (Rev 12:11).

## THE REST OF CONTENTMENT

### Read: Philippians 4:12

Paul wrote, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..." (Phil 4:12).

Paul had learned a great secret and he called being content "a secret." It is hard to find a person who is content in every and any situation. And when you find that person, you will see that they are resting in the power of the Holy Spirit and God's supply.

So Paul could say, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13).

Paul suggests that he is doing everything God tells him to do, and God gives him the strength to do it.

God will not ask you to do anything that is beyond your strength or ability. He gives the 'gifts' needed in the church and He gives the strength to carry out His will and purpose. He will give the enabling.

### TALK ABOUT

1. Why would Paul call being content a secret?
2. What did Paul mean by "I can do everything..."?
3. Is God asking you to do something special for Him?

## THEY SHARED PAUL'S HEARTACHES

The Christians at Philippi "shared in Paul's troubles" (Phil 4:14). We are not sure how that they this. In his next statement Paul said, "In the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel (while they were still new Christians), when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only..."

Paul had received a gift of money from the believers at Philippi. They gave out of their own need. Paul was not seeking money, but rather spiritual fruit which could be "credited to their account" in heaven (Phil 4:17).

These young believers had obeyed the Lord's command to help those who preached the gospel (1 Cor 9:14). So Paul could say to them, "My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).

This is the rest of contentment – receiving from the Lord all we need and giving back to the Lord all we are and have. This has nothing to do with the

## YOU CANNOT OVERCOME SATAN

You cannot overcome Satan in your own strength and wisdom. You cannot injure or harm him. He is a mighty spirit being, yet the God of peace and rest has crushed him for you (Hebrews 2:14-15). According to the promise God made to Adam and Eve in the garden You will “tread down” the enemy (Gen 3:15). Christ has overcome Satan for us. We accept His victory by faith (1 Cor 15:57).

But there is more; we “put on Christ” like a soldier puts on his body armor. We do this every day. No soldier would be dressed for battle until he had put on his full battle gear (Eph 6:10-12).

God will enable us to be 'more than conquerors' in this evil world. His strategy for moving His Kingdom forward in this world is not to conquer the evil systems, but to make His followers 'more than conquerors' in it...(Rom 8:31-37). This means living as a 'living sacrifices' in the world. Giving ourselves up to His will and to His victory every day.

There is a practical plan outlined for us in the New Testament (Gal 6:2). We confront evil by entering into the sufferings of those we help. We love them; we suffer with them. We act as supporters in their suffering. We bear them up before the Lord - we shoulder their needs with them; we overcome evil with good! To do this calls for 'living sacrifices' (John 20:21; 17:18; 1:29) .

## A LIVING SACRIFICE?

Paul wrote, “In view of god’s mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God –” (Rom 12:1). If you do this, what will happen to you? It will turn your life upside down. It will make you expendable. It will demand everything you have. The sacrifice, to be a sacrifice, must be consumed.

Taking up your cross for Jesus will mean suffering with and for others (Luke 9:23). We must get involved with those who are suffering unjustly - economic oppression; social oppression; religious oppression (1 Pet 2:19, 20; 1 Pet 2:23;3:14).

Our challenge in our own country is to overcome evil with good! (Is 58:6-132) If God’s Kingdom is to be advanced in this land, it will be through suffering (Col 1:24; Rev 1:9).

Suffering to overcome evil with good should be joyous! "If we see the extraordinary meaning of our suffering, that it parallels and continues Christ's suffering for the salvation of the world, then we understand why suffering became glorious for the early disciples (Act 5:41; 1 Pet 4:12-19).

It is the process through which the grace of God will reach more and more people for Christ.(2 Cor 4:11-18). The result of such a ministry is

2. Those who reject the gospel and trust in what they do to get them to heaven. In our Joshua example, the other ten spies represent this group. The spies’ fear of the enemy kept them from trusting God and going forward to possess the land. And their lack of faith spoiled it for all the others.

Christians rest in Christ’s finished work. We rest because the work of redeeming our souls has been completed. Christ spoke of this rest when He said, “Abide in Me and let My words abide in you” (John 15:7).

All the rest of spirit that you so long for is provided in Jesus Christ.

The Israelites said, “If the Lord is pleased with us....” Yes, He is pleased to accept you and me in His beloved Son. When He looks at us, frail though we are, He sees Jesus Christ and His great sacrifice on Calvary, and the Father is pleased with what He sees.

“He will lead us into the land....” He leads us by His Spirit into “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8). What does this mean to you? We cannot make ‘milk’ and we cannot make ‘honey’ but both sustain physical life. So we must conclude that the Promised Land is not a picture of heaven. It is the REST OF FAITH in the finished work of Christ.

## HE HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED

God has provided..... Everything we need (2 Peter 1:3).The milk of the word and the sweetness of the Spirit. He has provided for victory in our lives over all evil forces (1 Cor 15:57).

This Sabbath-rest is a foretaste of heaven. If you are saved and going to heaven when you die, that is good. But you still have all the years in between to live here on the earth. God grants these years to each of us for the purpose of fruit-bearing and service, years when He wants you to enjoy a rest-relationship with Him and grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18) and to move on in our Christian walk (Heb 6:1-8).

How do we achieve His purposes for us? We must cease from our own works and trust only in Him. It means letting Him do His work in you (Phil 2:12-13). This does not mean that we do nothing. We do good deeds (Titus 3:14). But we let God work the good deeds through us. We trust Him to show us His will and give us the power to obey.

We enjoy heaven’s rest now, in this life. True faith in His work sets us free from sin’s grip and gives us the will and power to please God.

We can be sure there is **NO** rest for the person who lives only for this world and the things of this world. Plenty of Christians are no further along in their walk of faith than that – they live for themselves.

## TALK ABOUT:

1. God sees only two kinds of people. Explain what they are?
2. Is there any rest for the person who lives for the thing of this world and not for the things of God?
3. The Sabbath rest is a foretaste of h.....?

## WHAT IS YOUR WORLD VIEW?

What is a "Neighborhood view?" What is your "world view?" A "friend of the world" is an enemy of God (Jas 4:4). A person with a me-me-me view works against God's plan for the world. He or she does not cooperate with God's Spirit. Every believer needs to know God's will for his or her life in relation to the whole world. When they know this, they can rest in His will for them.

Can you say, "I know why the Lord put me here! I know why the Lord has put my wife here!" ?

God's Spirit is a missionary spirit (Acts 13). God's view is a "world view." Jesus was a missionary and He sent missionaries out to every town and village where He Himself would go (Luke 9 and 10).

## IF YOU FOLLOW THE TERMS OF THIS COVENANT

### Read: Joshua 1:1-8

"Carefully follow the **terms** of this Covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do" (Deut 29:9). "Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night..." (Joshua 1:8).

In the Bible, loving God and receiving His blessing is always joined with keeping His commands. In the Old Testament every promise of blessing was joined with obeying the Lord's commands. Anyone who thinks that God made a covenant with the people of Israel that had no conditions needs to check the many times the word "if" is used in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Jesus taught that a Sabbath rest was made for man. The Sabbath was to be a special time for worship and service to God and mankind. Certainly God wanted His people to help the sick and care for their oxen on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17).

Jesus said love was greater than law. He told the Jews who listened to Him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind" (Matt 22:38), and you will do what is right. James called this "the royal law found in Scripture" (James 2:8).

A Sunday School class was discussing Luke 13:10-17. Some in the class had been raised in strict Christian homes. They were taught not to buy or sell on Sunday. Others thought this activity did not matter. Those who did not obey their conscience (or perhaps the Holy Spirit's prompting), felt guilty.

1. We all carry baggage from our past. Guilt and fear haunt us. We carry hurts and frustrations. They kill our Christian witness. But Jesus died to give us victory over our past.
2. We carry theological baggage. We may have a wrong perspective on our assurance of salvation or on how we should witness.

The disciples had not discarded this baggage. When Jesus was giving them spiritual food they asked, "Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6).

Jesus did not answer their question which was based on the teaching of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. He turned their eyes to the task at hand. They would receive the Holy Spirit and be His witnesses. They would carry forward the work He had been doing. It was the work of His Kingdom, a spiritual work.

3. Our spirits carry bruises. We went to Malta to visit a friend. She and my wife had been friends before we were married. This woman had been a missionary, but her spirit had been hurt by things that had happened to her. She carried this hurt for forty years and had stopped talking or smiling. There was no one who understood to talk to about her bruised spirit or sympathize - only we knew her past.

We talked; we prayed with her at every opportunity. But we knew that only God could give the victory.

Jesus said: "In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer (take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted)! For I have overcome the world. I have overcome the world. (I have deprived it of its power to harm you and have conquered it for you.)" (John 16:33 Amp Bible)

Victory is given to us - victory over all our past, victory over all our hang-ups - because Christ died (1 Cor 15:53). We can live as victors over sin, over bruises, over our own selfish wants and over Satan and all his temptations because Christ took them to the cross.

Satan throws grenades at us. He wants to blow us out of our fox holes. If we don't put off all the old ways and don't deal with all the old hurts (Eph 4:22-30), he quickly gains a foothold. He deceives and destroys our witness. Jesus said Satan is a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Don't listen to him.

## TALK ABOUT

1. Who did God send before Israel as they went up to Canaan (Exodus 23:20-30)?
2. Could any 'Angel' forgive sin?

## TALK ABOUT

1. Is there constant rest for the people of God?
2. Does Satan take away your rest?
3. Do you feel that Satan is attacking you; that you are fighting him off all the time?
4. The Bible gives us the answer (Eph 6:10-12).

## GOD'S PROTECTION WAS GONE

God's protection was taken from them, when they did not obey His commands and when they let down their guard. God sent Zechariah to the Israel after they returned from Babylon. He used two staffs to show God's displeasure with them. He broke the staff called "Favour," "revoking the covenant He (God) had made with all the nations" (Zech 11:10).

## GOD'S COVENANT WAS HIS PROMISE

God's covenant was the promise of His protection. He told Moses, "My Angel will go before you and bring you into the land" – of rest. But God warned the people: "Do not rebel against Him; He will not forgive your rebellion, since My Name is in Him" (Exodus 23:20-30).

The promise is clear: "I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you." And there are many other promises: "No weapon that is forged against there shall prosper..." (Isa 54:17 KJV).

And: "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today" (Ex 14:14).

## TALK ABOUT

1. Did the man with the withered hand find rest? How?
2. "In quietness and trust is your strength" (Isaiah 30:15). How can a servant find quietness?
3. Do you 'wait on the Lord'? How do you find quiet?
4. Can we serve and rest without first worshipping God?

## VICTORY BRINGS REST

### Read: Romans 16:20

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). The REST OF FAITH wins over all our circumstances.

Many Christians don't experience the triumph of faith in their lives. This could also be called "spirit rest." Our spirits have rest as we find our center of worship and service in Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Why don't true Christians have spirit rest?

## TALK ABOUT

1. God writes His greater "law of love" on believer's hearts by the Holy Spirit (Jer 33:31; 2 Cor 3:3).
2. Did the New Covenant of love embrace and replace the ritual of priest and sacrifice, of feast days and offerings required under the Law?
3. After Jesus sealed the New Covenant, was there any more need to question what to eat and what not to eat (Acts 10:9-16).

## NO REST IN THE WILDERNESS

The people of Israel toiled and struggled in the wilderness and had no rest. People struggle in the wilderness of sin today. They have no peace or rest. God's Word comes to them as it did to the Israelites (Deut 1:3). They hear the gospel, but the 'gospel' they hear is "of no value to them." Why? Because it is not mixed with faith in their hearts (Heb 4:2).

God's love for the people of Israel (or for you) has not changed, nor has His promises. The problem is our cold hearts. Because they did not desire nor receive what God promised to give them, He said they would not get it. God spoke hard words against them (Psalm 95:11). He said, "They shall never enter My rest" (Heb 3:11; 4:3b).

"Now we who have believed enter the (God's) rest" (Heb 4:3). We who have believed the gospel, must go on in faith to enjoy its promised rest. We must stop trusting in our own works and trust only in Christ's finished work (John 15:5).

Christ is the end of the Sabbath-keeping law for all who believe. Paul told the believers at Colosse, "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to religious festival (feasts), a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16-17).

Sabbath-rest is found only in Christ. It is not a matter of keeping a day of the week or a special time for worship, it is a way of life and worship. Paul told the believers at Rome to keep every day holy (Rom 14:8). Worship the Lord every day as if it was the last day you have on this earth.

## THE TERMS OF GOD'S COVENANT

Does God promise Sabbath-rest to us now? He assures every believer: "You have everything when you have Christ" (Col 2:10 TLB). All the promises of God are fulfilled in Him. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20).

The Jews fasted and kept special feasts. By doing this, they thought to gain points with God. What did God say to them (Isaiah 58)?

Paul said these things were an outward show. Under the Old Covenant God demanded law-keeping. But Christ had died. He fulfilled the law and signed a New Covenant with His own blood (Luke 22:20). The Old Covenant was put away and a new order took its place (Heb 8:13).

Now God accepts the man who has faith in Christ's death and resurrection. God seeks a heart made pure by the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:9).

### TALK ABOUT

1. Christians can live in the 'promised land' right now \_\_\_ True \_\_\_ False? Explain.
2. How can 'slaves to sin' be set free?
3. Our sins do not hurt others \_\_\_ True \_\_\_ False? Explain.
4. How can we rest in Christ's finished work and do good deeds at the same time?
5. Why is it important that we do good deeds (James 2:14-17)? What might these be?
6. Name some small works of faith and some large works of faith.
- 7.

## FREE TO REST

### Read: Matthew 1:28

Jesus said, "Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon You and lean from Me..... and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 1:28).

Jesus was speaking to a generation who had rejected John's message and they were rejecting Christ's message also. John's generation was as barren and lifeless as the wilderness of Sin (Num 33:11-12).

He asked the question, "To what can I compare this generation?"

Jesus said they were like children sitting in the market place and calling out to other (children): "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking (fasting) and they said, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man (Jesus) came eating and drinking, and they said, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard...' But wisdom is proved right by her actions"(Matt 11:16-19).

Nothing pleased the Pharisees and nothing will please the person who is smug and self-satisfied, who basks in his or her own wisdom. Such persons are like sulky children who refuse to play.

The parable points us to several truths:

1. God uses many different means and methods to bring us to salvation. He desires that every person be saved (2 Peter 3:9,15). He brings the music

## THE VALUE OF A MAN

The man with the withered hand stood before them (Matt 12:11-14). The Pharisees waited to see what Jesus would do. Jesus answered these stone-hearted men, "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep" (Matt 12:12)?

Then Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out your hand." When he obeyed the Lord's command, the man's hand was healed.

"But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus." They discussed this with the Herodians, those Jews who supported Herod Antipas and his regime (Mark 3:6).

They wanted to kill the Servant of men. Did they see no value in "the works of God?"

## GOD GAVE ISRAEL REST

### Read: 1 Kings 4:25

"The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as He has sworn to their forefathers" (Josh 21:44). "(They) lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25).

God promised, "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isa 32:18). This 'rest' means the freedom to carry on our daily pursuits without being molested.

God kept His promise and gave the men of Israel rest from fighting their enemies. This means they were free to carry on their chosen occupation without being attacked by the Canaanites. The land was at rest and they were at rest. This is a picture of the believer abiding in Christ.

Rest in this setting is a state of well-being and prosperity. While Israel obeyed the Lord God, He protected them and gave them rest from war. When they turned their backs on the God of their fathers "and turned to ways even more corrupt," God allowed their enemies to take away their rest (Judges 2:17-23).

In His great prayer for His people, Jesus set down the parameters for this rest when He prayed: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name... while I was with them I protected them and kept them safe..." (John 17:11-12).

Satan is alive and well! Peter said, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

We can enjoy rest from this 'war' with Satan as we claim the blood of Jesus to cover us and His name as our authority. You cannot do this too often!

## THE SERVANT REST

### Read: Matthew 12:18-21

"Here is My Servant (Jesus Christ) whom I have chosen....In His name the nations will put their trust" (Matt 12:18, 21). "Submit yourselves then to God...." (James 4:7)

Here is the Sabbath rest expressed in service to man and to God. Witness and service go hand in hand (Stephen in Acts 6:1-11).

Jesus came as the Servant promised by the prophets long years before (Isa 42:1-4). He came to serve the Father and mankind in a way no one had ever done before.

On the Sabbath day, He came into their synagogue. It was not His synagogue, but the people's; Jews who spoke against Him. He went to the synagogue to worship and to work His healing grace in the lives of the worshippers.

A man with a shriveled hand was there, and so were the accusing eyes of the Pharisees. Before Jesus could say or do anything they asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath" (Matt 12:10)?

The Pharisees knew that Jesus had the power to heal the man, but would He break the Sabbath Law to do it?

Jesus had two choices: To not cure the man and fail to act in His Servant role, or to heal the man and do 'work ' on the Sabbath. So He asked them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not...lift it out? Which is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill" (Mark 3:4)?

The Law of the Sabbath was in the hands of Jesus. He could change it and apply it in terms of the New Covenant. He had all authority in heaven and on earth to move from the Law of Moses to God's law of love. This, He said, was the ONLY law that mattered (Matt 22:34-40). "Love the Lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

### TALK ABOUT

1. Which is more important, service to God or service to man?
2. What was the commission Jesus received from the Father (Phil 2:6-11)?
3. What is expected of a Servant (Luke 17:7-10)?
4. Is there any Sabbath rest in this story?

of gospel blessings to our ears, as Jesus did. He sounds the curses and judgments of the law, as in John did in his ministry.

John came mourning and fasting for his people, Israel. They saw that John was a prophet sent from God (Mal 4:5-6). "His clothes were made of camel's hair...His food was locusts and wild honey..." (Matt 3:4). Surely this would soften their hearts and cause them to respond.

Jesus came mixing with the common men of Galilee, so that the Pharisees said, "He eats with sinners" (. He spoke openly to all kinds of people, even to the "Gentile dogs."

Or who would have thought that those who shunned John's stern words would be won by Christ gentle ways? As He said of Himself, "I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:28).

There will be a great diversity of operations, but it is the same God that uses all to His glory (1 Cor 12:6). Some of God's servants are "sons of thunder," some are meek like Moses. It is the same Holy spirit that works through all of them (1 Cor 12:11).

2. God uses many means and methods to save men and women, but much is fruitless. The 'children' do not dance and they refuse to mourn. In their hearts, they were not turned on. Jesus show this in the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:11-15). Men's hearts are hard toward God. This is not the fault of the messenger or of some deficiency in the (truncated?) message they bear.

People's hearts are not stirred by the sweetness of the gospel, nor by the tragic end of those who reject God. As Matthew Henry wrote, "If they will not hearken to the voice of Scripture, nor reason, nor experience, nor providence, nor conscience, nor interest, what more can be done?"

3. Those who do not receive God's grace are rebels. They speak against God's truth and persuade other not to believe. They are like children who have been bullied or kept out of a game. They are angry, rude and they try to turn public opinion against God's servant.

Of John the Baptist they said, "He has a demon." Because of his stern look and bold words, they thought of him as a Satan or an adversary. John was one to be attacked and put out of the way.

4. The gospel is maligned and its messengers abused, but there is always a remnant of people who have faith. They enjoy uninterrupted rest in fellowship with the Father and the Son, in contrast with the weekly rest under the Law.4-15).
5. The Pharisees added 'burden's that weighed heavily on the people. Jesus used -*anapausis* – indicating freedom from the burden of rules imposed on the people by the Pharisees.

Christ, the Wisdom of God, is justified of His children (Matt 11:19 KJV; 1 Cor 2:14-15). Those who have God's wisdom justify wisdom; they judge fairly. They respond to the grace offered to them in Christ.

Children of Wisdom gladly take Christ's yoke and learn from Him. They learn to shift the burden from their own shoulders to His. They learn that they don't have to carry their burdens alone.

- they do not carry the burdens of life alone.
- they share the burdens with Jesus. Let Him bear your burdens with you.
- they share their burdens with others; bearing another's burden, so that they can have rest
- they share the burden of prayer requests – how reluctant we are to ask for ourselves!
- they divide the burden among many prayer partners – reporting what God has done
- they rest in the service of the Lord God and are blessed

## TALK ABOUT

1. "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16). Why did the people who came out of Egypt fail to enter the promised land?
2. How should we treat a "weaker brother" (Rom 14)?
3. Did the Israelites have the same opportunity to trust God that we have?
4. What did Paul say about those who judge others for keeping Sabbaths (Col 2:16-17)

## A SABBATH REST

### Read: Matthew 12:7-12

Sabbath rest is not a rest **from** work, but a rest while we work. Rather than offering rest, the Pharisees were increasing the burden of rules and traditions which took away man's Sabbath rest.

Jesus quoted words from the Old Testament: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice...therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt 12:7, 12).

On the Sabbath, man pauses from doing his own work to do the work of God. This is the true meaning of "Sabbath rest." That meaning is illustrated by our Lord in the next two incidents:

The Sabbath rest addresses not only the needs of the 'soul,' but the whole man. In two events, Jesus demonstrated a holistic ministry.

On a Jewish Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a field of standing wheat or barley. "His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain, rub the husks off in their hands and eat the grain" (Matt 12:1-8). We suppose that Jesus did the same.

The Pharisees saw Jesus' disciples do this and they complained to Jesus: "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

The Law of Moses permitted a hungry traveler to pick heads of grain and eat them on the Sabbath if he only used his hands to do this and not a sickle (Deut 23:25). The Pharisees had added their own 'laws' of do and don't to God's Law.

Jesus turned to the Pharisees and said, "Haven't you read what David did when his companions were hungry? He and his companions entered the House of God (the tabernacle) and ate the consecrated bread – "the bread of the Presence" (Ex 35:13) which was not lawful for them to do..." (1 Sam 21:1-6).

The Shew Bread was 'holy' and only to be eaten by the priests.

In the case of physical need, the High Priest gave consecrated bread to David's hungry warriors. Jesus did not condemn the act. Further, Jesus referred them to the priests who ministered in the temple on the Sabbath. They carried out their duties on the Sabbath as they did on any other day. They were not breaking the law of the Sabbath, but fulfilling the law of service.

Jesus said that sustaining life and serving God were two duties that bypassed the Sabbath law. The Sabbath rest was required under the law to promote, not to hinder Sabbath worship.

The writer of Hebrews used the Greek word *sabbatismos* (Heb 4:4). This rest is enjoyed by believers who have an uninterrupted fellowship and communion with the Father – possible in part now, but reaching its full fruition in the future.

The serving priests were a picture of all believers. God said He wanted all the people of Israel to be "a holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests," to worship and rest at the same time (Ex 19:8).

Note that God wants His priests to worship (Heb 13:15). And to do "deeds of mercy." Not deeds of valor or distinction! Our deeds witness to God's love in our hearts.

## TALK ABOUT

1. What did Jesus say to the Pharisees about keeping the Sabbath (Luke 10:13-17)?
2. What two things go together in God's economy?
3. Does it matter to God how we worship? How we serve?
4. What does the Shew bread symbol teach – who ate it?
5. Why did the bread of the Presence have to be replaced with fresh bread every week?
6. What is an appropriate service for laymen on the day of worship?