

REST

Hymns from "Favorite Hymns of Grace."

Greeting and Opening Prayer

Hymns of Worship

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Devotional Summary: "Rest"

43 So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. 44 The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

Joshua 21:43:46 NKJV

We live in a world where the truth is often hard to find. From politicians in the highest levels of power and influence to mischievous children in the second grade an untruth is as frequent as a straight answer. Contractors who give us bids to do work on our homes are often dishonest - they hedge on the quality they promised and they take longer than they declared it would take to finish the job and before they finish they want more money than they said it would cost! Divorce courts are full of people who said "...till death do us part." In fact, couples nowadays are making prenuptial agreements to hedge their bets in case all the "love" they are professing runs out. And then there are the commercials on TV - if you take the right pill or buy the right car or drink the right beer you will live happily ever after. Even if the law requires companies to tell the truth in disclaimers they often do it with confusing legaleeze in fine print on the back of the bottle or with unintelligible lightening speed at reduced volume. When someone tells you, "I give you my word," we do not always know what to think, do we?

Truth is a precious commodity in a world of half-truths and crooked motives. And, in our more honest moments, usually when we think it is safe, we will admit to having told a few fibs ourselves. It's everywhere, isn't it?

Though we could make a great case for it throughout Holy Scripture, we have read together this passage in the Book of Joshua to highlight the glaring distinction between the dishonesty we are so familiar with in this world and the pure truth of God's Word. If He makes a promise, He will keep it. If He tells you something, you can take it to the bank! If you read something about Jesus in the Bible, it is true. If God Almighty tells you that He will do something, you can believe it.

"Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass."

Believe.....

Now, let us look at a wonderful teaching our Lord gave us when He walked the earth among

men.

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV)

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, spoke these words. They were recorded 2000 years ago. They have been tested through the ages and found to be true by untold numbers of simple believers who put their trust in Him. Testimonies of Christ's comfort and rest have come from the Coliseum in Rome where Christians were thrown to the lions, from the grass huts of missionaries in Africa, from the trenches in France, from prisons in Siberia, from concentration camps in World War II, from inner-city slums, from the lips of alcoholics and addicts, from waiting rooms outside surgeries in hospitals all over the world...the reports keep coming in - God is faithful! God is love!

1) Look at what a wonderful invitation our Lord has made to you! **"COME TO ME!"** This is not a whimsical invite to a tea party with your neighbor's kids. This is the One who gave you life, who called you into existence, who oversees your every breath, who has seen you through thick and thin to this day in your life...and He is calling, inviting, beckoning to YOU - "Come to me!" What an amazingly kind and generous thing that God would actually ASK us to enter His presence! After all we have done that we knew we should not do and after all we have not done that we knew we should do! He says, "I'll forgive you - COME TO ME!" Only believe.

Believe....

2) Look at what a wonderful promise our Lord has made! **"I WILL GIVE YOU REST!"** Does this sound familiar? Remember? In Joshua we read that God gave Israel rest all around. And this was as He had promised to their forefathers. The Almighty made a great promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He kept His promise! Christ has made a promise to you: if you come to Him, if you look to Him for salvation from the enemies of your soul, you will find rest. No more fear of tomorrow. No more dread of dying. No more longing for peace with your Maker. If there is a battle, the fight is to stay under the shelter of His love and mercy...to keep your faith in what He said, not listening to the voices of defeat, and doubt and fear that howl at us incessantly from our circumstances in the world.

Believe....

3) Look at what a wonderful challenge our Lord has made! **"TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."**

"Learn from Me!" Bible teacher, Ray Vander Laan, has a very interesting insight in his video series, **"That the World May Know."** Rabbinic tradition teaches that in New Testament times the doctrines and instructions of a rabbi for his disciples - his followers - was called his "yoke." The Rabbi, or Teacher, would tell his followers what they could do and what they could not do and they would try to conform. The idea of "yoke" gives the image of a poor ox laboring under the strain of pulling a heavy cart. In this light, it is a marvelous truth for us to grasp hold of, that the Lord is calling us away from the rigors of legalistic, ritualistic religiosity and

encouraging us to embrace constant fellowship with Him in our daily lives. Jesus WILL give rest: rest from trying to impress Him with how self-righteous we can be; rest from trying to silence our guilt for how unrighteous we honestly know we really are; rest from trying to earn our way into heaven. Indeed, HIS YOKE IS EASY AND HIS BURDEN IS LIGHT!!! What wonderful rest! ...we go to Jesus in the belief that He will do what He said He would do and He GIVES us rest! ...rest as we walk with Him in a day by day, loving, trusting relationship.

Believe....

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 3:12; 4:14-16 NJKV)

This passage in Hebrews is for US! ...for each of us who call Jesus our Savior and our Lord. The foundation of our salvation rests completely in who Jesus Christ is and what He has done and is doing and will do FOR us. He only asks that we remain firmly on that foundation, not giving in to the temptation of taking our destiny back into our own hands...of trying to find another way to heaven. We are called to remain under the shadow of God's protection in Christ. We are called to hold fast our confession - ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."*** (John 3:16 KJV)

Do we struggle with doubting God at times? Do we take things into our own hands sometimes, disobeying His leading in our hearts? Do we worry and fret because we give more faith to our circumstances than we do to the Word of God? Most of us can probably say, "Yes, I mess up - often."

Well, as His child, we can come boldly to the throne of grace - the only place of rest for our souls - and obtain God's mercy and find the power to overcome in the face of our struggles and our cares. ***28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."***

Closing Hymn

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Prayer Requests and Corporate Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Recessional

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