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## **I Will Give You Rest**

**By David Wilkerson**

May 15, 1995 God has promised His people a glorious, incomprehensible rest, which includes peace and security for the soul. The Lord offered this wonderful rest to the children of Israel. It meant a life full of joy and victory - a life without fear, guilt or condemnation. But up to the time of Christ, no generation of believers ever walked fully in this blessed promise. As the Bible makes very clear, they never obtained it because of their unbelief!

"...they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

Because of their unbelief, God's people went through life full of misery, doubt, fear, restlessness. They missed the promised rest during the period of the kings and prophets. God also offered it to David's generation, but they didn't enter into it, either. In every generation it was refused - never appropriated, never understood.

That is why, when we read Hebrews 4, we find this glorious life of faith still unclaimed:

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (4:9).

Yet this passage also adds: "...some must enter therein..." (verse 6).

My Prayer Is That Today You Will Enter Into the Rest God Has for You! The Bible admonishes present-day believers with a warning:

"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" (4:1).

Few believers have entered into this promised rest. On the contrary, many are tossed about by winds and waves of doctrines. Thousands upon thousands claim to be filled with the Spirit of God - yet many are restless, guilt-laden, with no security in Christ.

As long as these Christians are surrounded by their believing friends and everything is going fine, they can talk confidently about walking in victory. But when the enemy blows his ferocious winds of adversity upon them, they are pushed and pulled, cast down, with no strength to resist. Many are overwhelmed by temptation. They end up falling - and afterward they are crushed by guilt and shame, wondering if they're even saved. They completely fall apart - wiped out by adversity!

In some churches, victory is measured by manifestations of the flesh. A couple left our church a few years ago because, as they put it, "You people don't know how to 'shout.'" They said that in their previous church, the congregation "shouted" during services, often for three or four hours. The people would dance around and scream at the top of their lungs.

The problem was, this couple was hooked on pornography. Often after a Sunday morning service, they spent the afternoon in a cheap porno theater. Then they came back for the evening service to try to "shout out" their guilt and quiet their conscience. Their standing in Christ was based completely on their emotions and on a bizarre notion of works.

The fact remains that very few believers have any concept of what it means to rest in their salvation. They don't possess the rock-solid peace and security that all Christians have available to them in

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Jesus Christ, which can carry them through any storm. Instead, they are crippled with agonizing fear and condemnation, and they go from one extreme to another. One minute they're overflowing with joy, sure of heaven, witnessing boldly. The next, they're downcast - discouraged by even the smallest failure.

Such Christians live according to feel-good emotions. They judge their security in Christ by how "good" they can be - how faithful they are to obey God's Word, or how much victory they can achieve in putting off some besetting sin.

This is partly why so many Christians end up backsliding. Their faith is rooted and grounded in feelings, rather than on the eternal Word of God. They have no solid foundation of truth to undergird their faith. They've never taken the time to comprehend the meaning of the Cross of Jesus Christ and its victory!

I ask you: Have you ever backslidden? Have you ever grown cold toward the Lord, quit going to church, wanted your own way? Let me tell you why it happened: You backslid because you didn't fully understand how to bring your soul into rest! You never understood what it means to be accepted in Jesus Christ - to rely on His righteousness and not your own.

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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Christ is telling us very plainly: "Don't attempt to take on a walk with Me until you are at rest in your soul!"

If you do not have this rest - this wonderful confidence in what the Word of God says Jesus did for you - His yoke won't be easy or light. On the contrary, you will spend your time striving in the flesh to please God. You will go from hot to cold - living with unnecessary guilt and shame!

I Believe the Key Lies in These Words: "Learn of Me!" Jesus is speaking here of the discipline of learning who He is and what He accomplished on the Cross. He is saying, "You have to have a knowledge of what I've done for you. Then, once your soul is at rest, you can take on My yoke. So, learn of Me!"

Yet we don't want this kind of discipline. We want the easy way! We're like schoolchildren who want to stay on the playground rather than go back into the classroom. We'll spend years disciplining ourselves in learning to become a doctor, a nurse, a minister, a teacher. We know that any career or calling takes great study and effort. But when it comes to actually serving Jesus, we choose to be airheads! We follow Him as spiritual simpletons.

Perhaps today you testify, "I'm reading my Bible now and praying a little each day. I'm doing battle in my life and at home. I'm trying hard to do better!"

Dear saint, let me tell you straight: That is not enough! None of these things will keep you through the coming storm. It's not enough to try hard, to make promises to God, to strive and struggle to be better. It's not enough to say, "I'm more diligent than before." No - it's all about going after a revelation of what Jesus did for you at the Cross!

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Something should cry out in all of us: "Oh Jesus, Your Word says I can live in total rest, peace and security. I don't have to strive in my flesh or live in an up-and-down state, tossed about by guilt or fear. You have set before me the promise of a life at rest.

"But I don't have that rest! My life is just the opposite - in constant turmoil, with no steady peace, always unsure. Oh, Lord, I want Your rest! I desire to have it with everything that's in me. Teach me by Your Spirit how to enter Your rest!"

I know of only one way to enter into this rest. There is a truth that - if understood and appropriated - will usher you into the most glorious peace and security possible on this side of heaven. It is the foundational truth upon which all others are built.

That truth is the doctrine of justification by faith! It is the truth that ends all attacks of insecurity. And it is the one doctrine you must understand if you hope to enter into the rest Jesus offers. We have to know what it means to be justified by faith in Jesus' work!

I can only touch on the highlights of this wonderful, magnificent doctrine. Yet I believe God desires to lead His church further into this divine truth - to give us a foundational strength that will hold us up in the days to come.

Sadly, however, when you mention the subject of "doctrine" to many Christians, they turn up their noses. They say, "I don't want to hear all that deep, heavy stuff. Just give me Jesus!" Yet what they really mean is, "I don't want to spend the time or discipline to learn what Jesus did at the Cross."

Too many Christians become only emotionally involved with the Cross and never truly study it. I've heard many preachers deliver emotional appeals about Jesus on the Cross - about His beatings, the crown of thorns on His head, the spikes driven into His hands. But I believe the preaching of the Cross is about much more than that: It's about the victory of the Cross! It's about what Jesus did there for all of humankind.

For those who desire to "learn of Him" -who want to understand Jesus' wonderful work at Calvary - let me try to explain as simply as possible this concept of justification by faith:

What Does It Mean to Be Justified Before God? Two things are involved in our justification by the Cross of Jesus Christ:

- First, we have pardon for all our sins. When Jesus went to the Cross, His blood pardoned us from all guilt and iniquity.

- Second, we are accepted by God as righteous in Christ, through faith. This means God accepts us not because of our works or any good deeds, but on the merits of what Jesus alone did on the Cross.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).

Yet, when we sin, we are accused by two powerful forces. The first is Satan, whom the Bible calls the accuser: "... (who) accuseth (us) before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

Right now, as you read this message, the devil stands before the heavenly Father, accusing you of

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every fresh failure, every renewed sin. He brings out a list of all your shortcomings, whether in word or deed, and demands of God: "If You are holy, then You'll do something about this. If there is any justice in You, You'll judge this person for his sin. You've got to condemn him to the same hell You've damned me to for my pride!"

Most of the time the devil has a good argument. He's got a right to accuse you because you are guilty - you did sin, you were disobedient. And that leads to the second powerful force that accuses you: your own conscience.

"...their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15).

You stand before God with your head hanging low, because you know you've been caught red-handed. Your conscience lets you know, "I am guilty before God."

And God does not deny our guilt, because He cannot lie. He never sees us as innocent - because we are plainly guilty before Him, caught in the web of sin. Indeed, our justification has nothing to do with our being innocent. When God pardons us because of the Cross, it is as guilty lawbreakers. He never vindicates us; rather, He forgives us - pardoning our sins by His grace and mercy alone.

- "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).
- "...thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (38:17).
- "...thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

God pardons us because of the blood of Jesus Christ. And this pardon is totally undeserved. We deserve hell, judgment, damnation - but Jesus took all our sins on Himself at the Cross and pardoned us completely.

Picture yourself before God's throne right now. There you stand with no excuse, no alibi. Satan is present as your legal adversary, reading off the list of charges - with times, places, events, every shameful detail. He makes accusations of pride, prayerlessness, covetousness, unfaithfulness. And your heart smites you - because you have to admit, "Yes, that's me. I did it all!"

It looks hopeless for you. You know God's eyes are too holy to look upon sin, and His justice demands that you pay for your crimes against His holiness. You are helpless.

But suddenly, here comes your Lawyer, your Advocate. He stretches forth His nail-scarred hands to you - and you know something is about to happen! He smiles and whispers, "Don't be afraid - none of these charges will stand. You're going to walk out of this courtroom free and fully pardoned. When I'm finished, your accuser won't have one charge left against you!"

Best of all, your Lawyer tells you He has adopted you! He is pleading your case as your Brother. Then He tells you He is the Son of the Judge - so that now you belong to the Judge's family as well!

But there is still the matter of justice. What about the charges against you? You listen in absolute wonder as your Advocate pleads your case:

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"Judge, You know that I fulfilled the law, living a sinless life. And then I took this person's place, taking on all the punishment for his crimes. Through these nail-scarred hands and My pierced side, blood came forth to blot out all of his transgressions. All these accusations and charges You've heard were put on My back. And I paid the penalty for every one of them.

"Satan, you have no grounds to accuse My child. Each of his sins was placed on Me, and I have fully pardoned them all. He is not guilty - because his faith in the victory of My sacrifice gives him full, complete pardon. You have no case!"

As the devil slinks out of God's court, you can hear the blessed Lord cry out:

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).

The First Part of Justification Is the Pardon Of Our Sins by Grace - And the Second Part Is Our Acceptance Into God's Beloved! Paul gives us a list of those unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom of God:

"...neither fornicators, nor idolaters, not adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

But then the apostle adds:

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11).

How did these people, saved out of such horrible sin, become righteous before God? What happened to them, that they were no longer evil but, rather, accepted by God?

First of all, God is no respecter of persons - not of a king, a queen, a president or a prime minister. He is not at all impressed by man's honor.

And second, God is not charmed by any goodness in us. Long prayers, fasting, tithing, Bible study, benevolent acts - none of these makes us righteous or acceptable to God. Even our "good" flesh - good character, speech, thoughts and deeds - are a stench in His nostrils if used as a plea for our own righteousness.

Yet few of us seem to believe this. For example: When we first came to trust in Christ, we trusted our sins were forgiven. We believed we were accepted, that we could lay down all guilt and fear. We could say, "I am saved by faith alone in what Jesus did for me at the Cross!"

But then, as we proceeded in our walk with Jesus, fresh acts of disobedience befell us. We were crushed by our sins, and we quickly lost our vision of the Cross. We tried to work out our righteousness - to win back God's favor - by trying harder the next time. But our life then became a nightmarish merry-go-round of sin and confess, sin and confess...

Even today we have the idea that whenever we sin or fail God, we need to appease Him. We cry a river of tears and promise, "I won't do it again, Lord." And we sing that old gospel song I so despise: "Forgive me, Lord, and try me one more time..."

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We act as if trying harder in our flesh can save us! We think if we could just reform this flesh of ours, God would be pleased. So we're constantly working on our old man, to shape him up for a victorious Christian walk. But it will never happen!

You see, when Jesus went to the Cross, He crucified our "old man." And that old man of the flesh has been wiped away in God's eyes. Instead, there is only one Man left - only One whom God will deal with - and that is His Son. When Jesus finished His work on earth and was set down at the right hand of the Father, God said, "From now on I recognize only one Man, only one righteousness. And anyone who comes to Me must come through Him - My Son. All who would be righteous must accept His righteousness, and no other!"

We are accepted in God's eyes only by faith in Christ and His work:

"...he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Do you see how important it is to abide in Jesus - to come to Him quickly whenever you fail? You must learn to run to Him, crying, "Jesus, I've failed You! I can't work this out. No matter what I do, I can never be recognized before the Father - except as I come to Him in You. My only plea is the blood!"

Some Christians may answer, "But I paid a high price for the victory I've achieved. I went through a lot of pain and suffering. I fasted, prayed, bit the bullet. And I've put to death my besetting sin. I've successfully put down all my lusts and sinful desires.

"But now you're asking me to cast off all this and declare it to be dung? Is my struggle to obey worth nothing to God? Does He consider all my righteousness, all my hard work, as filthy rags?"

Yes! It is all stinking flesh - and none of it will stand before Him. It doesn't matter what you've conquered. Your righteousness will never work as a means of acceptance. There is only one righteousness - and that is the righteousness of Jesus Christ! The righteousness and victory achieved by human struggle alone is only temporary. Failure soon follows.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3).

Paul is saying, "These people have not given up their own works. They are still striving in the flesh to please God!"

The only way to get into God's good grace is to admit the truth: "There is no good thing in my flesh, nothing in my good works to merit my salvation. I can't become righteous through anything I do in my own strength. My righteousness is in Christ alone!" Paul says of the gift of righteousness:

- "...they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ..." (Romans 5:17).
- "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the

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Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). The only thing we have to boast in is Jesus - and His great work for us!

Jeremiah foresaw the victory of the Cross of Christ. He proclaimed:

"In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16).

The prophet was looking forward to our day - to a body of believers who would live in great security of faith. He was saying, "God's Branch will soon come forth. And through His sacrifice a people will rise up who live in security and peace, because they are able to say, 'The Lord is my righteousness.'"

Beloved, justification by faith is the most humbling thing in the world. It is hard to see that God doesn't accept our flesh - that we must set aside our constant strivings and rest in Jesus' obedience. Indeed, we must learn to depend wholly on Christ for all power to obey.

When Paul first revealed this truth, it shook the church. It was incredible news at that time. In fact, some theologians responded, "If I'm pardoned - if God is so merciful to forgive me freely by faith alone - then let me sin even more, so God can enjoy giving me more grace!"

But Paul asked, "...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1). His answer: "God forbid..." Those men didn't understand the gospel. Because of the Cross, God considered everything about our old flesh-man done away with!

I believe Paul was saying, "Why would any Christian, having been set free from such a dead man, go back and resurrect the corpse? Why go back to a life of sin when God wants to give you security and peace - to take away all guilt and condemnation? Now, because of the Cross, you can serve the Lord in joy and gladness. And you can obey Him in a new obligation called love."

"So," you ask, "are we simply to take by faith the righteousness of Jesus?" Yes, absolutely! That's what the Christian walk is all about. It's about resting by faith in what Jesus accomplished!

Our old man is dead, and the new Man is Jesus. And when we put our faith in Him, God fully accepts us. He considers us righteous, hidden in the bosom of His dear Son. So, whenever you sin or fail, run quickly to your Lawyer, your Advocate. Confess your failures to Him, and rest in His righteousness.

You may ask, "But, don't good works have any place in this doctrine?" Of course they do - but on this condition: Good works cannot save you, justify you or make you righteous or acceptable to God. The only thing that saves you is your faith in what Jesus did!

And what did He do? He saved you, pardoned you and accepted you in the beloved - warts, sins, failures and all. God sees you now only in Jesus Christ - and that's why we must come to our Savior every time we fall. The blood that forgave and cleansed us the first time we came to Jesus is the same blood that will continue to keep us until He returns.

Yet, along with this security comes a higher obligation. And that is, we must do all our works not in our own strength or power, but in His:

"...if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).

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The only way to do battle with the flesh is through the Holy Ghost! He alone has the power to deliver:

"...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape..." (1 Corinthians 10:13).

If you yield to the Spirit, He will walk you through every battle. He will equip you with all power, wisdom and authority - everything you need to fight sin!

And once you realize what Jesus has accomplished on the Cross, you will hate sin more than ever. You will begin to obey Him, pray to Him, yearn for Him joyfully - because He has secured you on the Rock of His grace. Then you can say, "Who can accuse me now? Christ has justified me! I rest in Him as my righteousness."

Dear saint, pray that God will make this precious doctrine real in your spirit: "Holy Spirit, come and open my mind and heart. I want to understand this foundational truth, and not to panic every time the enemy brings something against my soul. Help me not to be tossed about by fear, guilt or condemnation. Rather, help me to stand firm under the Cross of my Savior - who provides me with all rest!"

"...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

You've got a Lawyer - so run to Him. Let Him plead your case. And enter into His rest by faith in His wonderful work on your behalf. Amen!

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