

## **A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

I have enjoyed seeing the victors in the winter Olympics. The athletes are skiing or snowboarding to the maximum physical exertion, then as the winner approaches the finish line, he or she straightens up, lifts up the head, bursts into a gigantic smile, pumps the fist and glides across the finish line in confidence, exultation and rest. Rest from further exertion; rest from competition and rest from sheer nervous tension. In my mind, I kept seeing this picture played out as I contemplated our message for this morning. Hebrews 4: 9, 10: "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."

When a person receives Christ as personal Lord and Savior, he or she has entered into a perpetual rest. We did not work our way into salvation and thanks be to God there is no way we can work our way out of salvation. The Bible says in Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." There is no argument here; we agree with Paul who declared in I Timothy 1:8a, "But we know that the law is good...." But Paul also discovered in his human nature as shown in Romans 7:21, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." In exasperation he concludes in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In the very next verse he cries out his answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord..." (Romans 7:25a). So, how does the Lord Jesus do this? The Word tells us if we attempt to work our way out or through this mess, we run into the facts disclosed in Romans 3:20, 28: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Here's how God brings us into right relationship with Him; Romans 8:3 tells us, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." II Corinthians 5:21 says it perfectly: "For He (the Father) hath made Him (the Son) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The Apostle concludes in Romans 11:6a, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace...."

What victory we have in Jesus! And yet, why are so many living a defeated life? Before we go any further, let it be biblically understood that we who have been saved are in victory. What happens that deprives us of victory? I would put forth the question Paul asked in Galatians 5:7: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" The Devil is such a liar (John 6:44)! He will tell God's people that they are missing out by not partaking and indulging in the sins that this

world has to offer. Even the fleshly, yet religious sham of Mardi Gras followed by Ash Wednesday is such a farce, in that, before you enter Lent you better “party down” because any form of restraining the flesh is for the pits. God’s Word tells the truth about living without restraint: “...The way of transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15b). Isaiah 57:20, 21 tells it like it is: “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

Hebrews 4:9 says, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” We are commanded in Psalm 37:7 to “rest in the LORD...” When we walk contrary to the Word and ways of God, we never find contentment; we never find rest. As a matter of fact, restlessness is an attribute of the demonic world as illustrated in Matthew 12:43: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.”

There are 275 Bible verses where “rest” is mentioned. Let’s take a few instances and see if we can discover the benefits of rest, especially as applied in the life of the Christian.

## 1. REST FOUND IN STILLNESS

Exodus 23:11: “But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still...” Even the land will be more productive if activity ceases for a period of time. It’s during this time of rest that we get to know God better. Psalm 46:10a: “Be still, and know that I am God...” Miracles happen when we stop and let God do what only God can do. Exodus 14:13: “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” It is often when we rest that God goes to work. Philippians 2:13: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

God saw the good that taking one day of the week and resting would do when He commanded in Exodus 35:2, “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.” Jesus told His disciples in Mark 6:31, “...Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” Vance Havner said, “We will either come apart and rest or we will come apart.”

## 2. REST FOUND IN GOD’S PRESENCE

Exodus 33:14 informs us, “And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Where God is manifesting Himself to His people, there is rest. To live outside that realm is chaos, such as depicted in the life of the maniac of

Gadera. But when Jesus manifests Himself there is great peace and rest as Luke 8:35 records, "Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."

### 3. REST FROM CONFLICT

Joshua 14:15 says, "And the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war." Where there were giants, there was war. When we deal with the giants that invade a holy walk with the Lord there will always be war. I Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." In Genesis 8:9-12 we find an amazing parallel, "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark. And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more." In Genesis 8:7 Noah sent forth a raven who had a grand time going from dead, defiled carcass after another. But the dove would not stay in the earth until she found life, then she stayed. Rest will only be enjoyed by God's people in His life. Romans 8:6 reminds us, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Carnality and spirituality will never peacefully co-exist!

### 4. REST FROM CORRECTION

Proverbs 29:17: "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." A corrected child is living in rest. The fellowship with my earthly father was always so sweet when I lived in obedience to him. I did not dread his coming home nor did I sit anxiously at the supper table. Hebrews 12:11; "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

### 5. REST FROM BURDENS

In Matthew 11:28, 29 Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Resting in the Lord and being free from life's burdens does not mean inactivity. Returning to the athlete analogy, the gold medal winners age and move beyond their days of

competition and then they often do something very profitable; they teach others how they did it. II Timothy 2:2: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The industrious Christian finds continued rest in teaching the ways of rest to other believers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.