

The Law of Rest

by
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The Law of Rest

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SPECIAL NOTICE

The covenant name of God in the Hebrew language is Yahweh, translated by many Bible scholars as "the LORD." Because Lord is a title and not a name, and because much is made by God concerning the use of His "name," this work will use God's proper name "Yahweh" where the English versions use "the LORD." I would be interested to hear how you feel as you read these verses and encounter the name of Yahweh, the All-powerful, covenant making God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Please let me know at the address above.

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INTRODUCTION

SPIRITUAL LAWS FOR ABUNDANCE

The word "law" has many meanings. Originally, it meant "to lay down," as in our expression "lay down the law." In this material I'm not using the word law in the sense of courts of law, but rather in the more observable sense of cause and effect. The law of sowing and reaping is predictable. You will reap what you sow. The physical world operates by laws, and so does the spiritual realm.

Many physical laws are not seen, but are observed as they operate. Take the law of gravity. It is always in operation, but you do not see a big sign flashing saying "I'm the law of gravity; I'm operating right now." We may be sitting calmly at a table enjoying a casual cup of coffee the whole time the law of gravity is keeping the coffee in our cup! If we drink in such a way as to arouse the law of gravity, the unseen force, always on duty, causes the coffee to saturate our clothes.

In space, scientists are doing many experiments with weightlessness. Gravity's force is so diminished that things float around the spacecraft, including the astronauts. Gravity is still operating sufficiently enough to keep the craft in an orbit pattern, but not enough to influence most of the lifestyle of the craft's occupants.

Natural man has a hard time accepting the fact that God, the Creator of the universe, has put certain unseen spiritual laws in place. These laws could be called righteousness. They are the standards for maintaining a right relationship with the Lord as well as with others in our society. For instance, we may hear a person say, "If you're going to treat me that way, I'm out of here!" A slave may have to comply with certain outward laws laid down by their master, but if there is to be a quality master/slave relationship, certain expectations must be met by both parties involved.

Couples that are having troubles in their relationship are usually fuzzy about what the unseen and unspoken "laws of success" are for their relationship. They may not be able to clearly spell out the "laws," but they innately know when their partner is breaking them. Marriage counseling, therefore, has as its goal, to clarify mutually acceptable rules for the relationship, and to gain cooperation by both parties to enforce the rules.

Organizations have laws or rules that govern the relationships of its members. To be a "righteous" member, is to cooperate fully with the organization's goals and policies. Breaking the specified and the assumed ordinances will have different consequences. At some degree, you can get kicked out for violation of the group's standards. At other times you may be shunned.

Our relationship with our Creator is very similar. Although most of His rules are spelled out, some are assumed. And, as in all relationships, there are always two sides to every relationship. It may cost a person the sentence of hell, but they have the freedom to refuse having a relationship with God if He does not meet their expectations.

Righteousness or right relationship is like the law of gravity in that the further mankind gets away from God, the seemingly less effect His laws of righteousness have on their life. The greater the distance a spacecraft gets away from the earth, the less pull earth's gravity has on it. But as the astronauts have a price to pay when they return to gravity-governed terra firma (loss of bone and muscle mass), so the person who pulls away from God will have a price to pay at the Judgement-seat of Christ. There are simple lifestyle functions that can exasperate astronauts and necessitate scientists spending much time and money to compensate for because gravity is weak. My belief is that the human race is spending huge amounts of time, energy and money, trying to compensate for being too far removed from God. A poor relationship with the Lord (little righteousness) extracts a tremendous price, and all because we humans are either ignorantly or belligerently neglecting God's standards. When we are not willing to cooperate with our side of the responsibilities, the entire relationship suffers—just as in all fellowships!

Spiritual laws are always in operation and the only way we can optimize our life and maximize our eternal rewards is in keeping them, by faith. When we walk in right relationship with our Creator, His laws produce great abundance. When we go crosswise with His laws of righteousness, either knowingly or ignorantly, we quickly discover that life can be harder than it needs to be!

The spiritual law of rest was designed by God to develop our dependency on Him, and the side effect was to promote health and greater personal success. Ignorance and neglect of the law of rest results in pride, stress and a life of strife. When God commanded His kids to take off every seventh day, some were afraid they wouldn't make enough money. As they kept working hard, they ended up cutting their life short, and someone else got to enjoy the rewards of their hard work (see Ecclesiastes 2:18,19).

Let me hasten to say, this writing is not intended to take believers back under Old Testament Law. Jesus is our Sabbath Rest! All of the Old Testament was written to point us toward the One who would fulfill **all** of the Law. This is not a treatise concerning days of the week.

What I hope will happen to us as we go through this material is that we will gain a deeper respect for God's Word, and when He tells us to do something, we will not challenge Him, but comply and be blessed. We don't have to understand why His laws work in order to be blessed by them any more than we have to understand how the TV works to enjoy it! But as in human relationships, if things aren't going as we'd like, it's time to do some investigating work and take appropriate steps for improvement.

Spiritual laws always work. They are either the force that enables us to enjoy life and please our Heavenly Father, or they are like a destructive enemy hounding our every step. The devil gets blamed for some of the stuff that can be traced back to our own transgression of God's laws of righteousness. For sure, our adversary was no doubt the snake prodding us to take the forbidden apple, but when we know better, we can't hide behind his slimy carcass! We have a clear warning to not give him any opportunity (Ephesians 4:27). To walk in abundance, we must stop blame-shifting to "his ugliness" and quickly resist all hazardous input, taking every thought captive to Christ, and immediately refocusing on Jesus. The abundant life results from walking in right relationship with Jesus, not in bogging down in demonic wrestling matches.

If we fail to discern the devil's temptation thoughts and end up beating on our self or others, we will be a dismal failure in life. Equally true is the fact that if we spend too much time resisting the devil and fail to go on to "drawing near to God" (James 4:7,8) we will likewise end up in a pile, exhausted and exasperated. When Jesus said we could avoid temptation by "watching and praying" (Matthew 26:41), He was giving us the easy way to walk in continual spiritual abundance. We don't have to be devil-minded to walk in victory—just seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). Spiritual prosperity comes from enjoying the mind of Christ! Finding out how God designed His kingdom to operate becomes, therefore, much more than religious rigmarole. Exciting, abundant life is the reward!

When you see people apparently "floating" away from the consequences of breaking God's righteous standards, remember the astronauts. If the erring ones do not draw closer to the Source of righteousness, they will waste away in space. The

Bible is very clear that the scales will be balanced one day. Every flesh counterfeit will be justly compensated. The hiding place of scoundrels will be exposed, the guilty will be punished, while the righteous will shine forth as a bright light. The misunderstood will finally be exonerated. God-lovers who were mocked by earth's society will be compensated beyond measure.

Flesh-worshippers may ridicule the thought that there is a day of reckoning coming, but listen to them as they hug trees and decry the impending doom for "mother earth" because of the rape of the planet. They believe a day of reckoning is coming! Even mobsters hold "get even" over those who might dare think of crossing them. Everyone knows that there are consequences to our actions. Try as we may, mankind has not been able to successfully escape the gravity of the knowledge of some of God's righteous laws, i.e., the law of sowing and reaping!

As we look in particular at God's law of rest, keep in mind that His intention with this law is to bless you, not to make you miserable. In choosing to go His way, we reveal the kind of stuff we are made of. Our life, therefore, becomes part of the evidence by which we are judged (Romans 2:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11). Our right relationship with the Lord becomes both our source of enjoyment for life as well as our confidence in the day of judgement!

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6

CHAPTER ONE

THE LAW OF REST

As the Bible begins, we see the Almighty God busy at work creating the universe. The limitless reaches of space, speckled with planets and stars, were little challenge to the massive genius and ability of our Awesome God. His Word, traveling much faster than the speed of light—the speed of thought—brought from the fathomless dimensions of the spirit world, three simple dimensions: height, depth and width.

Surrounded by the world of the spirit, our universe was a piece of cake for our Heavenly Father to design and develop. We could say of the physical realm, as of a fish swimming in an aquarium, *in Him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). God created quickly. The vast regions of space were filled with His presence, so all He had to do was to manifest His power at each place where He wanted a star or a planet.

After taking six days to create our physical universe (He could have done it even faster), Yahweh rested from His work. As you read the Genesis account, notice what is missing:

*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed **His work** which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all **His work** which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all **His work** which God had created and made.*
Genesis 2:1-3

If this account was describing something a human accomplished, the record would include groans of soreness after such an outlay of energy. God was not tired, He merely completed the task.

*c Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth **does not become weary or tired.** His understanding is inscrutable (Isaiah 40:28).*

Yahweh did not stop working, He only stopped doing "His work" [notice above, it's used three times in Genesis 2:1-3, bold added]. Jesus made it clear that His Father has always been working: *But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working (John 5:17).*

God had to continue to hold everything together that He had made (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17). He was always working, **but after six days of doing His own thing, He became Adam's God.** Yahweh, the all powerful creator, began doing things for someone else.

This becomes the definition of Sabbath rest: **ministering to someone else.**

God finished doing "His work" and began working on our behalf! This was God's first name change: from "I AM" to "I AM, the God of Adam." He told Moses what His covenant name was:

And God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations." Exodus 3:15

Parents can identify with this shift of focus. They want to have a baby—their baby! After considerable time and expense, "their" baby comes into the world, and suddenly they become "Junior's parents." Their entire lifestyle shifts and begins to revolve around the new kid on the block. They rest from doing their deeds, and after a fashion, become the servants of the newest member of the family. Similarly, Jesus said He came to serve, not to be served!

Please do not misunderstand what the Word is saying about God. He is all-powerful and completely sovereign. We don't tell Him what to do, nor do we throw orders at Him. We are to fear Him and respect Him in all dignity. We are His servants, not He ours. But, some have only worshiped this awesome God from a distance. They have never come to know Him as "their" Father. Jesus told us that the proper way to pray was to start with the words, "Our Father which art in heaven..." Prayer is not telling God what He'd better do—it's asking! The definition of rest, as

the Scriptures above reveal, is that which takes place when God answers our prayers! For us to enter His rest is to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1) and answer His requests!

I can hear someone saying, "Wait just a minute. Everything I do is for someone else, and I feel far from rested." The kind of rest Genesis is talking about is not that which comes at 5:00 p.m. quitting time. The Jews observed the Sabbath rest by not working on Saturday. The Scriptures, however, say that they didn't enter into God's promised rest (Hebrews 4:8-11). Therefore, there must be something more to this kind of rest.

The power in the law of rest is that when we do what we do out of love and devotion for our Heavenly Father, we walk in "His rest." This is what Isaiah was describing using the term "waiting" on Yahweh:

But they that wait upon Yahweh, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:31 KJV

Notice how the true servant of God supposedly can be very active, yet tireless. They fly, run, and walk and are not dominated by the physical law of exhaustion from work. You may say that this promise is spiritual and not necessarily physical. I wholeheartedly agree. Herein lies the hidden secret to power and continual renewal.

God is a spirit, therefore, a spirit-being created our physical universe. We are tempted to think that the spiritual realm is weak and unable to really make a difference in our lives. I've heard many lonely people say, "I know God loves me, but I need physical arms to hold me." What is the implication? Spiritual arms can't do what physical arms can do. If we see the spiritual realm as just a religious dimension, we will place our emphasis on the physical realm. We will work in the flesh and find exhaustion is the result. This is why God told man to rest every seventh day. The expenditure of physical energy has as a byproduct weariness and exhaustion, but not so with the spiritual realm.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. John 6:63

The spirit realm made our three dimensions and holds this world together. God's source of energy is life. God, a spirit, makes what we see out of that which is invisible (Hebrews 11:3). This process of creating is not an increase of God's energy demands, but a stepping down, from higher to lower. An example could be seen if you compared the heartbeat rate of an out-of-shape person, just getting up from their easy chair, going to raid the refrigerator, with that of a seasoned marathon runner

doing a casual jog to warm up. What's a big deal to us doesn't even raise God's temperature!

When we do our many activities for our Heavenly Father, we are spiritually renewed. The power of the Spirit is to be the source for our physical renewal. Our physical bodies depend more on spiritual and mental renewal than they do on three-dimensional substance. Ponder these verses:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:6

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. Romans 8:11

The King James Version renders the word "life" as "quicken." It is the Holy Spirit's job to give our physical bodies life and energy (quicken) when our spirits make faith withdrawals from His limitless account. The lump of clay God first formed became a living human being when the Breath or Spirit of God entered it. The physical elements are just physical elements until God manifests His Spirit within them! Then there is life!

Rest and renewal, as well as creative force, come from the Spirit of God and He gives us this power as we wait on (serve) Him. When we stop doing our thing and do God's thing, the Holy Spirit pours rest and vitality on us. We can literally run and not be tired. His anointing flows through us, and He is the one doing the work. Or, in keeping with an earlier comparison, as we get into the spirit realm, God's arms become more real than physical arms. His spirit arms create physical manifestations. He quickens us. He heals our physical bodies. His hugs are continual; flesh and blood hugs must stop if we are to go about our business.

Our minds can be influenced by either the spirit kingdom or the physical kingdom, and God's demonstration in our mental realm is as "real" as manifestations in our physical bodies. For example, fear, a mental response, can paralyze our physical being and even stop our physical heart! If fear can do this, why not rest and refreshment?

Ministering for the Lord "under the anointing" produces a surge of energy and power that probably includes adrenalin hormones. The frail, human messenger can pray long and hard, loose, cast out, heal, and the time passes quickly. When the time of ministry ends, fatigue quickly enters. Why? Probably because the focus shifts

from "ministering" for others to, "Wow! Wasn't it great to be used to do..." Focus on the physical triggers fatigue.

One of our biggest tests will be to depend on God for this rest and renewal by doing what He says rather than hustle our way through life, grabbing the apples of temptation, hoping for a short trip to stardom (remember Eve's temptation). The flesh cries out "work harder and you will succeed." God's Word says...

Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5,6

"Straight paths" is another way to say that God will make your work easier. God is not asking us to be lazy, but to have as our main, driving purpose in life to please Him—first! This must be the foundation underlying every expenditure of our energy. Survival says "me first", and it produces death. When we purpose to seek God's kingdom first, even at the risk of death, we find life! The law of rest is working behind the scenes.

The law of sowing and reaping is perhaps the best known of all spiritual laws. Its power is undisputed. We know "what goes around, comes around." Look at the farmer sowing his seed. He gives the seed to the ground instead of eating it. He chances investing it in the hope of a bountiful return. Today's need is sacrificed for tomorrow's gain. Tie this into the law of rest. The farmer does what will bring out the potential in the seed. His first concern is to do what will maximize the seed. This may entail physical labor, but as he plants, the actual work takes place underground, hidden from the eyes. He rests, the seed does its work, and the result is a hundredfold return on his investment. All the sweating in the world could not have squeezed more seed out of the one seed, but allowed to do its thing, the seed, with minimal labor from the farmer, reproduces. I'm not saying farming is easy work, but the point is that the seed does what the farmer can't do directly.

The law of rest is tied to faith. If we believe that God has our best in mind, we can give our energies to helping others instead of being paranoid about getting our fair share in life. Let's see if we can show how this works out practically. Little Barry the Brat is always trying to get his own way. He is forever on the alert because someone may have something that he wants, or someone may be messing with his toys. He is exhausted at night because it's tough work keeping a vigilant eye open all day lest people rip you off. Some pushy authority figure may try to get him to do something he doesn't want to do, which would be disastrous. Every directive mommy puts forth is challenged to sift out the hidden innuendos that are there to trap him,

steal his valuable energy, and make him miserable. Enjoying life is hard work. Especially because he is the only one qualified to determine what is enjoyable.

Opposite this is Terry the truster. He is so convinced that God has his best in mind that he can relax all the time. He knows that whatever comes into his life, God will turn it into a blessing. People can't rip him off because everything he has is at God's disposal. God gave him what he has and God can give him much more. He depends upon spiritual resources that are limitless and require faith-currency, not fleshly sweat-funds. What continual rest! This attitude is faith in action. Terry's favorite verse is: *Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth* (Psalm 46:10).

Both Barry and Terry expend a lot of energy during the day. A peek inside their minds reveals one mentally exhausted brat and one rested saint. What makes the difference? One lived a rested life, trusting God by faith, seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that everything he truly needed would be added to him. The other was tormented continually by the possibility that things just might get out of his control. His pain was intensified by the enemy's lies that taunted him into expending much effort to try to escape pain. Crazy!

One reached down into his physical reserves to squeeze out the last drop of energy; the other floated amid the stream of God's all powerful grace, resting while he worked! *Yahweh will fight for you while you keep silent* (Exodus 14:14).

CHAPTER TWO

WORKING AT RESTING

We know when we're uptight, and it's even easier to tell when people around us need to "chill out!" We're hammered enough by the health professionals about managing stress, so how do we learn to rest in the Lord? How do we let go and let God? It must not be very simple, for if it were, there would be fewer stress-related problems today.

REST BEGINS WITH TRUST

How easy would it be to get a good night's rest if you were camping, had just your sleeping bag for a bed, and you heard reports of wild bears attacking campers nearby? Add to this a tick epidemic, resulting in Rocky Mountain fever? Toss in creepy, crawly things. What kind of rest do you think you would enjoy? Contrast this itchy picture with being snuggled in your clean bed at home. Fresh sheets, no bugs, and a safe house. The difference is that you trust the protection afforded by your home.

To go a bit further, let's say your night camping goes just fine without any incident or attack by predators. Contrariwise, the safe night's sleep at home turns into disaster with an unexpected thunder storm that blows off your roof and fills your bedroom with water. Standing back and comparing the two outcomes, the end result of a safe night camping was not enjoyed en route. You were unable to trust yourself to let go and enjoy your rest. And the rest you started to get in your own bed was sweet until the trust was found to be misplaced.

We won't be able to let go and let God unless we trust Him. We won't be able to trust Him if we don't believe that He has our best in mind. Our trust in God will be quickly shattered...

! If we draw conclusions from circumstances that do not "appear" to be for our best [even though God has promised to work all things together for our good!];

! If we ponder the devil's lies about God, our future and the motives of others [he will make a big deal over small upsets that God will later turn for our good].

Because He has promised, God will work everything together for our good, but we won't enjoy our rest until we see "daybreak"—too late!

Jesus had ultimate confidence in Father God. He knew His path would have a cross in it, but He looked past the pain and shame to the joy God designed for Him (Hebrews 12:2). This trust gave Him peace when religious leaders threatened His safety. When thoughts of embarrassing His earthly family bombarded His mind, He turned His focus heavenward. We can enjoy the same rest and peace Jesus had if we adopt the same attitude of trust and faith in our Heavenly Father. It's ours for a change in our focus!

If the illustration of the camper included another saint nearby, but that totally trusted in Jesus, there would be two safe campers in the morning, but one would be rested and the other would be an exhausted grouch—after "sleeping" all night!

How do we develop this attitude of trust? Do we have to wait until God has taken everything in our life and worked it together for our good? That will be too late. If we wait to have faith until we have the evidence, we're really not in faith at all. Plus, we've had to white-knuckle our way through life. The end evaluation of life will prove that God indeed has been in control, but the big question I'm concerned with right now is, will you get to enjoy living a rested life? Or, will stress make you old before your time?

FAITH BUILDING

The logical way to enjoy God's rest and refreshment as we work our way through life is by **developing** our faith and trust in God. We can increase our faith by filling our mind with words of faith (Romans 10:17). Memorize faith-building Scriptures, and repeat them to yourself frequently during the day. When you're jogging, chant your verses in time to your pace. When you're showering, sing your verses (everybody sings in the shower, don't they?). Driving the car by yourself can be a great time to say your faith-building verses out loud without reprisal. Not only does the Word of God build faith, but this repetition will also keep your mind from wandering to places where it shouldn't go!

Our inner faith reserves can compound daily if we chase away the enemy's faith-killing input. He wants to steal our rest by placing doubts in our mind. He'll point out our many failures, but conveniently forget to tell us of God's river of forgiveness and

mercy. Thoughts that God may be too busy to bother with our puny needs are one of his favorites. If he can't sidetrack us into beating on ourselves or maligning God, he will try the tabloid trick of tattling on others. Each of his schemes are designed to make us distrust everybody and everything. No trust, no peace. No peace, no rest.

Prayer is another trust building, faith enhancer. Consistent, effectual prayer produces results. We can rest assured that God will provide for our every need as we look back on miles of answered prayers. We know that not every prayer will get a favorable answer, but every victory will quench a dozen of the devil's lies. Reflect on how much mileage the Psalmists got out of God splitting the Red Sea! We can get a lot of trust and rest out of one answered prayer.

RESTFUL WORK

Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." John 5:19

Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me." John 8:28

I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father. John 8:38

If the law of rest is that we will be renewed as we do the Father's will, then Jesus lived in perfect rest, because He always sought to please the Father. He was able to do this because He trusted God rather than circumstances. His mind was ruled by the promises of God. Our's can be too! It will take work and the fight of faith, but the results will be far greater than any effort it takes. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience, experience; and experience, hope* (Romans 5:3,4)—we can build experience that results in trust!

DEVIL FISHIN'

Have you ever thought of the devil as a fisherman? He puts juicy worms on his hook and dangles the bait in front of us. If we're not smart enough (that's why fish live in schools), we will make our responses to his bait without the advantage of knowing there's a line with a fisherman attached. We might be like some fish I've tried to coax to take my bait—just nibble and never bite.

What does a fisherman do when the fish are not hungry? He tries to make them mad. Some lures are designed to aggravate the unsuspecting fish so that they will strike the gizmo in a rage. Paul the Apostle, talking about anger, told us to not give the devil an opportunity (Ephesians 4:27). If the enemy can't get us to trust his worms of temptations, he'll try anger. He also uses fear, but I couldn't think of how to work that in with the example of fishing.

James gives us a great way to yield to God's love and at the same time resist devil-bait.

*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your
hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
James 4:7,8

Jesus did this when He was tempted by the devil. He answered every temptation with God's Word! When the test was completed, He ran the devil off. In the Garden, Jesus knew the pain that lay ahead. It was a great temptation to take matters into His own hands. Yes, He was tempted, which is not a sin, but He yielded up everything to His Father. *"Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done."*

Here you are, minding your own business, when all of a sudden a twinge of pain catches your attention. How should you respond if you are walking in the law of rest? Before you know it, a thought comes into your mind... "Maybe I've got a kidney stone, just like dad. I'm told they run in the family." With such a thought in your mind, are you enjoying your rest? How do you respond? Do you see the kidney stone thought as a setup, as bait? And what if it really is a kidney stone? Shouldn't you do something about it?

The James passage above can help us stay yielded to God and also chase away the demonic fisherman. S-R-D. **Submit** — **Resist** — **Draw near!** Say something like:

"Father God, this body is Your temple. I submit it to you. I only want Your perfect will in it. I know that health is Your best for me because You sent Jesus to provide healing (1 Peter 2:24). Satan, I resist you in Jesus' name, be gone. Take your filthy symptoms with you. Holy Spirit, I just draw near to You and to the healing, comforting power of Your awesome promises."

The enemy's temptation is to get you to take matters into your own hands. Your response must be to turn to Father God first. If God wants you to go to the doctor, He

will direct you with peace, not in pieces (Colossians 3:15). The tipoff that the enemy is tempting you is the feeling of panic. God's way is paved with peace and rest.

Let's try another example. You hang up the phone from talking with a good friend. They mention in passing that Miss Goober recently told them how offended she was with you. The details were passed on without the slightest idea that after you were off the phone, your mind would be swirling with thoughts of hurt, self-pity, justification and resentment. But, you were just reading this chapter when the phone rang, so, like the proverbial Boy Scout, you were prepared. You quickly scoop up every thought and lay them down at your Heavenly Father's feet. "Lord Jesus, I submit this whole situation to You. I declare You to be Lord over Sister Goober, my previous actions, and my life right now. If I messed up, I confess that to You and ask for Your forgiveness. But, you slimy devil, I resist you in Jesus' name and demand you get out of here right now. Father God, I draw from Your grace and ask that You fix this misunderstanding. In Jesus' name."

Your mind drifts off in praise and adoration of your tremendous Savior. Soon you are soaring so high, you begin to praise God for the whole situation, including your dense friend who was totally oblivious of the anguish she almost put on you.

What would the remainder of your day be like if you had not responded according to the law of rest? Been there? Done that? Remember how your mind plays ping pong with one thought after another? You get mad, then depressed. You think, "Why even try?" Is this your idea of rest? Compare the feelings you would enjoy after yielding up the whole mess to Father God. He would renew your strength. You would gain invaluable insights for dealing with silly people in the future, like Miss Goober! And you wouldn't even be upset with your friend for almost poisoning your day!

Rest: what a way to go!

CHAPTER THREE

REST FROM THE TONGUE

Daniel was a nice young man, but suffered the distinct misfortune of living among a bunch of people who got him into serious trouble. His kinfolk rejected the Word of God and thereby evoked His wrath. The Jews ended up as slaves to Babylonian emperors. Daniel was a sincere believer in the God of Abraham, but his faith was not enough to keep him from being carted away to captivity. His godly character and faith, however, were sufficient to give him honor among the heathen rulers, even to the point of being promoted to third in command of the expansive Babylonian Empire.

There are two very important lessons Daniel can teach us concerning rest. The first is how trust in the Lord God can turn captivity into glorious opportunities to see the power and mighty workings of God. The second is how the ministry of rest—intercession— can provide victory in any situation.

The picture behind the captivity of the nation of Judah was rest. The following verses tell us why God sentenced the Jews to seventy years of bondage in Babylon:

*And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, **until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths**. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete. 2 Chronicles 36:20,21*

God had decreed in the Law of Moses that farmers were to allow their land to remain dormant every seventh year. This "rest" was to be on Yahweh. He promised to send enough abundance the sixth year so that the people could live in prosperity without working the seventh year, and have sufficient produce to last until the crops of the eighth year! The land got a rest, the workers got a rest, and all the farmers

needed to do was to trust Yahweh to provide for them. Did they trust Yahweh? No. Their faith was in their own hard work. Why rest when you can hustle?

Isaiah had prophesied of the Babylonian captivity years before it happened. His prophetic insight spelled out that this captivity was to be all about rest. Notice what he writes:

Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," and, "Here is repose," yet they would not hear. Isaiah 28:11,12

What makes this passage of even more interest is that Paul the Apostle says that these verses refer to speaking in tongues:

In the Law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says Yahweh." So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe." 1 Corinthians 14:21,22

The strange tongue of the Babylonians was a judgement of the unbelief of the Jews who couldn't trust Abba to provide sufficient food for them. They kept working their land, refusing the law of rest, and ended up being forced to give their land rest! While their land was finally getting caught up on its rest, they would hear people talk to them in strange languages!

As Paul ties these events together, it becomes clear why some people resist speaking in tongues. They want to be in control. They can't rest in the Holy Spirit, give their mind a break and allow Him to use their tongue to praise God in a language they don't understand. They must do the work. They must be in control. To be out of control is considered disastrous. These people shy away from any event where the Holy Spirit may take over control and people may do things they would not otherwise do in their more sophisticated frame of mind.

A sign points to something. Speaking in tongues is a sign that points to the Old Testament picture of unbelievers who are forced into taking rest! Daniel the prophet made a pictorial bridge between the old and new covenants by learning the "unknown" tongue and thus going with the flow. As he cooperated with God's corrective "rest" program, the Lord quickly and easily promoted Daniel.

Jeremiah the prophet got into big trouble with the Jews because he told them that they were going to be taken captive for 70 years, and that during their bondage they were to intercede for their captors.

And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Yahweh on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

The key to success during the time of captivity was intercession, and not just for their own misfortune. As they stopped doing their own thing and began interceding for others, God allowed the glory of His rest to make them successful. It sure worked for Daniel. He had position, glory and wealth because he prayed diligently for the welfare of the king and the land of Babylon. Remember, the law of rest is that we do what we do for the Lord, not for ourselves.

Even when jealous politicians in Babylon plotted to have Daniel exterminated, God used prayer to exalt Daniel. The scoundrels knew Daniel to be a praying man, so they tricked the king into signing a law that disallowed anyone to pray except to the emperor. Not only did Daniel refuse to back down from rest-giving prayer, he threw open his windows and prayed so all could see. His faithfulness was rewarded with a trip to the lions' den.

What a picture of how the roaring lion of First Peter wants to stop intercession. But, as Daniel entered the place of judgement, intercession not only protected him from being lunch for the lions, it catapulted him into greater honor. His protection through prayer caused the king to esteem Daniel, worship the true God, and destroy the oppressors with their own snare! All this took place while Daniel was "resting" in Babylon. Strange tongues were being spoken, but they didn't point as a sign to Daniel's unbelief. Rather, he trusted his Heavenly Father, joined in speaking the strange language, interceded for others, and became a very successful ruler while the unbelieving Jews bore the burden of bondage!

Later in the book of Daniel, we see this keen man tapping the rest-work of intercession to unfold God's prophetic plan of the ages. He was visited by angels as he prayed. He saw visions as he prayed. He was even given the exact time that Messiah would grace planet earth! The rest of intercession gave him the boldness to confront the king's wayward heir, and even tell Neb himself that he would eat grass like an ox.

During the hard times of Babylonian captivity, some died, many cried, some were miserable thinking of the good old days, and what if we had only... But the wise entered into the rest God graciously provided. The question before us is what will we

do when we find ourselves in a place of captivity, between a rock and a hard spot, because of our unbelief? Will we let go of having to fix everything, of having to understand everything, of having to be in control? Will we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God through the submissive posture of prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to intercede for us and through us however He so chooses?

Will we reach for the Holy Spirit's gifts and endowments to turn our trials into trophies of triumph? Will we abandon ourselves to the heavenly language of intercession until God's rest engulfs us? Will we go with the flow of God's revealed Word, obeying His directives and trusting His promises? Or, will we redouble our fleshly resistance, try harder, steel ourselves against change, and allow anger and resentment to seethe inside us?

Why seethe when you can intercede? Why pout when you can pray? Why wallow in trials when you can reign in triumph? The Apostle also said, *He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...* (1 Corinthians 14:4a), so Spirit-led intercession is really doing yourself a favor. No wonder he said, *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding...* (1 Corinthians 14:15). When you find yourself in a tight spot, don't panic or stress out, rather, let go of having to be in control. Allow the Holy Spirit to intercede through you for those around you. As you enter His rest, He will do the rest—and you'll be blessed!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

When I was a kid there was a magazine advertisement that had a puny runt getting sand kicked in his face. In response, he sent in for Charles Atlas' special he-man course. Today, he would join a gym, start running, skipping rope, whacking a punching bag, sweating and crunching his body. According to the ad, his diligent effort paid off big time! The one-time victim was marvelously transformed into a shirt-busting Hercules, an object of fear and respect. How true is this Atlas-wanna-be picture?

The law of rest promises an even greater glory, but its path is diametrically opposite. The world's "try harder" method has limited success for this life, for a season in some circumstances, but godliness is profitable in two realms:

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:7,8 KJV

The young and the strong will run out of energy—their get up and go will eventually get up and go, leaving them weary and spent! What then? Even muscle-rippling strong men will come up against situations that will require resources other than brute strength. What then? There are problems that wealth and worldly wisdom will not solve. There are physical maladies that doctors can't cure. What then? The only all-around proven solution is provided by the law of rest:

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength

to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for Yahweh will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. Isaiah 40:28-31

Waiting on Yahweh is what the Sabbath is all about. Jesus got into much trouble with religious cronies because He said that the Sabbath was made for man, and that it was permissible to do good on the Sabbath. The Hebrew word translated Sabbath literally means seven or rest. The "rest" was that people were to stop doing their own thing once a week, and serve Almighty God. This service would sometimes entail ministering God's healing touch to other humans.

As we saw in the last chapter, this ministry "for" God and "toward" others usually entails intercession. "Standing in the gap" is a phrase that comes from Ezekiel 22:30:

*And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and **stand in the gap** before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.*

The soul "exercise" of prayer produces a godliness that gets things done both in this three dimensional world as well as triggers heaven's involvement. Standing in the gap prevents destruction of a kind that every insurance policy, every medical plan, every contingency provision is powerless to even begin to touch. Prayer alone releases the faith that empowers the promise of Romans 8:28:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

The context of this well-known verse is verse 27, and it's all about intercession: *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* Why is everything working together for our good? Because the Holy Spirit is working **for us** 24 hours a day, doing the "rest" work of intercession! As we saw in the last chapter, we can actually join in with Him in this exercise of faith, and as we do, we are edified or built up (1 Corinthians 14:4). Move over Atlas!

It's sometimes sad to watch vintage folks ponder old photographs. Their youth and beauty seemed to promise immortality. Zealous, youthful strength held out the

illusion of cheating Father Time. Others hid in their health-nut cabinet, believing that strange sounding herbal remedies would ward off the grim reaper. As these disillusioned seniors near their inescapable trip, there is only one source of solace. The past is past; the present demands a source of power that transcends time and space. Only faith in the Source, trust in the true God, will release the elixir of rest and peaceful preparation.

For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing. Isaiah 30:15

Repentance is a word that may have hidden healing for us. If you correlate repentance with a fiery altar-call by an evangelist, you may miss another dynamic aspect of this word. Think of repentance as coming back to the table for supper. You ate breakfast. Lunch was nice, but oh the call to dinner. Repentance is returning to our Source of every blessing. Repentance is the mind-set that says, "Lord Jesus, I can't do anything without You!" Repentance is realizing that you just went five minutes without holding the Lord's hand. Returning is the bold march back into the Holy of Holies to the mercy seat to receive grace to help in the time of need—which is always!

True repentance is resting in the Father's provisions. This simple child-like faith knows that all things are possible to the one who believes. Every need can be met by sincere prayer in Jesus' name. Repentance is what we do as the light bulb comes on and we realize once again that we have tried to hustle, push, shove, cajole, threaten, force things to go the way we think they should go. We simply let go and let God. We climb back into His awesome lap and relinquish our death-grip on life. Prayer is the quickest way to accomplish this—"Father, I let go of having my way in this matter...not my will, but Your will be done!"

Isaiah said that quietness and trust would provide strength. The world says hustle and sweat provides strength. With which are you most proficient? Jesus said that faith as small as a grain of mustard has enough potential power to move a mountain. He clearly said (and He can't lie), that ALL things are possible to the one who has this pure, unwavering faith in Almighty God:

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Matthew 21:21,22

This faith is a deep knowing that God has all power and that He wants to bless His kids: *Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth* (Psalm 46:10). The New International Versions says ***Be still, and know that I am God***, which to me means—chill out! Relax! "I'm God. I have all power. I can meet every need. Know Me, know Life!" What a fantastic way to receive power. How marvelous and simple God made it. In our everyday walk in life, we lean not on our human strengths, but wholly lean on Him. Yes, we labor and do what our hands find to do with all our might (Colossians 3:23), but in reliance on His abilities, not ours.

*Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it;
unless Yahweh guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.*
Psalm 127:1

How do we walk out this attitude of reliance on the Lord in a practical way every day? Try these two simple things.

First: Repeat Jesus' simple prayer whenever you sense tension rising in your mind: *Not my will, Father, but Yours be done.*" Declare that Jesus is Lord over your situation. Yield everything to Him.

Second: Draw some faith pictures that enable you to quickly obey Colossians 3:1-3:

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

See yourself reaching out and taking Jesus' hand. Draw a picture in your mind of coming boldly to the throne of grace. Bow down before the nail-scarred feet and surrender everything to your all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful, loving Master. Look not at the things that are "seen", but at those things that are "unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Say in your heart and with your mouth, "Jesus, I draw Your strength; I receive Your solution. You are my Lord and my God. Thank You for giving to me Your rest and Your resources."

The attitude that God wants us to have is zero confidence in our abilities and tremendous faith in His abilities:

*And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.
And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words*

of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:3-5

We're not to shun power, but rather seek power— God's power:

But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. 1 Corinthians 4:19,20

Let's exercise our "dependant" muscles...

*But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and **exercise thyself rather unto godliness**. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:7,8 KJV*

CHAPTER FIVE

REST OR RESTLESS

One person's rest is another's restlessness. When you go on vacation with the kids, your rest and relaxation may be to lay poolside and read or just catch a few rays. That would be punishment for the kids, who, in short order, are jumping in the water, racing around the slippery walk, and getting into trouble with the lifeguard.

How restful to sit on a lakeshore, fishing line in the water, and wait for the big one to strike. Some enjoy this relaxation so much they don't bother to bait their hook lest an ignorant fish disturb their rest. Others would scream and throw the pole in the water and head off to the mall for some real relaxation!

Obviously, the rest that the Lord is offering us must be something that relates to where we are coming from, otherwise it would be restlessness. Either that, or we can acquire a taste for His brand of rest. Notice how both of these possibilities are contained in the promise of Psalm 37:4: *Delight yourself in Yahweh; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

This promise could mean two things. As we delight ourselves in Yahweh, or wait on Him as Isaiah 40 prescribes, He will give us what we desire, which would be refreshing. There is a renewing that comes from being blessed by God with enjoyable things: *Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle* (Psalm 103:5). God gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17), that our joy may be full (John 15:11). There will always be sorrows and tribulations sufficient to rain on every parade, but God doesn't add them to the blessing He gives us: *It is the blessing of Yahweh that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it* (Proverbs 10:22). Why? Because He wants us to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19,20), to be His happy people (Proverbs 16:20 KJV; 29:18). Fearing God leads to healing and refreshment (Proverbs 3:7,8).

Delight yourself in Yahweh; and He will give you the desires of your heart could also mean that as we seek God, He puts new desires inside of us. As a youth, we may abhor things that we will strongly desire later in life, such as sitting around, talking with old friends. As an adult, do we find it objectionable that our tastes have changed? If God gives us new desires, they will be enjoyable!

As we press in to know our awesome God better, we grow and mature. Our tastes change. What used to make us restless, now gives us great satisfaction. This mysterious process is available upon demand. The law of rest can actually perform a miracle of transforming irritations into times of relaxation. Imagine how useful and health-producing Paul's secret is:

*Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance **I have learned the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. Philippians 4:11,12*

The law of rest can transform any circumstance. There is a secret involved, and it's tied to letting go of our viewpoint and desires. When we feel forced into a situation we don't enjoy, frustration begins to mount. If allowed to grow, we can get stressed, resentful and angry. This is when most of our fights occur. If we get out of control, anger may seem to be the only way we can deal with the issue that started the whole mess in the first place. "I don't want to do this, so I'm going to throw a big fit, and if you're smart, you won't keep pushing me to do this!"

Little Tommy is resisting taking his nap. He is grouchy because he is tired, but also because mommy's agenda is interfering with his playtime. After a season of bratty bawling, he succumbs to mid-day refreshment. If mom awakens junior before he comes to of his own, he will lay still, stretch, and slowly regain control of his faculties. During his awakening stage, Tommy displays the attributes of coming forth from rest. He was resting, but not because he wanted to or had much to say about taking his nap. Funny, but at age 50, he'll fight to get to take a nap! My, how desires change.

Giving in to God's gentle tug toward rest is the secret. Our brat temperament pulls against circumstances, convinced that our misery is imminent. The secret is to put the situation in Father God's hands, then look deep into His face, letting go of the concern. As our focus shifts from what we fear to our Father's tremendous power, the miracle begins to take place. The adrenaline surge of brat-tilda is transformed by the

peace of Papa's presence into deep inner rest and relaxation. Do we really trust that He has our best in mind?

If we maintain our death-grip on our miserable focus, the Father's rest will allude us. Insistence on "my way or else," maintains the secretion of harmful chemicals in our physical body. Our "fight or flight" hormones degenerate into poisonous toxins that, over the long haul, harm our physical body, and impair our quality of rest. We literally stew in our own juices. The stress that we experience in our environment may not be totally the environment's fault! If Jesus is standing at the door, knocking (Revelation 3:20), then my failure to let Him into the situation may be the real culprit.

Mr. Brat's bogus attempts to control every situation is tied to most forms of stress—rest robbing stress! Like tired Tommy slowly giving way to sleep's persistent pull, so also we can enter into God's peaceful rest as we relinquish control. With our sleep-like compliance, we can give our will to His ever-watching care. This process can be accelerated with our inner talk, and praise and worship can change our focus from worse case scenarios to the One who is in total control. The more we purposely change our focus with praise, the more we rest. The secret Paul is talking about in Philippians 4:12 is that behind every situation, God has a rest-producing response. He has an oasis in every desert of life. It's hidden behind surrender!

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

We may despise the situation we are in, but if our focus can be pruned off of what we don't want, what we despise, and even the pain, we can enter into the joy of God's rest. The law of rest has sufficient power to transform every circumstance into good for us. **This is not mind over matter, it's Master over misery!** When Jesus is made Lord indeed over everything, His grace reigns. This is not the faceless, mindless meditation of "the force," but rather it is entering into the heavenlies, where Christ is. It enjoys the rest that results as He takes over the job of making everything in life work together for our good—which is what every brat so desperately wants! What our brat disposition desires is hidden behind the secret of walking into what we don't want, yielding control to Jesus.

Try a simple experiment the next time you get caught in traffic or have to wait in a line. As you feel irritation start to rise up inside of you, purposely change your focus. Set Jesus in front of you in your mind (Psalm 16:8). Begin praising Him. Think of all His awesome attributes. Use the time you're trapped to praise the

Master. Your focus shift will rob irritation of its power. Frustration will be turned into an inner garden of freedom as you enjoy this chance meeting with Jesus. Schedule upsets become the unexpected enjoyment of running into your best friend! [You do realize, don't you, that all of this won't prevent irritation if Jesus isn't your best friend? If you are your own best friend, and Jesus is just a religious figure you talk about, then you have an adventure awaiting you! Please read the Appendix in the back of this book.]

He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," and, "Here is repose," but they would not listen. Isaiah 28:12

The brat's blood boils as he determinedly resists God's cloaked treasure, the very thing he desires. The promise of God insures that "there's gold in them thar' hills"—the mountains of irritation are loaded with wealth!

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

CHAPTER SIX

A RESTING FEAR

The title of this chapter is supposed to be a play on words. By using the law of rest, we can arrest fear. Fear is deadly. It can kill—*Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth...*(Luke 21:26 NKJ). Fear is an emotion that triggers hormonal surges that shut down rational, logical responses of the brain. When we panic, we do and say stupid things. Job, the Old Testament patriarch, gives us some insight into another deadly aspect of fear:

*For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread
befalls me. Job 3:25*

Perhaps because we focus on what we fear, the mechanism of faith literally begins to produce the very thing we do not want. Anticipation and hope, even negative hope, are building blocks of faith. The negative expectations we have will either frequent our minds or our mouth, both of which are nurseries of faith. We produce, with our own faith, that which we fear!

Wise Solomon saw the deadliness of fear...

*The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in Yahweh will be
exalted. Proverbs 29:25*

Dynamic defense responses are activated when we slip into fear. We hear things that aren't there, see things that are mirages, and read into people's reactions what they never intended. Once a married couple begins to fear for their marriage, everything is suspect. Every issue is a matter of life and death. There are no small things. Every movement, every glance, is thought to have hidden meaning. Mountains of confusion suddenly spring from the plains of puzzlement with volcanic intensity. Why? Because fear brings snares!

...Do not fret; it only causes harm. Psalm 37:8b NKJ

The psalmist knew this valuable truth and used it to encourage us to trust in Yahweh. If we panic because we fear losing control, we trigger the deadliness of the fear response. On the other hand, as we trust in the promises of God, faith becomes a servant that ministers to us in at least two ways. Faith will not only bring to pass our heart's desire, it will also surround us with peace and rest.

*Commit your way to Yahweh, trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. **Rest** in Yahweh and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. Psalm 37:5-8*

Fear produces slavery. Psychology uses the Greek word for fear (*phobia*) to describe severe bondage that overtakes people. Who is under slavery like the person who cannot ride in an elevator, go into public places, take a swim, etc. The list grows daily with Latin and Greek names, used to describe the latest form of slavery binding mortals. The Bible may not be a psychology textbook, but it sure nails the cause of phobias:

*...and might deliver those who through **fear** of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Heb 2:15*

All the devil has to do to manipulate and trap us is to get us to fear something. If we fear catching a cold, our immune system is compromised and thus the fear helps fulfill the opposite of what we want! If we fear having a fight with our mate, we stumble over things better left unnoticed. The panicky investor, fearing the loss of funds, yanks his money prematurely from stocks that will rebound, thus insuring his loss.

Maybe the paradoxical power of fear is why we are to fear God. If fear brings us deeper into what we fear, then fearing God could possibly draw us deeper into the awesome God, Who alone is worthy to be feared.

And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

Fearing the powerful God of the Bible could cause us to lose confidence in our ability to "get away" with sin. If Adam and Eve had clear minds, they never would have tried to hide from God. If they truly feared God, they would not have touched the forbidden fruit. I think of how many of us fear snakes and would do almost

anything to not touch one. What if Adam had that kind of fear of displeasing God? What if we had the same revulsion toward sin? It would be easy to be holy; as easy as it is for me to say "no" to asparagus! The Word tells us...*The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil...* (Proverbs 8:13a). We had better fear the Lord more than snakes or vegetables!

Fear can lead us into love. As we ponder why we should fear God, we begin to discover how much He loves us. He is a mighty God to be feared, but He loved us so much that He took on flesh and became our sin-payment! While we were yet sinners, He paid for our failures (Romans 5:8). Our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29) of holiness, but He has done everything short of forcing us into enjoying His love!

The fear or wholesome respect of God leads us deeper into His love.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love (1 John 4:18).

As an example, think of young lovers, intoxicated with each other. Their love causes a certain wholesome fear, a great concern that they not offend the other. They will do anything to gain that special smile and avoid anything that would hurt their lover. They cover up shortcomings, overlook mistakes, and avoid confrontation, knowing that their love will somehow work it out, somehow find the answer. And they do this without even being aware of the fear! They are love-minded, not fear minded, but the fear of hurting their lover is an invisible fence that protects the relationship. Sad to say, this is the first thing to go when love begins to decay.

*Yahweh thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; **He will rest in His love**, He will joy over thee with singing. Zephaniah 3:17 KJV*

The properties of love produce a *rest* in a quality relationship. Because they both are aware of the unseen "fence" of fear, they rest in the knowledge that their special person would never knowingly hurt them. This knowledge is part of the elixir of love! Once tarnished, I think it's one of the things most missed. The "rest" in the relationship provides a measure of security. Now shift this example to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. He wants us to revel in His love, rest in the confidence that He only has our best in mind. Fear for the mature, love-struck, believer, is an invisible fence that knows God would never hurt them, and they would die before ever hurting Him! What security! What love! What an arresting of fear!

There is a delightful side benefit to fearing nothing but Yahweh. We soldiers of the cross enjoy giving our mortal enemy pain. This verse should give us special pleasure as we live a life of praise:

...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God. Philippians 1:28 NIV

If you want to strike terror in the devil's heart, let him know that you do not fear death. Inform him that you look forward to escaping the trials of life and are excited about seeing Jesus face to face. As the verse above states, our fearlessness in the face of death reminds the enemy of his impending doom! Hallelujah!

The vicious "accuser of the brethren" harasses us day and night. His jabs are intended to immobilize us with fear. If he can trick us into taking life too seriously, he can lead us into fear. If he can get us panicky about infirmity, he can steal our health. He panders financial problems in an effort to get us to fear being destitute. Most every temptation has some kind of fear attached somewhere. The fear automatically produces bondage, graceless bondage. We may even feel that God has abandoned us. Has He abandoned us, or have we abandoned His Word? His promises? When we fear anything other than God, we take a step away from Him and turn our eyes off of Him. Is it any wonder that we feel isolated and abandoned?

It doesn't matter why we put our focus on the flesh, death (separation) still begins its ugly work of making us feel isolated (Romans 8:6). Soon, the fearful believer wonders if there really is a God at all. The devil comes in for the kill with thoughts such as, "If God really loved me, why is this happening to me?" The snowball effect of fear increases our separation from the only source of help. Faith, our ladder of escape, is withdrawn, and we feel depressed and angry.

Why doesn't God override this whole process if He really loves us? Because this is what life is all about! If God were to supersede the use of our free will, He would short-circuit the learning process. He does, on occasion, stop the process, but then we have to go through the course of instruction all over again! Sooner or later, we need to wake up and grow up. Our Heavenly Father has promised to not allow us to be tempted above what we can bear. The part of the promise that we may forget when we are throwing a panicky temper tantrum is that God has only given this assurance along with the condition that we take the way of escape He provides! If He demands that we not focus on the flesh, or fear life, then we negate the promise and our disobedient response invalidates the Word of God (Mark 7:13).

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

The faithful believers referred to in Revelation 12:11, used fearlessness as one of their weapons to overcome the evil one:

*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.***

Jesus used this same response to frame our salvation:

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

Salvation became a reality because Jesus was unafraid of death! Jesus arrested fear when He rested in His Father's promises and walked into death, unafraid.

The next verse pulls this chapter together and arrests fear by prompting us to face the flesh's ultimate fear—death!

...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10).

When suffering knocks at your door, instead of running out the back door into the pit of fear, full of demonic alligators, look up and over the suffering. See Jesus. He's always standing behind every situation, beckoning us to come to Him for rest. His sweet fellowship may not seem as real as the trial of the moment, but if you refuse to become "suffering" minded, and rather become Jesus focused, you will soon be saying, as the Psalmist, *In Your presence is fullness of joy* (Psalm 16:11)!

I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies and of the son of man who is made like grass, that you have forgotten Yahweh your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth... Isaiah 51:12,13

CHAPTER SEVEN

ENTERING THAT REST

The fourth chapter of Hebrews gives us invaluable insight into Sabbath rest. The author tells us that there is a rest awaiting the true believer, a rest that those who kept the Old Testament Sabbath did not enter into. It may come as a surprise to those who place preeminence on worshipping on the Sabbath (Saturday), to learn what the Holy Spirit is saying in this chapter.

Ask someone of the seventh-day persuasion what it means to keep the Sabbath. My hunch is that they will describe something similar to how the Jews of the Old Covenant kept the Sabbath. Notice from the inspired book of Hebrews what Yahweh thinks about keeping the Sabbath:

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. Hebrews 4:1,2

We will see later in chapter four of Hebrews that the rest being talked about is the Sabbath rest, and the "they" referred to was Old Testament Israel. There is a promise of rest for us, but it is entered into by faith. Whatever this rest consists of, it has to do with faith. Setting aside the seventh day as a "no work" day was considered part of the "works of the Law," and as such, it is the opposite of New Covenant faith:

Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Romans 3:28

Jesus made it clear that He did not come to destroy the Old Testament Law, but to fulfill or complete it. He is the completion of the Law for all who believe. This being the case, then whatever the Sabbath was a picture of, Jesus fulfilled the picture. Let's go back to Hebrews chapter four...

For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works." Hebrews 4:3,4

Jesus said that His *Father is working until now* (John 5:17), the context of which was healing on the Sabbath day. Paul said that God operates by faith (2 Timothy 1:4 NAS). Exodus says that God rested on the seventh day, but if the God of the Bible never gets tired (Isaiah 40:28), then how did He rest? This rest and refreshment must be none other than the fact that God quit doing His own thing (creation) and started operating as Adam's God. He rested from His works and began ministering life to Adam and Eve. God did not stop holding all things together by the Word of His power, but He did begin holding them together for His creatures! He did all this by faith! My belief is that the rest that Hebrews four is talking about is ministering to and for others—by faith!

The Children of Israel failed to enter the Promised Land because they had grasshopper faith. They had more confidence in the giants of Canaan that they could see with their eyes, than in the unseen, all-powerful God who took them out of Egypt! Their classic line was *we were as grasshoppers in their sight*. Entering the promised land was a symbol of rest, and the fearful nation failed to enter into rest because they were more concerned with doing their own thing. What does a bunch of giants in the pathway have to do with obeying God? Mountains or monsters will keep us from God's rest only if we put our survival before obedience. God said to go into the promise land, but their fear said *Ah, can we think about that for forty years?*

Abundance is waiting for us: Welcome to a land flowing with milk and honey! Talk about a picture of rest...the milk is produced by the cows and the honey is made for us by the bees. God wants to give us that for which we have not labored (John 4:38) as a love gift for serving Him by faith. Survival fear keeps us from abandoned obedience—fear kept the Jews from God's best, and fear keeps us from the abundant life! Although they were resting in the wilderness, wandering from place to place,

not having to sow seed or raise crops, they were outside the promise. After they entered the land of promise, they would begin working and the manna would stop, but the real rest would begin. They would be in God's land, doing God's work, under God's blessing!

The routine in the new land would be to work for six days, rest on the seventh; work for six years, rest on the seventh. They would keep the seventh day, pretty much, but they just didn't have the faith to set aside the whole seventh year. That, as you will recall, is what got them removed from the land of promise and indentured in Babylon.

"...They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, Hebrews 4:5,6

The actual physical act of entering into the land of Canaan was not the fulfillment of the law of rest, as Hebrews 4:8,9 tells us:

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

When verse nine says that there remains a Sabbath rest for God's kids, it could mean that we're still supposed to keep the Sabbath, or it could mean that the Old Testament saints never did enter into the real intent of the Sabbath rest. The whole point of Hebrews chapter four is that the Jews did not enter into or keep the Sabbath the way God intended it to be kept! God's intention for the Sabbath was for it to be used to minister to others:

*If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing **your own pleasure** on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of Yahweh honorable, and honor it, **desisting from your own ways**, from seeking **your own pleasure** and speaking **your own word**, then you will take delight in Yahweh, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken. Isaiah 58:13,14*

Jesus got into big trouble with the religious leaders of His day because He sought to keep the Sabbath the way His Father intended it to be kept (see Luke 13:11-16). He said that it was fitting on the Sabbath that sick people be healed.

And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day? Luke 13:16

As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus revealed what “keeping the Sabbath” was all about! God’s rest is that we serve Him with all of our heart, and He, as our faithful Master, heals us, feeds us, and refreshes us! For the Jews entering the promise land, it was serve God and He will fight your battles for you! For Christians, Abba promises to add to us everything we need (Matthew 6:33), turn every trial into a triumph (Romans 8:37), and protect us with His perfect peace (2 Thessalonians 3:16). Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath by healing a woman. We can fulfill the Sabbath by ministering to others in the name of Jesus: *Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me* (Matthew 25:40). In serving others we serve Jesus. Or in the Words of Hebrews 4:10...*For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.*

If God is still working and if He had to keep holding everything together, even on the seventh day, then the way God works is the key to this matter of rest or refreshing. Resting from our works is to take the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:29), which is to do His work. Notice what the Word says Jesus’ full time job is: *and He ever lives to make intercession!* The work of rest is to intercede for others.

As we enter the holy of holies in heaven and approach the mercy seat, we obtain grace for others. The byproduct of this grace is that we are blessed even more than the ones we enter for! Carrying God's love refreshes us more than the ones we give it to!

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:11

The disobedience of the Jews was their refusal to journey into “giant-land.” What is the starting point for our journey of faith? We are commanded to *pray without ceasing*. We are promised that if we watch and pray we won't enter into temptation. Samuel the prophet said that it would be a sin for him to not pray for his king (1 Samuel 12:23). To not intercede is a sin. To not stand in the gap, by faith, for others, is a sin! To come boldly to the throne of grace by faith is to be refreshed even as we labor. The interceding saint is like an athlete in peak condition: What leaves others exhausted doesn't even cause them to breathe hard!. We can run and not get weary, walk and faint not!

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE REST AFTER THE STORM

According to the Nelson Spirit Filled Study Bible, the Hebrew word *nuach*, translated “rest,” means: “to rest, settle down; to be soothed or quieted, to be secure; to be still; to dwell peacefully.” The first time this word appears is when Noah's ark "rested" on the mountains of Ararat, following God's terrible judgement on planet earth. What a picture. The curtain is brought down on the worst holocaust our world has ever known, with the word **rest**.

Some of the sweetest rest I knew as a child was when my slate had been cleared, having paid for my transgressions with a whipping. Amid the throbbing and sobbing, there emerged rest and peace. I can still recall the nagging feelings of guilt prior to the scales of justice being balanced. If I were a kid today, they'd probably have me on hyperactivity medication! After the executioner's blows, I didn't need sedation. I was at peace and felt a measure of inward cleanness. The sins were gone, covered with stripes—mine!

This kind of rest is pictured in the Proverbs: *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him* (Proverbs 22:15 NKJ). Get the foolishness out of the child and you have a peaceful home. We're told that the hand of Yahweh's discipline provides peaceful fruit:

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Hebrews 12:11

In the verses following the verse above, healing is promised as part of the peaceful fruit. Along this line, 1 Corinthians 11:29-31 gives us a bit of hope. When we have a sin attack, if we will judge ourselves before Father God has to, we can

save ourselves some of the discomfort of chastisement. Imagine, **we can eliminate the middleman of pain and go right to the peace!** *But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged* (1 Corinthians 11:31). If, on the other hand, we neglect immediate confession of our transgressions, God has to spank us.

What a peaceful world Noah walked into as he left the ark. No crime, no domestic violence, and no political campaigns! It wouldn't be long before sin once again popped up. And the process goes on: we sin, we're punished, God chastises us, we're at peace with Him, we sin again, etc. Can't we stop this process and remain at peace with God? The aged Apostle John offers some very interesting insights along this line:

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:7-9

The beautiful rest and peace that results from the cleansing of chastisement is also available by fellowshiping with our Savior. When we confess (Greek meaning: say the same as) our sin to our God, the blood of Jesus washes us afresh. It's like living in a washing machine! We will sin, but if we live in close relationship with the Lord Jesus, we will quickly agree with Him that our messing up was wrong. His love and His blood quickly wipes away our failure. The "rest" of being cleansed is ours for the price of continual fellowship with our awesome God!

Example time: We're driving down the road and a motorist, oblivious of our legal, rightful pursuit of our destination, pulls out in front of us, necessitating our disengaging the cruise control. The accuser plants an adjective in our head that describes the inconsiderate driver's mental abilities. Before we realize it, an unseen force honks our horn and makes us speak some pretty rough words out of our mouth, our very own mouth that was just sweetly praising the Lord! We are shocked. Now our emotions are a peculiar blend of guilt and anger (the ~~jerk~~ is still poking along in front of us). The tempter, giggling with delight, suggests we forget trying to be spiritual, after all, we're such a dismal failure. But we suddenly recall ("Thank You, Holy Spirit"), that sin needs to be quickly confessed, so we agree with Jesus that what we said out our mouth was wrong. Our apology is immediately met with the crimson flow and restoration of fellowship is so quick that we barely miss a beat. If we're savvy, we'll send the spirit that helped stir up the whole mess to the pit.

The other side of this example is less pleasant. The bad guy wins. There we are, riding the bumper of Mr. Slowpoke, like he even knows anyone else drives on the road. What makes it worse is that your wife is reminding you of your lineage linkup with certain species from the animal kingdom. What's a guy going to do with this strange mixture of rage and guilt? Justify yourself. Didn't work. Blame the other guy. Feels better, but then there's still your wife's comments rattling around in your conscience. In a feeble effort to gain some sort of inner calm, you reach for the ultimate weapon—change the subject!

I could take this silly example even further (because I've lived it!), however, suffice it to say that when we try the face-saving, flesh-pampering methods, we prolong our misery. I've nursed a low-grade guilt trip for days! Some of these episodes (always brought on, it seems, by nerd drivers) have even taken some of the sparkle out of my otherwise perfect marriage. Hey, a small price to pay to "be right," wouldn't you say? Small price? Why pay such a big price and avoid God's excellent peace and rest?

The paradox of the Christian life is that we don't want to sin, but we will. In our B.C. days we enjoyed our sin and were right proud of it. Sure we had our times of guilt and feeling stupid, but that was before we met the marvelous Master and His wonderful grace. Now we've become addicted to His perfect peace and relaxing rest. Though we will sin, we don't make allowances for it, we atone for it with confession and restitution where needed. If we come clean before we're caught we can barely miss a lick and stay physically healthy and mentally rested. If we take the razor strap and go meet daddy in the hallway, things will go much easier on us (and on our hide).

A sidebar may be in order here for parents with small children. You can help your child maintain a better level of mental health when you provide quick ways for them to pay for their transgressions. Being a grandpa now, I'm slower to call for corporal punishment (in fact, I'm slower at about almost everything). But, if you have the child do some manual labor (clean up the yard, straighten their room, scrub the floors—just kidding), they can take care of their sin and get back into peace and rest. I'm not for physical abuse by any stretch of the imagination, yet a swat or two on the seat of learning can release endorphins as well as wash away guilt! I don't like "grounding" or sitting on a chair or being quarantined in their room, because it prolongs the time of confusion. The enemy can use this time to trick them into all manner of foolish flesh responses—just like he does with us adults! Let justice be swift. Let the rest return.

The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly. Proverbs 20:30 (KJV)

Isn't it funny how we take so much solace from the mistakes of famous people in the Bible? It's somehow easier to face life knowing that the cloud of witnesses that surrounds us (Hebrews 12:1) is composed of our fellow humans who also stubbed their toes. What this chapter is about, though, is not having a group therapy session where we all lick our corporate wounds and pass the crying towel around, as we sing one more stanza of "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog." The warm fuzzy feeling quickly fades as we leave the safe setting where we "spill our gastro... The night air sobers us up and stark despair tries to steal inside. When we realize that we are aboard a sinking ship and the crew is likewise a mess, where do we go? Learn to accept a lower level of expectation? Please, I'm at a dangerously low level now! Why not rather allow guilt and failure to drive us to the mercy seat!

Come out of the closet, you confirmed sinner! Stay at the throne of grace and drink in the rest promoting elixir of God's love. Why expend so much energy, Mr. Jonah, sir, running from God?

CHAPTER NINE

THE REST OF RELATIONSHIP

As I occasionally agonize over the continual battle against the flesh, I am brought back to mankind's absolute need for a continual, intimate relationship with the only wise God, who gives rest. What did our Heavenly Father have in mind when He made us? Why did He leave us so vulnerable to *the sin that so easily besets us* (Hebrews 12:1)? Why can't we get to a safe plateau where we are immune to the tug toward evil? Why can't we be spiritually "sealed in plastic?"

Perhaps our loving Lord is not as interested in our perfection as He is in our intimacy and dependency upon Him? This may be heresy to those who believe that holiness is greater than love, but I feel that when the Word says *the greatest of these is love* (1 Corinthians 13:13), it means just that. Not only is love the greatest character trait in the universe, it may be the only way to gain true holiness and to continually live therein!

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13

God is more concerned with our relationship with Him than with our performance of "do's and don't", such as the Old Testament demanded. What all the hard work of the Old Covenant could never do, love and dependency on Jesus easily provides! We see a glimpse of this with David, the man after God's heart, gaining a pardon for what was otherwise a capital crime. Not that God ever soft-peddled sin,

but that David's fervent love for Yahweh ran out in front of him and provided a kind of covering for his sin. *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions* (Proverbs 10:12). True love doesn't abuse this benefit, but it surely enjoys it!

Another picture of how love calls from the human heart for more intimacy with God is seen in the story of Moses asking God to not leave the Jewish wanderers.

"Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favor in Thy sight. Consider too, that this nation is Thy people." And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Thy presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Thy sight, I and Thy people? Is it not by Thy going with us, so that we, I and Thy people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?" And Yahweh said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name." Exodus 33:13-17

Yahweh promised that His presence would go with Moses, and His presence would give rest. Though the Word says that Moses spoke with God face to face, this was not a visible encounter. As you may talk with a blind person face to face, and they may even feel your breath, yet your face is not visible to them, so with God and Moses. God's "invisible" presence didn't seem to be enough for the leader of Israel. He longed for more. Notice what he received:

Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Then Yahweh said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." Exodus 33:18-23

The actual, physical, visible perception of Yahweh would destroy our three dimensional body. The Scripture makes it clear that *No man has seen God at any*

time (John 1:18a), and ...*no man...can see [God]* (1 Timothy 6:16b). We are promised that one day ...*the pure in heart...shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). We will see Him and we will be like Him (in the same dimension, 1 John 3:2).

Does this mean that because we can't physically see God that His presence is any less real? Of course not; however, this becomes the test of our faith. Will we "look" to the invisible God for our rest and refreshment or to physical contrivances of the flesh? Will we follow Eve's example and reach for the forbidden fruit in search of something that will fill our inner love-void? Will we resort to Judas' busyness the night of the Passover, making preparations in case of a catastrophe. In contrast, will we be like John the beloved and lean back on Jesus' breast, almost oblivious of the commotion and impending crisis?

Life's three dimensions continually clamor for our full attention, yet this world offers only strife and a moving carrot. The fourth dimension, where God's presence is manifest, calls, but more subtly. His beckoning is more of an inner itch, a longing. The more this presence is sought, the greater its effect. The more we require Him, the more His rest refreshes us.

Back to my concern at the beginning of this chapter. The flesh is like a bunch of chickens that are always looking for a hole in the fence. When the spiritual partition fades, the flesh oozes out, manifesting in unseemly ways. As our frustration forces our attention on this un-tameable (foul) beast, the law of Romans 8:6 promptly goes into effect, *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*. Because the flesh is un-trainable, flesh-focus quickly triggers a negative loop. Soon we are knee-deep in despair. This crazy whirlwind of confusion takes place in the very presence of the One Who is the only solution. The Answer is standing nearby, waiting for us to call upon Him! Intimacy is the answer, not frustration.

Relationship with and focus on the Spirit, though unseen, is the only adequate provision given to contain the monster called flesh. Because *the flesh profits nothing* (John 6:63), even well-trained, highly sophisticated flesh is still unprofitable. Willpower and rigid discipline are beautiful attributes, worthy of respect, but they do not provide clearance for entering into God's refreshing presence! Maybe the reason our willpower won't get us into God's presence is because there is typically a lot of pride involved with the flesh, and God resists the proud (1 Peter 5:5).

Flesh flare-ups, then, must not be taken as seriously as God's presence. In fact, when Fido the Flesh wanders, few things bring him back as quickly as a loud rattle of his tin dinner dish! Harsh treatment of ourselves will never produce the soothing

rest of feasting with the Father. The whole time the "accuser of the brethren" is railing at us for our failures, the loving, longsuffering Father is offering us the only known solution to our "flesh-management" problem—His presence! To put this in the words of an advertisement jingle... God's presence: don't leave home without it!

Moses' concern was that the motley troop he was leading might have to wander in the desert without the presence of God. Ponder for a moment with me the impossibility of such a concern coming to pass. The Apostle Paul made the following comment to a bunch of heathens, *For in him we live, and move, and have our being* (Acts 17:28 KJV). If we are always surrounded by the Omnipresent God, then a lack of God's presence is not our problem, nor should it be our concern. Rather, our constant test is "Are we more aware of God's presence than we are of our needs?" Is our unruly (and always so), fickle, frustrated and rambunctious flesh being held in check with the byproduct of our intimate relationship with Abba? Is our focus producing life or death (Romans 8:6)? Are we resting or restless? Father-minded or failure-minded?

God's presence is everywhere. He's omnipresent. David said God is even in Sheol [Hades] (Psalm 139:8). The question is not one of God's presence, but of His glory being manifested. His glory is dangerous to sin. Our God is a consuming fire and without holiness no one can see Him (Hebrews 12:14, 29). If God's glory manifested when we were clinging to our sin, we would fall over dead like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1 ff). To be cleansed from our sin, we must let go of it, agree with God that it is wrong, and receive His cleansing, all of which is a love response. Love for Abba makes us hate sin. Desire for intimacy with Him makes us run to the fountain filled with blood.

Use the tools God has given us to help your focus stay on the Rest-giver. Our minds focus very easily on that which they are describing. Notice how our foe doesn't stop with just telling us we are a creep. He goes into great detail on how we messed up, always have, always will. The detailed thoughts he throws into our mind draw our focus to the flesh, thus producing his desire—death. Our minds can likewise be drawn deeper into our awesome God by describing how tremendous He is. Rehearsing His life-giving promises and sketching out a mental picture of them, draws our focus back to His abiding presence. Rest and refreshment flow from His nearness, thus strengthening our flesh-restraining abilities. Picture the Savior, not your sin!

It was early in the morning. A stranger had called out from the shore to the weary fishermen. They had plied their trade all night to no avail, then the stranger

bid them cast their net on the other side of the boat. When the nets began to bulge with fish, one of the crew recognized the voice and blurted out that the stranger was Jesus. Before he knew what he was doing, Peter had flung himself into the cold water and was swimming toward the barely visible figure, standing in the morning twilight. Can you picture this scene? Soon the men are gathered around a fire, eating a fish breakfast prepared by the Master. In the quiet of the early hours, what would Jesus want to talk about? Peter's betrayal? How the leader of the apostolic band had allowed the intimidating questions of a young girl to prompt him into swearing and denying that he knew Jesus? What a great sin—treason! What mighty sword had coerced such epithets from his lips? A maiden, the source of many a man's demise.

Was this the time for Jesus to part Peter's hair with His harsh comments? Are you seeing all of this? Jesus looks casually over at Peter. His eyes flow with compassion. "Peter," the words finally begin. "Do you love Me?" What? Are there no harsh reprimands? No scathing rebuke? I hope you can feel what Peter must have felt. His guilt anticipated the worst—perhaps dismissal? What his ears heard were tones that coaxed him nearer the God-man, the One who made him. Jesus, the One who called to him, wanted fellowship! Relationship! Intimacy, not distance! Pleasure, not punishment.

When you feel a load of guilt trying to pry your grip loose from clinging to the knot at the end of life's rope, replay this scene. Put yourself in the traitor's place. Allow Jesus to call you to His wounded side, wounded for us! Torn open that we might enter through His payment for our sin. Don't mock His payment for our sin by refusing its call to reconciliation! When you sin, run to the Son, not from Him!

If God were to destroy our flesh when we got saved, we'd be in heaven...no test or trials. Something is required that will build our faith muscles while we are here on earth. If we "see" the answer to problems prematurely, faith is canceled out. We are to ...*walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7), and we are told that *faith works by love* (Galatians 5:6), so love becomes part of the test of life. A simple shift from a self-centered, survival focus to the Source of love, will tap the power of both faith and love. Because God's presence is unseen, reaching for Him fulfills the requirements for a faith exercise. Because He is love, focusing on Him draws us into love and love into us. The rest is history. The rest is reality. The rest from our relationship with Abba is everything we need—now and eternally!

*Father, help me rest in Thee,
Rather than observe the sea;
The flesh with all its waves of sin,
Steal Your peace from within.
When my eyes behold Your grace,
Something fills my inner space;
Only You can fill my heart,
God is love, the Missing Part!*

CHAPTER TEN

GIFT WRAPPED REST

Consider the difference between Harry and Clyde working on a math assignment. They are in the same class, they are the same age, but their math ability differs considerably. Harry is a genius. At an early age his parents recognized that he was very gifted in mathematical skills. He was born with these skills. No one sat him down and taught him, he was just naturally endowed.

Poor Clyde. He was just the opposite of Harry. His math perception was virtually nonexistent. He slaved over basic concepts, tutors pushed, and nothing seemed to penetrate his math-dense brain.

With these two extremes, let's venture into their class one day as the teacher asks the students to spend the remainder of the period working on their assignment. Sweat breaks out on Clyde's forehead, while Harry calmly breezes through the exercise effortlessly. Is this fair? Maybe not, but it has everything to do with the value of gifts.

The gift of salvation is so beautiful because what mankind feverishly pursued and yet missed, God graciously provides as a gift. Harsh treatment of the body and straining at minute details of laws could never provide the rest and peace that simple grace affords. Working harder is not always as great as we've been told. Working smarter is where the joy resides!

If we consider "working smarter" for a little bit, this verse in Ecclesiastes gives us a valuable insight... *If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success (10:10).* Wisdom tells us that it's easier to use a chain saw than it is to use an axe, if both are in good shape. Likewise, if God gives spiritual gifts, using them will make life's tasks easier.

The Father has given spiritual gifts to the whole body of Christ: *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good* (1 Corinthians 12:7). I believe that God has graciously given whatever is needed to someone in the church. We may not be good at math like Harry, but God will put a gifted Harry in the body to take care of financial matters.

As time passed, Harry and Clyde were adults and attended the same church. Clyde was tremendously gifted at fixing broken things, like heaters, coolers, fixtures, and the likes. Poor Harry was always in trouble at home because his wife had a long list of broken things that needed to be fixed but he shunned even attempting repairs because he lacked that ability. As each guy operates in their area of gift, everybody is happy, things get done, and frustrations are minimized. Is Harry any less of a man because he can't fix things like Clyde can? Is Clyde ignorant because he lacks financial, mathematical skills such as Harry possesses?

We may have to slug it out, grit our teeth, grin and bare it at home when we have to do necessary repairs, but that's not God's desire for the church. It may, in fact, not be God's will for us even at home. I believe He wants us to work smarter, not harder. Jesus said His yoke of service was light and easy (Matthew 11:29,30), so I think it's safe to say that if Jesus is involved in our projects, they will be easy, that is, if we avail ourselves of His provisions.

Spiritual gifts such as healing, can do in a few minutes what it takes hours of "fighting by faith" to accomplish. The gift of miracles can move mountains that a lifetime of effort couldn't budge. The word of knowledge will reveal things hidden from the frustrated seeker.

As you pour over the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament, a couple of things become evident. No one has all the gifts. The list of gifts vary, giving the impression that the actual number of spiritual gifts may be limitless, depending on the need of the moment. If the Lord tells us to seek the better gifts, He may be giving us insight on how His yoke is supposed to be easier. For every job, there is a spiritual gift available. If our task seems hard, then we should stop and seek the Master's gift! If we can not obtain a particular spiritual gift, then we are expected to look around for someone who has what we need. Such interdependence is one of the concepts taught in the Word and it may be a hidden secret for rest.

Reaching for spiritual gifts as we enter into a project develops the mentality of trust that Proverbs 3:5,6 commands us to have... *Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and*

He will make your paths straight. This mind-set says, "Father, I know You have a better, easier way. Please show me!"

Reaching for God's gifts is a demonstration of humility that puts ones self under the mighty hand of God, which in turn releases more blessings from Him:

*...God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that
He may exalt you at the proper time, 1 Peter 5:5,6*

The human trait to strive and push is linked to an inner need to create. We are made in God's image and likeness and therefore enjoy creating. What Abba is after, though, is a co-creating. Teamwork. He wants us to seek His participation, of our own free will. He wants us to trust Him more than our own independent abilities (which He gave us in the first place). Seeking His involvement in our everyday affairs conveys that we love Him and desire fellowship with Him. Seeking His gifts says in so many words, "Without You, Father, I can't do anything!" I like to add, "And I don't want to try!"

*Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that
you may prophesy. 1 Corinthians 14:1*

*But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more
excellent way. 1 Corinthians 12:31*

The more excellent way is to use every available tool the Father provides, empowered with love! If we major on love and ignore spiritual gifts, we may wonder why life is so hard! If we focus on spiritual gifts without the balance of love, we will probably end up sidelined because of pride. To stay spiritually balanced we must maintain an attitude of dependance on the Source of love and spiritual gifts. Resting in Him provides the rest of our equipment!

*And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you
shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who
asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it
shall be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his
son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will
he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion,
will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your
children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy
Spirit to those who ask Him? Luke 11:9-13*

Jesus is letting us know that the Father is not bogged down with our requests. Our God is so powerful that every person on the planet could get a tremendous miracle at the same time and five billion plus miracles would not make the slightest dent in Abba's resources. The call is for us to ask. The promise is that He will give. When we need life-giving food, He won't give us poisonous vermin. We won't get in trouble with God when we ask largely. Ask for the sky. Ask for His Spirit! Ask and you SHALL receive!

Why don't people use God's tools to make life easier? Afraid to ask? He commanded us to come boldly (Hebrews 4:16) through Jesus (John 14:6). Concerned that God will ask something in return from you? Don't look now but you owe Him everything already. And we are either working for Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30). We would be smart to be busy about His business every moment of the day, and to be found using every tool He provides. He's looking for smart workmen.

Watch construction workers using pneumatic (air powered) tools. They can do so much more so much quicker. The power of air enables a jackhammer to bust up concrete. Super tight lug nuts come spinning off as the mechanic buzzes them with his power ratchet. And when the Holy Spirit is allowed to flow through us, we can *do all things through Christ* (Philippians 4:13). With His breath we can mount up with an eagle's wings, we can run and not be weary, we can rest while we work for the night comes when no man can work.

Another trick of the trade that you may have learned is to take a break when things get hard. I found that when I was trying to repair broken equipment and my frustration level got to a certain point, I only got angry. Greater progress is made when we step back from the tension, spend a little time praising the Lord, drink in some refreshing rest, and allow the Holy Spirit to give us insight. During a prayer-rest, we give the angels time to loosen the bolts and our brains time to sift through alternate responses.

The law of rest reminds us that we may have lost sight of why we're doing what we're sweating over. Are we trying to fix something because our ego has been hooked and we're not about to quit until we've conquered it? The Scripture reminds us: *whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father* (Colossians 3:17). Stop when you start getting frustrated and give your efforts up to Jesus. Make Him Lord over the project, whether its planning a major church function or repairing the lawnmower. Rest in His love and give the all-powerful God an opportunity to work with you. Two work better than one, especially when the other One is Yahweh!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LETTING GRACE DO THE WORK

What drives people to do what they do? Why is it that we can look at the same old chore for months, and then all of a sudden, we jump in and get it done? What motivates us to action?

Here is a theory I'd like you to consider. Motivation has three key ingredients. If an area is lacking a bit, one of the other two aspects can compensate. When the sum of the three is at a certain point, we act. The three components to motivation are:

NEED — DESIRE — ENERGY

I have seen folks full of nervous energy, who will do unpleasant tasks simply because they need to be doing something. They can't relax because their internal engine is racing. Quick, point them toward the refrigerator with the green things growing in the back. Let the nervous frustration take on the windows stained from winter storms. Whatever you do, keep them away from the shopping mall!

Our energy level is not only tied to our physical body, it's also directly connected to our hope and excitement level. If you have a hard time sleeping the night before an exciting trip, you know what I mean. Anticipation produced chemicals that overpowered the penial gland's secretion of melatonin, the sleep inducing hormone.

Some years back I owned a print shop. By the time the day ran down, I was usually exhausted, except when my friend and I were planning to take a canoe and head up the mountain for a little twilight fishing. It's funny how the hope of doing something we enjoy can generate extra energy. This phenomena can have the kids

bouncing off the walls. It's strange that this energy can't be redirected toward doing chores.

The opposite of this mental/physical relationship is also commonly seen. Our energy can be drained as we meditate on an undesirable task looming up in front of us. A detested confrontation will drain us. Stress can leave us feeling like we've run a marathon. The pressure of starting a new job leaves us exhausted, whereas in a few weeks, with experience as our helper, we can do the same task with far less fatigue. The difference is how we perceive the task. Our mental perception has a lot to do with how we feel physically. We could simplify this by saying that a "rested" mind will produce a rested body; a stressed out mind will result in a stressed out body. David explained how his physical reserves were depleted because of his thoughts:

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.
Psalm 32:3,4

The bad thing about the weariness from mental anguish is that we can't even rest properly. A good tired from proper work and daily activities makes our rest sweet (Ecclesiastes 5:12). For the overtired, stressed, anxious person, sleep makes them more groggy and sluggish. This cycle can result in loss of appetite, which further complicates the energy cycle. The end result of this downward spiral is little motivation to get anything done.

The Proverb says that *hope deferred makes the heart sick* (Proverbs 13:12). When hope is stolen from our mind, a soul-sickness begins to rob us of vitality, without which, even the simplest task seems monumental. Just try to muster up the energy to start working on your taxes when you're fighting depression. Try to tackle the pile of ironing when despair has sapped your energy.

Something almost magical begins to happen when we start to receive hope. An energy begins to percolate up inside us. Hope deferred may make the heart sick, but hope received can give a lot of energy quickly. Good news can begin to heal and rejuvenate: *Bright eyes gladden the heart; good news puts fat on the bones* (Proverbs 15:30). Can you see how what we meditate on is so very important? Ponder dead end situations and hopelessness begins to erode your energy; cast your cares on Father God and rehearse His abundant provisions and hope starts energizing you. The rest of godly meditation will refresh your body.

DESIRE

Desire is a funny thing. We may want what we can't have, which is tied to the little brat that lurks deep inside most of us. Of course you do not suffer from this malady, but most of us do. We've all tried this form of what's been called "reverse psychology" and found it works especially well with small children. Ask for a kiss from your three year old and get shunned; tell them you don't want a kiss, and you get smothered! Tell a rebellious teen what you most definitely don't want them to do, and guess what they suddenly feel a strong compulsion to do?

I think brattiness is behind the power of pornography. God told us to be modest—cover up! There are approximately five billion people on earth and half of them are the same sex as you are. Everybody has the same plumbing as their half does. Seen one, you've seen them all. Or have you? The very fact that you're not supposed to check out another person, even if half of the people in the world are identically arrayed, is all it takes. Pornographers depend upon this brattiness to make big bucks. Satan uses the power of desire to lure the unsuspecting into the snare of death (Proverbs 5:5,6).

We may desire something that is not really "us." For instance, the quiet and shy person may be drawn to the gregarious butterfly by none other than the fact that opposites attract. When a serious relationship ensues, the shy person finds they are repulsed by what seemingly attracted them. One counseling book I have on my shelf is entitled, "Opposites Attack." Heaven help us when we are fooled into desiring the opposite of what we really value.

Desire can be directed on purpose by our inner talk. We can begin to see value in something and talk it up in our mind. As we meditate favorably on it, desire builds. We can overpower the brat inside us by maturely meditating on that which God says has value. As we allow the Holy Spirit to "talk up" virtues and heavenly values in our heart, and as we join Him in agreement, we can soon develop enough desire-energy to get the ball rolling. We can team up with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to harness the energy of desire, which in turn can take us into the realm of rest.

Now, let's consider the matter of...

NEED

Need is the most forceful of the three components. We do many undesirable tasks because they are necessary, whether we like it or not. We change dirty diapers even though we are exhausted and it's the last thing in the world we want to do (even

love can be wimpy when diapers are full!). We may argue with ourselves about doing something (taxes), but when push comes to shove (April 14th), we reach down inside and somehow, somewhere find the energy to overpower our lack of desire and get to working on the ugly task.

Need can be a crazy slavemaster that mutates something that didn't even exist yesterday into an absolute need today. Haunting chants of "I need..." drive people to pay a price for that which, in their rational mind, they would never even consider. The sense of need is what compels a dissipated drug addict to do what they hate, even to the ruination of relationships, health and wealth.

Because need is so powerful, expect it to be the target of our enemy. Be aware that he will try to pump our heads with slogans that hypnotise us into believing we need that which will produce death—"Have you had your Eden apple today?" Everything from inhaling deadly chemicals, to eating more than is safe, to buying what we don't need, the tempter motivates his victims to action with the propaganda of need. Jesus told nervous Martha:

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41,42

If we can find this "one" thing, and allow it to build desire in us, produce hope and energy in us, and develop a strong need for it, holy motivation and momentum will be a piece of cake. Here's what Paul found it to be:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10

God's grace was the motivating factor in Paul's life. The energy was grace. The desire was grace. The need was grace. This grace is the byproduct of God's righteousness. When we see the value in seeking His kingdom, it builds a desire in us. As we meditate on His kingdom, hope begins to energize us. As we step back and get the bigger picture of life, we become truly convinced that we need God's presence, His salvation, His grace more than anything. This need coupled with desire and Holy Spirit produced energy results in motivation that moves mountains. Work accomplished with this kind of motivation is not really work. This is refreshment. This is renewal. The anointing produced by this process makes work fun. Grace does the work and we get the benefit!

An illustration comes to me of a Dude Ranch. One guy is paying for the privilege of working on the ranch, while the man next to him is being paid to do the labor. For the first fellow, it's refreshing time away from city life and his regular job loaded with stress. For the paid hand, it's another day, another dollar. He's full of stress from trying to keep the city-slicker in tow! If we can tap into this perspective of seeing life as a privilege of doing each chore for the Lord, and the price we pay for the privilege is praise, we'd come away from each day, perhaps tired, but definitely refreshed and able to enjoy the sweet rest of a good night's sleep!

FLOATING UPSTREAM

How can you float upstream? Around the world there are places where ships need to go from one sea to another, such as through the Panama Canal, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Going downhill is easy, such as flowing over the Niagara Falls. But, how does one get a huge barge upstream, up and over the falls? How can one lift the payload from a lower elevation to the higher plane, without a lot of expense, time and energy? Let grace do the work!

The locks along a barge canal, as you probably well know, consist of a set of gates or doors, forming water-tight compartments. A barge entering the lowest chamber comes in at its present elevation. Easy enough. The door behind it is shut, and the door in front of it is opened. In flows the water from a higher source! This water is not working because, for it, its going downhill! Piece of cake.

The water, by its very presence, lifts the barge and its great payload higher than it was. After the new level is reached, the door yet in front of it is opened. Once again, water effortlessly enters, raising the barge up to yet another elevation. This process of flowing water does a lot of work without the barge straining a bit. The compartments that the barge has passed through, need only to open and allow the water to run out. The emptied locks are now ready to lift another vessel.

Isn't the correlation obvious. As we put the clamor of the world behind us, and open up to God's flow of grace, He effortlessly lifts us up to new heights! Say "Stop" to the noise of the devil's confusion and temptations. Say "Yes" to Yahweh's awesome grace.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness..."[flows into weakness!] 2 Corinthians 12:9 a

When we try to figure out how God's going to fix everything before we trust Him, it keeps the door behind us open to the world. His grace passes by us and

rushes, unused, somewhere else. No, we must shut out the "Do something" temptations and do something—let God's amazing grace flow in! Concern yourself with opening up more to Abba, than how you or He are going to fix things. Before you can sing, "Up a Lazy River," you'll be past the barrier in your journey!

CHAPTER TWELVE

COMING APART

Not all rest is created equal. The ultimate rest, this side of heaven, is what occurs when God sets us aside as He pours out His wrath on the wicked. For Noah, it was an ocean cruise. Lot and his daughters had a mountain resort, a place of safety as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The Psalmist declared:

*Thou art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble;
Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance. Psalm 32:7*

When trouble comes against the rebellious world, God is the only place of refuge. Catch the irony of this...the One sinners are rebelling against is the only place of safety!

We are to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12), but frequently this method of warfare is that which faith requires, hiding in Abba until the storm passes by. Moses told the multitude leaving Egypt, *Yahweh will fight for you while you keep silent* (Exodus 14:14). The multitude was crazy with fear as the Egyptian army approached. How could they ever repulse such an attack? By letting go having to be in control of the situation and trusting God to finish what He started (Philippians 1:6).

*Come, My people, enter into your rooms, and close your doors
behind you; hide for a little while, until indignation runs its course.
Isaiah 26:20*

There is a rest for us that is different from the rest and relaxation of peaceful times—kicking back, enjoying the summer breeze. There is a rest that we must press in to obtain, and if we fail to gain it, we will perish along with the world being judged. For the church, being raptured from God's wrath on planet earth will necessitate pressing in with prayer and holiness:

But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. Luke 21:36

The five foolish virgins missed out on the marriage supper because, though they had oil for their lamps, **they did not have enough** to last into the night (Matthew 25:1-13). Faithful watching keeps the night from overtaking us:

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6

The "rest" the Holy Spirit is holding out in front of us is the result of **aggressive devotion and intimacy with our awesome God**. Wandering about on the battlefields of life makes us a target for the adversary. As the generals insisted that elderly King David remain in the city as they fought the battle, so we must remain in the citadel of God if we are to escape the fiery missiles of our foe. There is a rest that follows warfare, but the kind I'm talking about now is that which comes as we hide while God's army does the fighting—they fight, we abide!

You will only look on with your eyes, and see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made Yahweh, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. Psalm 91:8,9

I don't believe that this abiding will be very easy. God may be doing the work, but something in we humans wants to jump in the middle of the action. We want to set the record straight, give them a piece of our mind (like we have some to spare), and show them a thing or two. The psalmist prefaces his promise of protection with these words:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to Yahweh, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Psalm 91:1,2

This safe place is entered by having more confidence in the Savior's fighting skills than ours. Lack of confidence in our flesh keeps us hiding there.

The "rest" of protection from the perils about us is found *under His wings*. Draw a mental picture of what Psalm 91 is describing. We are close to His heart, protected in a soft place, under His wings. But to the outside world, this secret place has the appearance of a bulwark, a reinforced fortress:

For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. Psalm 91:3,4

Steel on the outside, soft as feathers on the inside. How do we gain entrance to this place of rest and protection? By love! By seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness (having a right relationship with Him).

Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him. Psalm 91:14,15

Practically, how do we enter into this rest? When things are falling apart all around us, how do we stay in the secret place? Are we not to get involved? What kind of a friend would we be if we remained calm and at peace when our loved ones are being destroyed? And, are we not told that if we seek to save our life we will lose it? Maybe seeking God's refuge is a copout. If we can't "fix" the crazy things around us, at least we can have the decency to go nuts with everyone else! At least they won't be intimidated by our "rest."

Obviously, God is talking about our emotional, mental focus, our dependency. To what are we looking in times of crisis? When situations demand solutions, where do we turn? Inside? Outside? Or, upward?

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:1-3

If our attention is more on the problem than on the Source of the solution, we will panic. As we begin to lose control when panic slides its icy tentacles around our mind, the only solution is to change our focus. Intercession runs bodily into the throne room of heaven and looks into the limitless, all-wise eyes of the God who is love. His promises are for just such a time as this. He is the Christ of every crisis!

As the injured person in an accident may feel we've abandoned them when we run desperately to phone 911, the only real hope for the hurting person is that we leave them while we reach out for help! Prayer enters the phone booth, closes the door and reaches for the only real help. Have you ever had someone look at you through panicky eyes of desperation, and you feel the emptiness of your words coming out, "I'll pray for you." Why doesn't the accuser bother to tell us we're wasting our time calling 911 for the dying? Are we copping out any less when we reach into the heavens for miracles?

Our *rest* in the hidden sanctuary of intercession could be likened to what Moses did on the mountain as his people fought in the plains below. We're told that as long as Moses' hands were raised (in intercession), his troops prevailed. When weariness pulled down his arms, the tide turned in the battle. It didn't take long for Aaron and Hur to notice the problem behind the problem. They sat their leader down on a rock (seated with Christ), and held up his arms (corporate prayer). The battle was won!

What is the problem behind the problems surrounding us? Why doesn't all of our hustle and bustle seem to stem the raging confusion? Could it be that we are supposed to be enjoying our Master, drawing from His limitless supplies, and sending the overflow on to those around us? If mamma doesn't go to the store, we don't eat! If someone isn't spending time in the heavenlies, there are going to be a lot of folks starving. **If we're not more solution minded than problem minded, we're going to be too weary to intercede and too confused to try!**

I imagine it would be frustrating to be a 911 dispatcher. You hear the panic, fear and frustration and all you can do is tell someone else about it. You can't fix the problem directly, but wait a minute, the link between the problem and the solution is standing in the gap! When the off duty dispatcher focuses more on the emergencies than on the care givers, they will get depressed. If they reflect on the successes, they will feel properly proud, satisfied, and rested! They will take great comfort and meaning from being a vital link in the chain.

Why is God calling us to come apart? Just for our rest and relaxation? Isn't the secret place under His wings designed for intercession. There, close to His heart, we set ourselves in agreement with the One who is seeking someone to stand in the gap. We partner, as a helpmeet, to conceive the needed miracle through our faith. Where two agree as touching anything, we have the petition we ask. Faith is satisfied, love is rewarded. The byproduct of such intimacy is rest and eternal solutions! And it's hard to stay negative in that place, because *in His presence is fullness of joy* (Psalm 16:11).

You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not approach you. No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent. For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down. With a long life I will satisfy him, And let him behold My salvation.
Psalm 91:6-8,11-13,16

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REST IS NOT LAZY

To the hard driving, take charge person, the word rest might conjure up the wrong kind of picture. They might envision a field of fruit going bad while the harvesters are taking a prolonged break. Maybe they see kids goofing off instead of cleaning their room. How about the stereotype picture of one laying poolside, sipping lemonade?

The biblical picture of rest is far from lazy. The Scriptures do not have much good to say about the sloth of laziness:

The lazy man says, "There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!" As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly. Proverbs 26:13-16 NKJ

The wickedness of laziness does not stop with letting others do all the work. It uses lying and self-deception as tools to get its own way. A confirmed sluggard might really believe that his phobia lion truly exists. If you've ever observed people possessed by fear, it appears that they really believe their hallucinations! What started with a simple, lazy delay from dealing with issues, mutates into a monster. The lazy person can end up controlled by mind-altering drugs, detached from society, and caught in the downward spiral of feeling worthless and unproductive.

As a door turns on its hinges is not a picture of rest. It's more a metaphor of restlessness. Unable to draw the sweet refreshment of sleep, the lazy person tosses continually in fitful, half-sleep. How bone-weary it is to be in such a state. Haven't we all experienced it one time or another? We're afraid that we'll be very tired in the morning, so we stay in bed, even though the restlessness is non productive. Maybe you've never been there, but I have. Another reason I don't get up and read or do

something productive is that it's dark and cold—there is a lion in the street! Does such a night spent fighting for a few morsels of sleep provide the desired rest? Hardly! It would have been better to have gotten up and prayed or read the Word! Then my weariness could have at least been attributed to a worthwhile reason.

The lazy man can't even enjoy a good meal. He's so taken up with how tired he is that his attention is more on getting the spoon to his lips than with how great the food tastes. That's lazy! What a picture of real tiredness. And the last verse quoted above reveals how this miserable soul is trapped in his quagmire. He garrisons himself with a form of twisted wisdom that keeps him locked in his depression. Such self-centered, energy-sapping logic must be demonic:

This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. James 3:15,16 NKJ

Can you see how delighted our enemy is when we fall into the rut of sluggishness? His work is made a lot easier. The lazy person frees up the evil messengers to go harass someone else. Who is less of a threat to the one who roams around like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), than the one who's sloth has fancied up delusions that make them homebound? Lazy is not good.

The process of developing lazy bones is easy and I believe, not far away from any of us. Some folks protest that they are anything but lazy. Industry is their middle name. But, follow them around, and I'll just bet you'll find some area where they are lazy. They may pick up the papers and the trash, but put off sending thank you notes. Or, they may excel in the correspondence area, but are remiss in having their personal devotions. Others are lazy about returning phone messages. Some put off doing home repairs until threatened with the pain of a handyman being called. The ultimate lazy attribute is that of being too tired to come boldly to the throne of grace. Too exhausted to take every thought captive to the obedience to Christ. I feel that everybody has some Achilles' heel where they are susceptible to laziness.

The path to laziness is tied to the desire cycle of motivation we talked about in Chapter Eleven. Stinkin' thinkin' puts up a bit of a barrier, a sham of resistance. It could start when a spirit of sluggishness tiptoes in and presents us with a phantom barrier. The spirit may give us a "tired" feeling. [Don't think it strange that a spirit can give us feelings. They can put feelings of lust, fear, anger, etc. into our minds.] Following the "tired feelings," we are presented with some "lazy logic"...ten reasons why I feel so wiped out! It is possible that we are legitimately tired and need to rest. So rest already. What I'm talking about here is when you know that you do not have

a valid reason for being tired. You are sluggish, not rightfully weary. The solution is to push through the false barrier. We can do this many ways.

When I feel sluggishness coming between me and my exercise regime, I sometimes resort to trickery. I know this is a gimmick, but it usually works. I tell myself that if I just get started, I won't exercise that long. "Just a few minutes!" Coaxed onto the treadmill, my blood starts pumping, and typically, the adrenalin kicks in, and I can have a good laugh and a good workout! Victory over inertia!

We must have a plan. Sluggishness must be seen as the enemy of real rest. We can talk up the value of a particular goal and hope that our motivation level builds. We can bind and cast out a sluggish spirit, then put feet to our faith. We can lean in the direction we need to go, followed by purposely stepping over the phantom speed bumps of feeling bushed. We can preach ourselves happy. We can stack the deck against our "lazy-self" by having someone show up at a certain time, and we can't let them down. This is good when you're trying to overcome sluggishness about going to church—"Will you come by and get me for the meeting?"

*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, **that you may not be sluggish**, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:11,12*

At stake is our inheritance. The author of Hebrews reminds us of the danger of spiritual laziness. Hope breeds an assurance that perseveres and presses in to obtain the fullness of God's promises. Laziness exudes a numbing toxin that weakens faith by producing guilt. We lack assurance because our feelings are saying that we do not deserve God's promises (this is guilt mocking us). Our head may have all the faith in the world, but our heart lacks the conviction that comes from pure devotion to Christ. The end result is that we're double-minded and thus robbed of receiving from Father God (James 1:6-8).

The person too lazy to pray will lack the sincere faith to bound boldly before the throne of grace. The sluggard with the Scriptures will not only lack the knowledge of what's available to claim, but will also feel the shame that accompanies slothfulness. Our enemy definitely takes advantage of such shortcomings on our part, but his mocking is hard to shut off—even with stern faith commands. You see, our laziness gives him permission to take us to the cleaners:

Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. Proverbs 10:4 NIV

How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. Proverbs 6:9-11 NIV

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor. Proverbs 12:24 NKJ

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. Proverbs 13:4 NKJ

The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway. Proverbs 15:19 NKJ

The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing. Proverbs 20:4 NKJ

The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. Proverbs 21:25 NKJ

God's law of rest is not laziness. Obviously, the Lord hates laziness because it prevents His kids from enjoy His real rest! The deep inner peace and rest you feel at the close of a successful day, as you ponder over the many things you accomplished, provides sweet sleep. You may be exhausted, but the hard work acted as a guilt-destroying antidote, allowing you to enjoy "taking it easy." When guilt slithers in to the mind of one who has just completed a successful task, they usually shift their attention from what they need to do to what they've accomplished. The sweet balm from diligent work provides a kind of energy and hope for facing another day of labor. If combined with the rest attitude of dependance on the Lord Jesus, refreshment for body and soul comes forth.

The neurotic person who can't rest, who is paranoid about laziness, is probably hiding behind work instead of pursuing a deeper relationship with Yahweh. These dear souls are almost as miserable as the sluggard, but for a different reason. Their relentless efforts and mental activities are probably self-centered. The slothful person is obviously self-centered, but so is the person who "can't rest." Why must they always be busy? Is there a phantom parent standing guard over them in their mind, crying "More! More!""? Are they reaching for that ever moving carrot? Perhaps they are trapped in a mental loop that somehow promises that someone, somewhere will be impressed with their vigil and will be so kind as to write something nice on their gravestone—"Here lies one impressively busy person."

The cure for workaholics is in how they go about gaining acceptance. The law of rest reminds us that we must do what we do for our Heavenly Father if we are in fact ever to enjoy His perfect peace and rest. To cease striving and know the Lord is not to be lazy, but to do everything we do for Him.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Colossians 3:17,23,24

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

GOING TO POT

In John chapter two, we come across the story of Jesus turning water into wine. We are told that there were six large waterpots that were full of water for purification. How did putting water in pots purify it? The Jews didn't know anything about germs. Putting water containing bacteria in a pot doesn't kill disease, if anything, it aides the propagation of the bacteria. So how did putting water in pots purify it?

The water these people had came from wells and would be cloudy with dirt particles. After the water sat for a period of time, the dirt would settle to the bottom, leaving what appeared to be clear water. Everything Jesus did, that is written down, is for our instruction (Romans 15:4), so this must be a picture of how the Master wants to purify and transform us. Our bodies are called earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7), and that which is inside us is supposed to give glory to God.

If you put muddy water in a waterpot and keep it stirred up, the water will remain cloudy. The water must be left alone if the particles are to settle out. There is a special purification that takes place as we get still in God's presence.

...the Holy One of Israel, has said, "in repentance and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength..." Isaiah 30:15

And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. Isaiah 32:17

The prophet Isaiah lived in tumultuous times, yet he learned a secret. There is a perfect peace that settles on the person who stays their mind on Yahweh, the most high God (Isaiah 26:3). Part of the value of the law of rest is the peaceful fruit that

travels with it. As we quiet ourselves and lift our focus on to Father God, He fights for us. Remember, the law of rest is to do what we do for Him! When we're Father minded, rest follows.

I've heard people say from their hospital beds that they were so busy that God had to set them aside in a bed of infirmity in order to speak to them. I'm not as concerned with the debate over who set them aside, as I am with the question, "Did you learn anything while you were being forced to rest?" It's amazing how some people can continue to struggle to control their world, even from the restrictions of a hospital bed! What will it take for us to "let go and let God?"

If the illustration I opened this chapter with has application for us today, we should ask, "Has Jesus turn my water into wine?" As we quietly wait on Him, does He speak in inaudible tones, taking the common, ordinary things of life and turn them into exciting new wine? If not, is it because I'm too stirred up inside? Am I talking too much? Is there too much noise around me? Is music blaring? Is the enemy chewing on me? Is guilt beleaguering me? Am I too busy conducting court in my mind—defending/accusing?

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isaiah 57:20,21

The attribute of internal tossing is used to describe a bad heart. We're told that stress (internal commotion) is a cause of heart problems. I feel a scolding coming on... You see, I'm as bad as the next guy with internal noise. I'm either fighting a battle, searching for some deep truth, yakking at God, singing, or something. Prayer time, if not rattling off petitions in English, is filled with tongues. Busy, busy, busy. Maybe God is trying to get a word in edge-wise but little old me is too busy asking for God to speak, to hear Him! Maybe I'm seeking too much and not soaking enough?

Balance. Yes, we need balance. We're commanded to seek, knock and ask. We're also asked to be *still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10 KJV). Maybe we fail to receive the guidance we desperately want from God because it's found beside "still" waters: *He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters* (Psalm 23:2). What if the waters are being whipped to a frenzy by our constant, anxious clamoring? Can He still lead us? Or, maybe the question should be, will He lead us?

Did He not say to come apart? I usually add, "before we come apart!" Yahweh spoke to Elijah in a still, small voice. Maybe we're waiting for Him to drown us out.

He can outshout us, but then we'd probably be like the folks in John's gospel who said it was thundering when God spoke! *So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved"* (Nehemiah 8:11). True holiness is related to stillness. "Being grieved" can be self-conscious, self-centered. The law of rest is seeking to get our eyes off of ourselves, our needs, our hurts, our confusion, our whirlwind of busyness, and put our attention on the source of holiness.

The purification of water by putting it in pots is a picture of the meaning of holiness—setting aside. When the Jews set aside water in the pots, it was to be holy water, or water to be used only for sacred rituals. This water could not be used for any common purpose, but only for sanctified sprinkling and cleansing. We are to be holy because Father God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). As our God is "set aside" or resting from doing His own thing, and out of love He's ministering life to us, so we are to be set aside to do everything we do for Him. The law of rest is the picture of sanctification! Jesus, God manifest in flesh, came not to do His own will, but He came as a servant—not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). To be holy is to do what we do for Him!

Poor Martha. Jesus said that her thoughts were dragging her all around (Luke 10:41 in the Greek). Her sister, the source of her consternation, was sitting quietly at Jesus' feet, drinking in His every word. The Lord said she had chosen the better part. There is a time to bang pots and pans in the kitchen (thank God for good cooks) but when we need refreshment, Jesus' feet are the prime spot! Rest is to be found in quietness at the nail-scarred feet.

How can we calm our mind down without falling asleep? If you fall asleep every time you try to get quiet, you may be living too fast, pushing too hard. You might do better to take off enough time that you can get quiet before the Lord, and if you fall asleep, you sleep. When you wake up, quietly seek Him again. If you fall asleep again, keep the process up until you are rested enough to stay awake. I can hear someone saying that this process would take them days. Is your spiritual, mental, physical health worth it? Would you rather spend days in a hospital bed or in a mountain cabin seeking God?

How do you get your mind to shut up long enough to hear God? Remember **S-R-D**? After you've Submitted your entire self to the Lord (body, soul and spirit), Resist the enemy. Much of our confusion comes from him. That's why we're commanded to take every thought captive to Jesus. Our foe tries to jam our line of communication. Every time a stray thought bounces into your head, calmly blow it away (oxymoron). Then begin the **D**, Drawing near to God (James 4:7,8).

To draw near to God, our focus needs to be single. Isaiah used the word stayed:

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3 NKJ

"Stayed upon Jehovah," the gospel hymn reads, "hearts are fully blessed, finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest." Single vision, fixed on our Heavenly Father, affords that place where our turmoil ceases. Focusing on Abba yields sweet rest, rest that He can easily turn into sweet, new wine!

How do we focus on Him? Ponder His Word, perhaps your favorite Scripture, until you can picture it in your mind. This is biblical meditation. As you "see" His Word come alive in your mind, focus on it until He speaks. If you choose the twenty-third Psalm, picture you and Jesus in a green pasture, with a quiet stream wandering close by. Is there a big, shady tree in the meadow? Have Jesus sit under it and you lean back on Him. Look up into His face. Maybe you can't see the details of His face, but what about His beard? Sometimes all I can see is His beard. As you focus on His face, softly tell Him how much you love Him. Then, be still! Wait. Let your inner waters calm down. Let His presence purify you. You may not be able to strike gold the first time you try this, but if you consistently give Him quality "quiet" time, I'm sure you will soon hear His awesome voice. We'll all be able to tell when He turns your water into wine!

The law of rest points us toward true worship. I've heard the word "worship" defined as "being taken up with God's worth." Reading and pondering hymns, songs and spiritual poetry can help focus our attention on the Source of Love, the River of Holiness. Some people get especially blessed by reading from books of prayers. Typically these spiritual resources are Heavenly Father focused and can help us take our eyes off of fickle man and earthly problems.

Our soul waits for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Thy lovingkindness, O Yahweh, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee. Psalm 33:20-22

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FRUITFUL REST

Are you aware of your breathing rate right now? Probably not. We usually don't even think about breathing in and out unless we experience some problem. When we're congested, we may fight for every breath. Some people on oxygen are more mindful of how essential every breath is. As a kid, I would swim across the city park's Olympic-sized pool under water, playing frogman. My lungs would scream for another breath. I would break to the surface gasping for oxygen. Breathing had, at that moment, a new intensity.

So I've made you think about breathing. Why? I want us to reflect on the rest that comes when we naturally do what we were designed to do. When we exercise hard, which is the opposite of rest, we are aware of our breathing. At rest, we are free to think about everything else. When we are worked up about something, our relationship with God becomes more frantic. Our prayers are more intense. The picture of deep, spiritual rest, therefore, is when we are almost unconsciously breathing praise, drawing in His grace virtually unnoticed. The almost hidden rhythm of spirituality is the substance of rest.

The picture that Jesus gave us is that of a branch vitally connected to the vine. The continual flow of life-giving water rises from the roots, to the vine, through the branches, into the leaves, and finally back into the atmosphere. In return, the leaves produce sap that the branches give back to the vine and the roots. This continual interchange produces new growth, leaves and fruit. Giving and taking. Without strain, without pain.

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and

dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. John 15:5-8

Why this picture of abiding in the vine? Maybe the Lord wanted us to realize that glorifying the Father and bearing continual fruit is not supposed to be some tedious ordeal. It is designed to be something so simple that we can give our God great pleasure as we ourselves live a rested life. This picture is not one of frantically trying to please Him, but rather enjoy Him in a steady rhythm of give and take. This is not harsh treatment of our body, continually spouting pious platitudes, or whipping our wayward self into compliance. It's enjoying His love.

Do you realize that the plant kingdom was exempt from the Old Testament law of Sabbath rest? Humans and their livestock were ordered to rest every seventh day (Exodus 20:10), but not their plants. No signs were posted in the fields: Absolutely No Growing On The Sabbath! Why? I think it is because constant growth is the picture of rest. The human body at rest is still a dynamic machine, repairing, restocking and refreshing itself. The heart and mind obviously are not allowed to take vacations; they must refurbish themselves as the body operates at a slower pace. We call this rest.

A picture of the power of rest is that of a small seed that lands in a tiny crack of a very large boulder. As the seed begins to germinate, it's hair-fine rootlettes (cotyledons) seek out a space in the crack. The roots grow where they can and their expansion begins to make a way for them. The silent, slow power of growth of the small seedling is seen when the bolder fissures, cracks open and the tree lifts its proud crown to the sky. Keep your eyes peeled the next time you go hiking and you'll see many of these silent, powerful rock-busters. What would take a man much effort and work, the tree does simply by steady, calm growth. Rest-work is powerful.

As our bodies can never completely obey the letter of the Old Testament law of rest (and remain alive), so our soul and our spirit can not cease from activity. Rest for the soul, therefore, must be what it does, not just what it doesn't do. The law of rest reminds us that when we are Heavenly Father minded, we are truly at rest. When we draw from our Savior, we are being refreshed. Rest is not stopping all functions (not breaking up any rocks or mountains), but rather clearing the path of life of all obstructions by continually drawing our power from the indwelling Holy Spirit! How

can we continually enjoy this lifestyle as the plant kingdom does? Reread the passage above from John chapter fifteen.

The seventh verse of John fifteen has great significance along the line of rest. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.* There's no sense here of great labor in asking in order to receive from the Source. Rather, the calm, regular interchange provides the basis for obtaining whatever is needed. We soak in His Word as a branch soaks up the water from the roots. Our praise, like the transpiration provided by the leaves, pulls up the continual flow of water. "Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for filling me continually with Your Holy Spirit. I give You worship. Oh, how I love You." No great urgency. No need for panicky gimmicks like... "Father, I'll just die if You don't..."

When Jesus said "*whatever you wish,*" He opened the door pretty wide. We might expect Him to make this kind of a promise contingent upon our paying a great price. This blank check is extended to the person who abides in Him and allows His Word to abide in them. But wait a minute, this may be a greater price than a concentrated fit of energy expended only occasionally. This is a picture of righteousness, a right relationship with Abba. This is a continual life of pulling Him in and giving Him back praise. This is a twenty-four hour a day, vital relationship. Although it is not classified as work, it definitely is not "doing nothing." Our enemy might accuse us of being lazy or negligent, but this life of abiding in the Vine is anything but inactivity!

A continual whisper in your mind of "Jesus, I need You," is as important as your lungs drawing in air. "Thank You Heavenly Father," is essential every moment, as is the beating of your heart. The throbbing of your injured hand contacts the brain, seeking relief; can our minds do less when life throws pains at us? Hurts and rejections must trigger our spirit to race to the throne of grace for the solution rather than be caught in the downward spiral of focusing on the flesh—ours or somebody else's.

Life is full of anxious input. The hard-work mentality jumps in with steam and sweat, pushing, controlling, bossing and tossing orders. Sometimes this is the right response. At times it is the shortest, quickest path to the solution—see the need and fix it! What are we to do, though, when our vim and vigor produce frustration rather than results? Quit? Throw a temper tantrum? How about entering God's rest? Why not take our focus off the mountain in the path, as the faith-seed does, and begin to

draw in God's Living Water? Soaking and abiding allows the "supernaturally" natural process of growth to calmly lift the mountain from its foundation!

...truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. Matthew 17:20 b

As the little seed says continually by its growth, "Out of my way, I'm growing through," we merely repeat Abba's promises continually. The seed doesn't shout at the mountain, and we don't have to shout back at life's problems (though shouting sometimes gives a needed release!). We simply draw strength from the living and abiding Seed-Word of God. It grows inside us and before we know it, the big problems that made us so anxious yesterday, are not to be found. Trials are "rested" into testimonies. The abiding is not just our focus on Father God, it's also a continual rehearsing of His Word. Jesus, the High Priest of our confession, helps us direct our continual confession of His never-failing promises. This growth produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness!

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:17,18

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. Philippians 4:8,9

APPENDIX A

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

The Bible tells us how we can enjoy a rich, fulfilling life. The Awesome Creator designed us with a capacity for love and a desire to be successful. This abundant life was formulated around mankind living in close fellowship with the Lord. Listen to the words of Jesus Christ...

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20 NIV

God's design includes provisions for us even when we're drained:

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28 NIV

Yes, our loving Father God has our best in mind:

...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10b NIV

I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11 NIV

Why is it that most people are not experiencing this abundance? Mankind has stepped out of God's plan and has tried to do their own thing. The Bible calls this sin. This rebellion blocks God's blessings from us. None of us is excluded from this problem of sin:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 NIV

Some people feel that sin is an old-fashioned concept, but the Bible tells us that our sin separates us from God's blessings.

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.
Isaiah 59:1,2 NIV

Our good works and noble intentions are not sufficient to reinstate us to a standing where the holy God can bless us:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Isaiah 64:6 NIV

God's plan of salvation is the provision of His love for a race of fallen, stubborn beings. Because the Almighty is holy, His standards are essential and can't be ignored. But, because "*God is love*," He designed a way to reinstate those individuals who, out of sincere love for Him, would obey His instructions.

GOD'S SOLUTION

God's Spirit overshadowed a virgin named Mary, and the child that was conceived was therefore both God and man. God entered our world in human form as the son of Mary and the Son of God—Jesus, the Christ (or "Anointed One").

Jesus led a sinless life by complete obedience to Father God. Then, as our substitute, He took our place and our punishment.

Whereas the punishment for sin was death, and because He was just, God couldn't ignore sin, but He revealed in the Old Testament that He would receive a substitute payment for man's sins.

Animal sacrifices pointed to the day when God, in human form, would come to earth and be our substitute sacrifice—the Lamb of God! What God's holiness demanded, God's love provided!

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16 NIV

Because Jesus was a perfect man, He could pay for our sins; because He was Eternal God, His blood paid for **all** who would come to Him.

Jesus willingly went to the cross and died as our sin substitute. He arose from the dead to demonstrate that God's holiness was satisfied. By rising from the dead, Jesus broke sin's power over us.

...He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption...How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Hebrews 9:12b,14 NIV

This salvation is all of God. Going to church, doing good works, etc., will not save us. It is very hard for independent individuals to accept that they can do nothing to merit salvation.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8,9 NIV

OUR RESPONSE

A free gift cannot be earned, but it must be accepted! An essential aspect of God's plan of salvation is that it separates between those who couldn't care less about God's will and those who, when they see the error of their ways, will repent, or turn from doing their own thing.

...unless you repent, you too will all perish. Luke 13:3 NIV

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. Acts 20:21 NIV

We receive Jesus' payment for our sin by submitting to His Lordship over our life. Submission and obedience puts us back on the original path God designed for us!

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 NIV

Do you want to receive God's gift of salvation right now?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins? That He arose from the grave on the third day?

Will you turn from being the boss of your life and surrender to Jesus, and ask Him to be your Lord?

Here is a sample prayer. Ponder it, then put it in your own words and say it to God, if you truly mean it.

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You admitting that I have sinned and have not done Your will. I believe that, out of love, you sent Jesus, Your Son, to die for my sin. I believe that He rose from the dead and has destroyed sin's power over my life. I turn from my sin and receive Jesus as my Savior and my Lord!

The exact wording is not as important as the heart response. Did you turn from being the lord of your own life and, in receiving Jesus, are you making Him your Lord?

This may seem like a simple prayer, yet it is a legal transaction, a covenant. If you were sincere, God will honor His Word and will save you and send His Holy Spirit to live inside you.

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GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

Read the Bible every day. Get an easy to understand translation, such as The New International Version, The Good News Bible, The Book (Living Bible), or The New American Standard Bible.

Start reading at least a chapter a day. Begin with Matthew's gospel and read through the New Testament first; then begin reading in the Old Testament. Make notes as you read, and write down any questions you may have to ask a Bible teacher later. Begin each Bible study with prayer for God's guidance.

Look up these verses on the importance of Bible study: 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Psalm 119:11; Psalm 1:1-3. Check the index of your Bible for the location of the books of the Bible.

Talk to God your Father in prayer, every day. Begin your prayer time like Jesus' example, with praise (Matthew 6:9). Confess any sin. 1 John 1:9 tells us the Lord will forgive us. Look up these verses to see what happens when we don't confess our sin: Psalm 66:18; Psalm 32:1-7.

Pray for others (Ephesians 6:18, 19; Colossians 4:2-4). Instead of worrying, pray (Philippians 4:6-7). Give thanks in your prayers (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Bring your requests to the Father in Jesus' name (John 16:23,24).

Beware of a new pull. Our enemy, Satan, wants to pull you down, discourage you and make you give up. Jesus said the first thing that would happen to us after we receive the Word would be that Satan would come to try to steal the seed (“I didn't feel anything; nothing happened”). Also, persecution, worry, cares of this world, and the love of sin will attempt to choke the word (Mark 4:3-20).

Resist the devil in the name of Jesus the very instant you recognize his temptation traps of sin and doubt: 1 Peter 5:6-9; James 4:6-8; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Think of “resisting” as chasing away a stray dog who's getting into your garbage...“Get outta' here, you pest!”

When temptations or pressures increase, get together with another believer. The Lord wants us to strengthen each other (Galatians 6:1,2). We're to help others! This entire book is about winning the war against our enemy, Satan. Learn all you can; share all you learn!

Meet regularly with other Christians (Hebrews 10:24,25). Find a good church home where the Bible is taught, God is praised, Jesus is served, and the Holy Spirit is honored. If you have difficulty locating a church that teaches the whole Bible, including the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare (such as this book teaches), write Spear Ministries at the address in the front of this book, and we'll seek to help you find one.

Look into being baptized in water (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47,48).

Begin seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is when Jesus pours out the power of the Holy Spirit on us. Study these verses: Luke 11:9-13; John 7:37-39; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:44-46. Chapters Nine and Ten in this book deal with this in more detail.

Begin sharing the story of God's love and salvation with others. You may be the only “preacher” some people will listen to (Romans 10:9-15).

Please share your comments with me at...

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