

God's Rest for the Stressed

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

A Christian has two natures—his old sin nature and the new nature given by God. An unsaved person only has one nature. Since the Christian has an option to live in one nature or the other, he is not as predictable as the unsaved man.

Because we have these competing natures, we face a choice every moment of the day: We can live in God's rest, or we can operate in the stress of our self-effort. The latter course is one that always ends up in failure. Sooner or later, the capacity of the flesh is exhausted, which brings about reactions and emotional outbursts in response to situations that are beyond our control.

Internalizing situations causes stress. Stress is a known killer, both spiritually and physically. Doctors have determined that high-stress lifestyles produce short life spans. The mind and the emotions are simply overworked and they

take it out on the body.

Life doesn't have to be that way. This booklet will show you that there is a rest for the people of God. It is a rest centered on and supported by the love of God that never ever fails or forsakes us.

Chapter One

GOD KNOWS OUR FRAME

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Romans 6:14-15).

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

“As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth” (Psalm 103:13-15).

I love to read in the Bible about the ways God dealt with the children of Israel. They rejected Him in the wilderness, provoked Him

when they had no water, grieved Him in the desert, and yet He had compassion on them and forgave their iniquity. He did not destroy them because He knew that they were but flesh.

A person who uses a pickup truck knows that the vehicle has limited dimensions; therefore, it can only carry so many pounds. God knows our capacities, how much we can handle. He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to stand. What's more, with every temptation, He provides a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We need to remember this in our dealings with each other. I was counseling a teenager who kept saying, "I do not love my mother." He needed to understand that the problem was not with his mother; the problem was with him.

Love Comes from the Subject

This teenager needed to understand that with God's love, the subject performs the action of giving love. It is not up to the object to cause love to happen. Every husband should consider this in the way he treats his wife. She is frail, and she hasn't been perfected yet. He must look at her in terms of compassion, understanding that all of us have weak frames, and in our natural

condition we are prone to mistakes.

Our heavenly Father's love goes so far beyond what we are. He loves us. He pities us. His Son shed His blood and died for us. He doesn't impute sin to us; He doesn't even keep a record of our sins. He understands our frailty. As our heavenly Father understands our frailty, so we as fathers should understand our children's frailties. We must treat them with the heart of God, for we are all but flesh.

All of us are sinners—the pastor, the choir director, the baker, the doctor, the lawyer, the mother, the father, the brother, the sister, the children. When we received Christ as our personal Savior by grace through faith, we became saints (1 Corinthians 1:2; 16:15). No, we are not always saintly, but we are who we are because Jesus Christ made us saints through the Finished Work of Calvary.

Specific Promises for Specific Needs

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in

them that heard it.

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

“For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest” (Hebrews 4:1-5).

This passage in Hebrews 4 tells us to be careful not to leave out a promise for our life, especially for a specific need. Each of God’s promises relates to a specific need. If we leave a promise out of our life, then we cannot enter into God’s rest. He has a beautiful rest for us—a rest that penetrates the unconscious, the subconscious, and the conscious mind of our souls, a rest that calms self-consciousness in the emotions and the volition.

Faith-rest depends upon who God is, what God did, and what I believe. No one can have faith-rest if he tries to work out the fulfillment of a promise in his flesh. Rest comes when we have a deep trust, loyalty, and faithfulness to God Almighty—when we abide in His promises.

He prepares a rest for us so we can fulfill our

joy (see John 15:11). That joy becomes our strength as God shares His happiness with us on the inside (Nehemiah 8:10). He gives us peace that the world cannot give (John 14:27).

The Essential Word That Is Heard

God does these things for us providing we hear the Word from the pastor-teacher under whom we were called to serve in the local assembly. No Christian is called to have five pastors; God calls each one of us to serve under one pastor-teacher.

When we enter into God's rest, we do so through His integrity and His promises. He has promised to bless our marriages and our families (1 Peter 3:7; Hebrews 6:13; Acts 2:39). He also promises to bless our businesses. Perhaps His blessing doesn't come when we expect it, but He will keep His promise:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Chapter Two

PROMISES THAT
OVERPOWER ADVERSITY

The Lord Jesus Christ wants us to understand the difference between adversity and stress. Adversity refers to circumstances on the outside. These are things we cannot control. They are inevitable, and most of them have nothing to do with us. We are not to blame. These are called adversities.

When, however, we refuse God's provision of grace and we react to circumstances, we internalize the adversities. This is what we call "stress." It is something that we allow to control us. Stress impairs the memory and inhibits our ability to receive and learn. Stress takes away our keenness and makes us double-minded, even when we don't intend to be so. It discourages us and causes us to live in degrees of despair. It brings garbage into our minds.

Stress, according to medical and psychologi-

cal studies, causes many physical and emotional problems. Stress is a major cause for problems that lead to divorce, alcohol and drug abuse, overeating, and a number of other unhealthy practices. Why? Unhappiness within brings an inability to resolve, through positive measures, the circumstances without.

Two of the top psychiatrists say that the effects of stress can take fifteen years off a person's life. Stress is the leading cause behind conditions that lead to death.

A person who lives in stress internalizes problems instead of receiving perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). The Lord says, "I don't want you to be stressful. I love you with an everlasting love, and what I really want to give you is perfect peace."

Receive God's Blessings

When we mix faith with what we hear from the promises of God, we enter into God's rest where the work is finished. There is no condemnation, and we are not put on trial. God wants to bless us, and He does, far beyond what we could even ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

Why does He bless us? We are the objects of the love He expressed at Calvary. He loves us so

much that He died for us—while we were yet sinners. Don't you think He will do much more for us now that we are saved? He is just waiting to bless us so that His mercy can be exalted (Isaiah 30:18).

God wants to cleanse and purge our unconscious and subconscious mind. When we respond to His love and receive His blessings, we will have a single eye, and our whole body will be filled with light (Matthew 6:22). He desires to give us divine guidance by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15) through the Word of God (Psalm 119:133).

But when we live in the effects of stress, we let our old sin nature function through our free volition. That causes us to enter into the process of knowing or perceiving people and situations according to self-occupation in one of the six lust patterns: materialism, power, the desire to be praised, pride, sex, and criticism.

But when we let the Word and the Spirit influence our free volition, we become connected with grace, mercy, and love in our conscience. As a result, we become cognizant of Christ and occupied only with who He is (Hebrews 12:2). The stress goes, and we are liberated—not agitated.

Glory to God! We can enter into a rest from strife and struggle. We can enter into a rest from all distress. We can live in the joy of the Lord twenty-four hours a day. He will even give His beloved beautiful sleep (Psalm 127:2).

Profit from His Promises

Stress comes when we do not claim the promises of God. Thus, there is no filling of the Holy Spirit when we let stress take over. The love of God cannot be received and shed abroad in a stressful heart. God's Word declares more than seven thousand promises. There is a promise for every situation we encounter, and not one of those promises will ever fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). When a child of God takes hold of a promise, he will mix faith with the character of the One who gave the promise.

Claim God's promises. Confess His promises. Talk about His promises.

God wants to heal our souls. He wants to heal our bodies. He wants to heal our diseases. God wants to bless us and transform the loved ones in our families. He will do it all by grace. How do we know that? Titus 1:2 tells us that God cannot lie. It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). All of His promises are yea and

amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Don't stagger at the promises of God, but be strong in faith, believing (Romans 4:20). Believe in the things that are not as though they are (Romans 4:17). We have a God who loved us enough to die for us. He has paid for our sins. He remembers that we are very needy because we have this frame of flesh.

The Word of God says in Hebrews 4:1-5 that the Gospel profited us because we believed, but the promises did not profit the children of Israel because they would not enter into His rest in the wilderness. When we believe, we enter into His rest.

Claim God's Promises

Let's take a promise and follow it through. Years ago, God promised us some things. I was not even teaching Sunday School at that point. I was just an available Christian.

"You will be on radio," He told me. There was no such thing as live Christian talk radio back then. But a man in New England started a show and then turned it over to me. We have been on the airwaves nearly forty years now—the second one in America to do it. What happened? I claimed God's promise.

“You will be on TV,” God said. Again, I wasn’t preaching yet. Here we are, years later, and our program is televised from coast to coast on various cable systems—All because we claimed that promise.

“You will be a pastor after My heart with a ministry that will grow and grow, touching many lives wherever you go. There will be persecution, but I will bless you according to Mark 10:30. And, I will expose the persecutors.”

God has done this for me every step along the way because I claimed His promise.

God says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—you and your house” (see Acts 16:31). If God has given you a promise like that, claim it; and no matter how bad things look, God will save your children. I know it is hard for some parents to believe that one. Believe it, I say, because that promise will not fall to the ground. When you hear that promise, mix faith with it, and you shall profit from the promise.

It doesn’t matter what the circumstances are, mix the Word you have heard with faith, and you will profit from the Word of God and enter into His rest.

Chapter Three

MIX FAITH WITH THE REST THAT REMAINS

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9-10).

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

“The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands” (Psalm 138:8).

There remains a rest—a rest from sin, a rest

from judgment, a rest from going to hell. Beyond those things, there remains a rest that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit, a rest of joy, of peace, of power, and of wisdom. There is a rest in knowing that you are called to serve Him.

We can rest in the promise that He always finishes what He has started (Philippians 1:6).

It is amazing that a man and woman of God can hear directly from the Word (providing they come to church, ready to hear) for their family, their business, and their health. For anything that happens to them in life, they can receive a promise, mix faith with the promise, and watch God go to work.

We didn't get into over 180 countries by accident. The 130 outreaches we oversee in Baltimore, the area of our local church, didn't just happen. We claimed the promises and then starting telling people what God has done. And the people like what they have heard. Our church is constantly growing.

His Rest Never Ends

Throughout the first six days of Creation, God said there was a "morning" and an "evening." But on the seventh day, He didn't say

anything about an “evening” because the sun has never set on His rest. There has been no end to His rest since that seventh day. There is no end to His resting in His love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times, and the strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is our treasure (see Isaiah 33:6). “Fear” speaks of reverence. We reverence God by entering into His rest, by claiming His promises instead of withdrawing into our emotions and acting emotional. Reverence prompts us to draw near to Him and be spiritual. God blesses His children with faith-rest. There are no strings attached, and no striving or struggling involved.

I won’t have a hard week this week because I have entered into His rest. I have ceased from worrying, from stress, from anxiety, from discontentment. No matter what happens, I will—by God’s grace—enter into His rest.

Apastor asked his congregation to do something special. He said, “Take time right now and go to the one who blesses you the most.” A line formed in front of an eighty-year-old lady. She was a prayer warrior and soul winner, a woman who kept making phone calls, investing in people though she had trouble getting around. She

was a blessing because she had entered into God's rest despite adverse circumstances.

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was going blind and his son asked him, "What are you going to do?"

"I served God while I had sight, and I will keep serving Him after I'm blind," General Booth said. Why could he respond this way? He had entered into God's rest.

Mixing Faith Is Easy

It is such a great thing to mix faith with what we hear as we respond to God. Mixing faith is as simple as making biscuits. You put certain ingredients together and follow the directions, and you have something good to eat.

Every time we mix faith with a promise from God, we receive a blessing. Say, "God bless me in my business"—and claim 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." He will do it. Of course, the sovereign will of God is the final decision.

Say to God, "Bless my family. Bring out a providential reversal in the lives of my children who have gone far from you." He will do it. Ask Him for healing. He will do big things like that.

Billions of years ago, God foresaw that you would accept Christ. He foreknew it. He predestined you in Christ. He called you, justified you, and glorified you in His heart, in His purpose, in His plan, and in His providence. In the beginning of time on earth, in the eternal counsel of the Trinity, He expressed His unconditional love in the diplomacy of "divine etiquette." This means that with godly manners and godly grace He presented Himself to ungodly people, never violating our free volition. To this day, He rests in His love toward sinners.

The Sacredness of Faith-Rest

In Exodus 15:24, the children of Israel didn't have any water and they began to murmur. They had just witnessed the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. They watched the great army of Egypt get washed away. Yet, here at the first test of faith, they began to murmur. Moses, however, entered into rest and started talking to God. God told Moses, "Strike the rock and water will come out." God gave water to the children of Israel even though they murmured.

God did things again and again for Israel because Moses practiced faith-rest. One time there were bitter waters. God told Moses to throw a

tree into the pool and the waters were made sweet. I don't know how Moses put up with them for forty years—with all the murmuring and complaining. I do know that without faith-rest, he never would have made it.

In Numbers 20, Israel again needed water, and again the people were speaking against Moses. God told him, "Speak to the rock and water will come out." But Moses, in his anger toward the people, struck the rock twice. Water did come out, but Moses' action went against the Finished Work of Calvary and against the principle of faith-rest. God disciplined him and would not let him cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The Finished Work and the principle of faith-rest are sacred to God. None should touch these things. God wants us to have His rest internally with meekness and joy on the inside. There is not a reason in the world for us to be upset. There is no reason for us to struggle mentally. No matter what happens, Jesus Christ stands ready to give us contentment with godliness, no matter what state we are in.

CONCLUSION

A note from a listener to our radio program said this:

“Discouraged and depressed, I was not able to function. Then, I started listening to your radio broadcast. Your brokenness and love moved me, and God’s love came into my heart. After listening for ten days, I have been totally healed.”

That is a beautiful testimony of what resting in God can do for someone who is stressed. God’s rest sends us out with the blessings of grace in the edification, hope, joy, and faith of the mercies that He makes new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

This is why the Gospel is so glorious. His grace is so superb. His love is indescribable. As God’s people, we are precious in His sight. He has made us what we are because of what He did at Calvary.

Praise Him for giving us the instructions of

His Word and the joy of His Word. Thank Him for faith, hope, and precise expectations in His promises.

Lord, help us to pick up these promises and mix faith with them. May we learn to enter into Your rest for each day. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.