

# The Blessedness of Rest

Teaching given by Peter Warren at FGPC, April – June 2016

## 1. Blessed Are The Wise

Over the last few months we have been studying the theme of **Walking in Wisdom**. As we continue to develop this theme further we are going to spend a few weeks looking at a topic which comes as a direct result of walking in wisdom.

Let us remind ourselves at the start of this series of what wisdom is.

*“Wisdom is the ability to hear, judge accurately and act upon God's principles (the Word of God) for righteous living”*

This total dependency and reliance on the principles of God's Word, and the putting of it into practice leads us on to certain blessings.

Jesus said: *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”* (Matthew 7.24-25)

A wise man builds his house on rock. What is Jesus saying to us here? If you are going to be wise (not talking about worldly wisdom, that is what the world regards as the wise thing to do) we will build, construct and establish our lives on the the Word of God, that is those things that Jesus said (His sayings). So that when storms, troubles and trials beat hard upon us we will remain strong and standing.

This wisdom gives us security, strength and peace of mind and heart.

### **Proverbs 3.13-26**

This passage in the Proverbs begins *“Happy is the man who finds wisdom...”*

This word 'happy' is the Hebrew word *'eshet* and can also be translated as blessed. So we can justifiably translate this verse as *“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom...”*

The Greek word *makarios* in Matthew 5.1 means exactly the same – *happy* or *blessed*, and you will find that the various translations of the Bible interchangeably use either word. In Matthew the AV, NKJV and NIV say *'blessed..'* whereas others like the GNB(TEV) and NCV use *'happy..'*

So in Proverbs 3 we read that the man who finds wisdom is blessed.

The writer says that the *“proceeds (of wisdom) are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold”* (vs14). There are millions who chase after and trust in silver and gold for their security but the Word of God says that to have wisdom is better than all the profit of silver and gold.

He continues (vs15) *“(wisdom) is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her”*

It's no wonder that the writer can say 'blessed is the man who finds wisdom'. Then he goes on to list some of the blessings that come through wisdom.

- length of days (v16) - longevity
- riches - prosperity
- honour – honour and integrity
- pleasant ways (v17) – right way
- paths of peace – right paths
- tree of life (v18) – abundant, eternal life
- happiness – true joy and happiness
- grace (v22) – spiritual ornament, His glory and favour
- walk safely (v23) – safety
- will not stumble – security
- will not be afraid (v24) – fearlessness
- sweet sleep – freedom from worry
- no fear of terror or trouble (v25) – deliverance, with no anxiety or fear
- confidence in God (v26) – faith and an unwavering trust in God
- feet from being caught – divine protection

### **Proverbs 4.10-13**

In the next chapter we read:

“Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.” (vs10-13)

Here again we see there are promised blessings to those who hear and receive the Word of God and grasp it and walk in it:

- the years of your life will be many
- your steps will be unhindered – free to walk from distress, press on with large steps
- will not stumble – faint or fall, i.e. to quit or give in

I think that all of these blessings can be wrapped up in just one word – peace. This peace is a type of rest that we enjoy as the people of God.

Over the next few weeks we are going to be looking at this topic related to walking in wisdom – the Blessedness of Rest.

### **Hebrews 3.18-19; Hebrews 4.1-12**

God had promised His people rest. They were slaves in Egypt, held in bondage but God brought them up out of their captivity by mighty miracles. Yet, at the verge of entering into the promised rest they were disqualified because of unbelief.

What was this unbelief? It was a failure to trust God and His word of promise. They failed to walk in wisdom. They didn't accurately judge and act upon God's word. Here was a lost opportunity, a whole generation excluded from the blessing of rest.

There is still a promise of rest – this is ultimately talking about when we enter into heaven to meet our Lord, but there is still a promise of rest for the here and now and we enter it by faith (v3).

The writer to the Hebrews urges us to “[be diligent to enter that rest..](#)” (v11). Diligence requires effort – but what is our labour? It is not through worry (we'll never get rest through worry), it's not through hard toil or works. We enter the rest through faith in the living, active, powerful Word of God (v12).

We have the Word the same as the people of God did in the wilderness. Let us not make the same mistake as they did. They did not mix faith with the word (v2) and thus didn't enter their rest.

We will come back later in the series and dig a little more deeply at this thought.

## **2. The Blessedness of Rest**

Last week I began a new teaching series on the Blessedness of Rest. This is a continuation of the theme of walking in wisdom that we have been studying recently.

### **Genesis 1.26-31 - Genesis 2.1-3**

The very first words that God spoke to Adam were “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea...”

This was his life's work – being fruitful and replenishing the earth. Having dominion and authority in it.

God told him how he was to plant seed as a means of food and resources. Sowing seed would be his means of support, it was the way he was to operate in order to replenish the earth. Sowing seed would be how he fulfilled his God ordained task.

That was day 6 of creation – before Adam could do anything that God had spoken to him came day 7 – the Sabbath, the day of rest.

God was setting a precedence here, He was showing the importance of entering the rest – a necessary part of our life of faith.

On Wednesday we were looking at spending time in the presence of God as a pre-requisite for our service to God. We cannot continually give out without being filled with something to give – that comes from resting in His presence. There's blessedness in rest.

### **Mark 2.27**

“[And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'](#)”

The Sabbath rest “[was made on account and for the sake of man](#)” (Amp). It was to “[benefit people](#)” (NLT).

There is a blessedness in rest. You cannot be fruitful by labouring all the time – rest is necessary. People think that if they can work 7 days a week they will earn enough to live – that thinking is wrong, flawed and unscriptural.

It is also just as wrong to rise early in the morning and retire very late (**Psalm 127.2**)  
“*It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep*”

Fruitfulness comes out of rest. Blessing comes out of rest. We see it in nature

- **trees and flowers have to rest** – they lay dormant through the winter months but burst into fruitfulness once spring arrives and produce their flowers or fruit. After the harvest or flowering season they take their rest again.
- **land has to rest** – a farmer cannot keep cultivating his land year after year without resting it.

We also know that a really successful farmer will not grow the same crop in his fields year after year (crop rotation) this is to revitalise the soil with essential minerals

This is also scriptural – land was to be left fallow (allowed to rest and lie still).

**Exodus 23.10-11** “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove”. This not only rested the land from producing food, but anything the land produced of its own accord was a blessing for the poor.

### **Exodus 20. 8-11**

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.... therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it”

God instilled rest into Adam from his first day on earth – God gave commandment to rest. Not to curb people's enjoyment or prevent them from doing something but to bless them.

### **Exodus 23.12**

“Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed”

Sabbath (*Shabbat* Heb.) and it means “intermission, cease from labour, desist from exertion, rest, sit still (see Isaiah 30.7)”

“*For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still*” **Isaiah 30.7** (KJV)

“*For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not*” **Isaiah 30.15**

God wants you blessed... but that involves rest. And many miss out on the blessing because they won't rest.

### **Mark 4. 26-29**

Jesus taught this parable to explain how the Kingdom of God functions and operates.

He said it was like a man that sowed seed in the ground. The man slept at night and got up in the morning. The seed grew by itself until the time came for the man to reap the harvest.

In this parable what work did the man do? - He sowed the seed and he harvested the crop.

Did he make the seed grow? - No

What was he doing between sowing and reaping? - resting.

He wasn't panicking over the seed, he wasn't worrying whether or not it would grow, he wasn't losing any sleep – he was resting.

That's the essence of the meaning of **Philippians 4.6**

*“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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* - pray and rest

We are going to develop that thought and theme in a later study

There is a rest for the people of God.

Our flesh and natural man want to take control of the situation and sort the problems out, the flesh wants to go it's own way, run it's own course.

Fruitfulness and blessing come from rest - we have to strive to enter that rest (as we touched on last week)

### **3. When It All Goes Wrong: Resting Through The Trial**

#### **Mark 4.35-41**

(v35) *“On the same day, when evening had come”* - this is a significant phrase for our understand on this lesson about rest. It tells us that something is about to happen on the same day as something else. So what happened earlier in the day that has a significance for their now.

In the early verses of the chapter (earlier that day) Jesus had been teaching His disciples and telling them parables to explain how the kingdom of God functioned and how they were to operate within the realm of the kingdom.

- The Parable of the Sower [and it's explanation] (vs1-20)
- The Parable of the Lamp (vs21-25)
- The Parable of the Scattered Seed (vs26-29)
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (vs30-32)

What is the main summary of teaching in these parables?

Three of these parables were about seeds –

- **What is the seed?** It is the Word of God. The teaching here is that we use the Word of God by faith.
- **What do you do with the seed?** It needs to be used - the seed needs to be sown in order for it to become productive.
- **How can we sow/scatter the Word of God?** We do this by giving the word a voice – speak it. (Romans 10.8-10; 2 Corinthians 4.13; Hebrews 10.23)

“The Word of God on your lips [*as a Bible believer*] is as powerful as the Word of God on Jesus’ lips”

- After a day teaching the multitudes by the seashore, Jesus gave instructions to His disciples to cross over to the other side of the lake.
- After sailing, and travelling a fair distance, a great windstorm arose on the lake.
- This was not just any windstorm – four of the twelve disciples were experienced fishermen. They were used to life at sea, they were used to storms on this lake, storms were part of their daily lives.
- Water was filling the small rowing boat so quickly – the disciples were fearful of drowning, panicking they tried to bail out the water.
- Jesus was asleep in the stern, rear part of the boat
- They woke Him with the words ‘don’t you care!’
- Jesus stood up, commanded the wind & waves and rebuked them for their lack of faith

### **How could Jesus rest during this violent storm?**

When we go through storms, troubles, trials and testings do we have to run around like a headless chicken or can we follow the example of Jesus and rest?

In Matthew 6.26 Jesus tells us to “**Consider the birds of the air**” - the context of this statement was made during a sermon on how to handle worry, fear and the pressures of life. So for a few minutes let us take a look at some birds.

### **Isaiah 40.31**

“**But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.**”

- This verse tells us that those who wait on the Lord will mount up with wings like eagles.
  - During flight the eagle stops flapping her wings and soars on the thermals that lift her higher. That’s the perfect picture of rest
- Migrating geese have an amazing technique to increase their flying capabilities. They fly in a V formation. When the lead goose gets tired, she drops back to the rear of the formation and rests, while the next goose takes over lead role. The resting goose is carried by the vortex of air produced by the other flying geese. This technique means they can fly longer and further than ever they would on their own.

In a stormy situation many of us continue to flap about, because we think that if we're not flapping we're not in control – that's NOT REST.

**“Rest is being out of control in His control “ (Dot Mitchell).**

All the flapping will not save us, it will just wear us down and tire us out.

- A lot of our praying is pointless flapping of our wings.
- Our salvation and deliverance comes when we rest and trust in Him – being out of control in His control.

Isaiah 30.15-18 (Amp)

“(15) For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning [*to Me*] and resting [*in Me*] you shall be saved; in quietness and in [*trusting*] confidence shall be your strength. But you would not. (16) And you said, No! We will speed [*our own course*] on horses! Therefore you will speed [*in flight from your enemies*]! You said, We will ride upon swift steeds [*doing our own way*]! Therefore will they who pursue you be swift, [*so swift that*] ..... (18) And therefore the Lord [*earnestly*] waits [*expecting, looking, and longing*] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [*earnestly*] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him [*for His victory, His favour, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship*]!”

**Matthew 23.37** – Jesus uses the picture of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

““O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!”

'You were not willing' - doing it your own way

We can find rest under the shadow of His wings - **Psalm 91.1-2**

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.*””

'dwells' – literally means 'to sit down, to inhabit, remain'

'abide' – literally means 'to lodge or stop (overnight), to remain' – a place of rest.

**Abraham** learned the secret of rest.

When he faced the ultimate trial of his faith, to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to God, he rested knowing that God would raise the boy from the dead. Examine his faith declaration in **Genesis 22.5-8**

“And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you”.....And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering” So the two of them went together”

**Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** learned the secret of rest.

When threatened with the fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol, they answered the king:

“...“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king”” (**Daniel 3.16-17**)

This is how the disciples should have reacted – Jesus had commanded them to cross to the other side. They should have used their faith and the word of God and like Jesus rested during the storm instead of trying to do it their own way and getting themselves in a state.

**Jesus promised us rest** – Matthew 11.28-29

“Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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.”

He said 'come to Me' – return to Me, wait on Me, rest in Me

If you are weary, burdened, heavy-laden and tired from all the labouring (flapping of the wings, bailing out of the water) – come to Me and you will find REST.

There is a rest for the people of God, there is a place we can weather the storms. Our flesh and natural man wants to take control of the situation and sort the problems out, the flesh wants to go it's own way, run it's own course but we have to strive to enter that rest.

## **4. Enter The Rest By Faith**

### **Hebrews 3.19 - Hebrews 4.3**

#### **Exodus 3.7-10**

'*land flowing with milk and honey*' this phrase is recorded as spoken 5 times before Children of Israel arrive at Kadesh Barnea. After the spies had gone into the land and came back to report, twice it is used to describe the land.

They were in slavery, oppressed, in pain - 'I have come down to deliver them.. to bring them to a good and large land, flowing with milk and honey' I have come to give them rest. God had promised this people a land of blessing beyond their wildest dreams.

#### **Exodus 4.30-31**

“And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped”

The people ***believed the word*** spoken by Moses & Aaron. They were prepared to act on the word of God and leave Egypt.

This generation had never known blessing, only oppression and pain – but their faith in God brought them out. They had heard of the faith adventures of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and now the same God was about to take them on an adventure of faith.

- They saw the mighty hand of God at work to bring them out..
- They knew the blessing, prosperity and favour of God upon them..
- They saw God deliver them through the Red Sea..
- They saw their enemies (the Egyptians) defeated...
- For the first time in over 400 years they were out of Egypt and enjoyed camping at Elim (where they spent approx 1 month)...

#### **Exodus 15.27**

“Then they came to Elim, where there *were* twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.”

- Elim was an oasis in the desert place.

- It was a place of palm trees and springs of fresh water, a place to be refreshed, and for the people of God to rediscover themselves and start to become the nation that God had purposed.
- Although they enjoyed 'resting' at Elim, this was not the rest that God had promised. There was something better ahead for them and the time came to move on.

### Exodus 16.1

“And they journeyed from Elim, and the whole assembly of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure out of the land of Egypt”

- Next stop on the journey to this '*land flowing with milk and honey*' was Sinai.
- They entered the Wilderness of Sin 2½ months after leaving Egypt.
- It was here that they grumbled and complained about the lack of food/meat and God sent the Manna for them every morning and quail in the evening.
- After this they complained about the lack of water to drink (**Exodus 17.2**) and God provided water from the rock.
- God gave them a great victory over the Amalekites

### Exodus 19.1-2

“In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain”

Their arrival at Sinai was in the **third month** after leaving Egypt. They camped here for 2 years

- Here they received the Law – this would be the foundation of the forming of their nation.
- God gave Moses the instructions for building the Tabernacle – the place of meeting with God.

Even though they stayed here a long while, still this was not the rest that God had purposed for them and the time came for them to move on.

**2 years 2 months 20 days after leaving Egypt** they leave for the borders of the Promised Land – the place of rest.

“Now it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran” Numbers 10.11-12

Because of their complaining they spend approx another 40 days under the judgement of God (Numbers 11-12)

Numbers 11.19-20, 33 (*one month*)      Numbers 12.15-16 (*7 days*)

Moses sent twelve spies to go in and spy out the land (Numbers 13) – they were there for forty days (Numbers 13.25)

### Numbers 14.1-11, 20-24

Approximately 2 years and 6 months after leaving Egypt the people were now ready to go in and possess the Promised Land, they were ready to enter the rest.

The twelve spies had gone through the land and brought back word concerning it. It was **just as God had said** – truly a land that flowed with milk and honey. Two of them, Caleb and Joshua, encouraged the people to believe God and enter in. But the other ten reported that it couldn't be done, the people are too strong, the cities fortified, there are giants in the land, the inhabitants are oppressed there – **it would be Egypt all over again**.

Here they are at the borders of the land and the rest that God had always promised them, but they didn't believe the word spoken by Joshua and Caleb, they rebelled against the word and rejected God.

Unbelief is the greatest sin – we need to have the spirit that Caleb had, the spirit of faith.

Because of their faith Joshua & Caleb were the only two of that entire generation that entered in to the land. The others could not enter in because of unbelief.

Lot's of Christians are like that – they have faith to be saved, but then struggle believing that God has something better for them. Maybe that's because too many well-intentioned Christians give bad reports like:

- “that was Bible days, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, things are different now”
- “worrying about it just shows you care”
- “you have to work when you can, the bills don't pay themselves”
- “those miracles passed away a long time ago”
- “you can't expect to be healthy all the time, everybody gets sick sooner or later”

Everybody has something to say – but what does God say? We need to put our faith in God and His word.

- Faith enters in to rest.
- When we trust God we can rest.
- When we have our confidence in God we can rest.

Next time we shall look at Abraham and see that he had an unwavering trust in God which led him to rest in God, even through the dark times.

## **5. An Unwavering Confident Faith**

### **Hebrews 3.5-15**

In verse 12 we are told to “**beware..lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief**” This is a warning from God – He warns us to be aware. Unbelief is evil, unbelief will rob us of everything.

In our study last week we saw how the people of God did not enter into the Promised Land because of their unbelief. This land was their promised rest. All that God had promised them, a land of blessing and prosperity, “a land flowing with milk and honey” was stolen from them because they did not believe. Unbelief cost them their rest and

called calls that unbelieving heart evil. It required faith on their part in the promise of God to enter in: and likewise we enter the rest by faith.

We finished with these thoughts, that:

- Faith enters in to rest. If unbelief cost them their rest then the opposite must be true.
- When we trust God we can rest. Trusting God eliminates the pressure of having to be in control.
- When we have our confidence in God we can rest. In this study we are going to see that Abraham's confident, unwavering trust in God led him to a place where he could rest in God, even through the darkest of times.

We cannot entertain unbelief – unbelief breeds mis-trust, bitterness, envy, jealousies, anxiety, worry and fear. None of these things will allow us to enter the rest.

Rest is being at peace, if you're not at peace then you're not at rest.

Faith is the launch-pad to enter the rest. We must believe that God is, we must trust His Word, but then what?

[“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end”](#) (v14)

**Confidence** - confidence in what? Not ourselves but God and His Word. This confidence springs from our faith in His Word.

The same word (*hupostasis*) translated *confidence* in this verse, is also translated as *substance* in Hebrews 11.1.

[“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”](#)

Confidence is the substance or expectation of what we believe. The root word literally means 'to stand or set under, ie foundation' Our confidence causes us to stand under, endure anything. It gives us the assurance we need to stay the course.

Let us consider Abraham once again. He was a man of great faith and great confidence.

#### **Romans 4.16-21**

[“and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform”](#) (v21) - he was totally confident (KJV *fully persuaded*).

Abraham received a promise from God – that he would be the father of many nations. That promise meant that he and Sarah had to have a child.

- v16. The [promise is sure](#) to those of faith – this wasn't just for Abraham, this is for us all, those who will believe, trust and enter the rest.
- v17. Abraham got in line with God and started speaking the way God spoke. He called those things which did not exist as though they did. He started confessing that he was father of many nations (Abraham – *every time he spoke his own name he was confessing this promise*).

- This is not positive thinking, positive mental attitude or mind over matter. Nor is this what some have labelled '*name it and claim it*'. This is agreeing with God's word and confessing it by faith.
  - A few weeks ago we saw that seeds need planting. The seed is the word of God and needs to be spoken. We speak what God says, not what we feel or think. The seed will produce the intended result.
  - In the foreknowledge of God, what He has promised is already done, even if we can't yet see the physical manifestation of it.
- v18. When everything was contrary to what he was believing – he still believed
  - v19. He did not consider his aged physical body, nor Sarah's age or her inability to conceive – Sarah's womb was dead (barren)
  - v20. He did not waver (doubt God's promise) but rather was strengthened in faith by meditating (considering) on the promise – He looked at the promise and not the problem
    - Abraham did not waver (*stagger, oppose, dispute, contend, doubt or hesitate*) at God's promise through unbelief but was confident in God.
    - James 1.6-8 "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting (*wavering*), for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."
  - v21. He was fully persuaded, totally convinced, absolutely certain that God would fulfill His word – that gave Him confidence.
    - Abraham and Sarah eventually received God's promise – Isaac. It didn't happen straightaway, they had to stand in faith and rest in that "*what [God] had promised He was also able to perform*"
    - Hebrews 10.23 (Amp) "*So let us seize and hold fast and retain without wavering the hope we cherish and confess and our acknowledgement of it, for He Who promised is reliable (sure) and faithful to His word.*"

His rest in God didn't end once Isaac was born – that was not the end of his faith. We mentioned a few weeks ago that some years later God asked Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. (**Genesis 22.1-14**)

v5. "*we will come back to you*"

Why does Abraham say these words?

- It was not just a figure of speech
- It was not because he was unprepared to go through with the task
- It was not because he wanted to prevent the boy from being afraid

These are not idle words – these are faith words, spoken by a man who was confident in his faith. The writer to Hebrews shows us clearly the reasoning behind these words:

### **Hebrews 11.17-19**

Abraham was prepared to offer up Isaac because he was absolutely confident, totally convinced, fully persuaded that

- (1) Isaac was the fulfilment of God's promise to him [v18]

- “in Isaac your seed shall be called” - Genesis 21.12. Not Ishmael or any other son, but in Isaac.

(2) and, if Isaac was killed, God would raise him to life in a moment.

Confidence will not be moved or shaken by circumstances, conditions or setbacks. There is no worry or fear attached to a confident man - that's REST.

## **6. Be Diligent To Enter The Rest**

### **Hebrews 4.9-16**

We have already seen in this series of teaching that to enter the rest we must enter by faith.

God's people failed to enter their rest because of unbelief (Hebrews 3.19). Their unbelief and mistrust in God, after all He had done for them and brought them through, grieved God's heart.

Faith pleases God, unbelief displeases God. God is looking for people of faith. The Bible says “*when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth?*” (Luke 18.8). God is looking for people of faith, people that will trust Him, people that have learned to trust Him and believe His Word no matter what they feel like or what their circumstances look like. That type of faith will bring us into the rest.

Then we have seen that we need to hold fast to our confidence. This confidence comes out of that faith in the Word of God. When we believe that God and His Word cannot fail that gives us confidence, assurance, so we can say with Abraham “I am FULLY PERSUADED that what God has promised He will perform”

### **Ceased from His Works**

Hebrews 4.10 tells us what rest is. He says “*he who has entered God's rest, has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His*”

God rested on the Seventh Day (Sabbath) after He had finished His work. We need to come to that place where we rest from our work – not necessarily our daily jobs (although it is vitally important and Scriptural that we take a rest, holiday etc) but the labour, toil and pressures of daily living – cares of living eg paying the bills, buying food & clothing, concerns over wayward children, or a number of other pressures that we may face, schooling, work, health issues etc.

*“for he who has once entered [God's] rest also has ceased from [the weariness and pain] of human labours”* (v10, Amp)

We spend far too much time pondering (worrying) over these things – we are working at worrying, we are toiling in trying to solve problems ourselves. Rest is letting go of all that work and letting God take over.

## Be Diligent

v11. It's not going to be easy. This verse says we need to “**be diligent**” to enter into rest.

Diligence here means '(i) to put in great effort, labour; (ii) be prompt; (iii) to study'. All our effort should be directed at entering the place of rest, rather than into worrying over the problems.

Let us substitute these meanings into the text of the verse and see what revelation we get:

'Let us therefore **be diligent to enter that rest...**'

- 'Let us therefore *put in great effort* to enter that rest...'
- 'Let us therefore *be prompt* to enter that rest...' - don't put it off, do it quickly
- 'Let us therefore *study* to enter that rest...'

I believe this last understanding to be of great importance here as the next verse goes on to say “for the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...”

## Holding Fast Our Confession

It is the Word of God that makes the difference, it is the Word of God that is effective and energises us. The Word of God is able to penetrate our innermost being, discern, expose and change our thoughts and our hearts.

When under pressure we speak only those things we truly believe in our hearts.

“**Out of the abundance [overflow] of our hearts our mouth speaks**” (Matthew 12.34).

When the going is good and we are not under pressure we can say all the right words and fool everyone. But when the pressure is on, what is truly in our hearts is made known.

There is something else we need to do to keep our faith strong - “**let us hold fast our confession**” (v14)

We make confession with our mouths. Many people confess [talk about, rehearse] the problems, the difficulties, the sickness – this just keeps on enforcing them, so that they become so big in our lives. Think of them as seeds – **everytime you talk about them, you water them. We need to rather water the seed of God's word.**

We need to be confessing what God says about our problems, situations and difficulties. That comes from studying the Word of God and finding out what He says.

What does it mean to hold fast our confession? - to keep on confessing what God says even when everything else says opposite. Our situations may change, our bodies may change, our circumstances may change – but our confession should remain the same.

Putting our effort into studying the Word of God, and confessing that Word with our mouths plants it deep in our hearts. It is the Word of God that produces faith in us (Romans 10.17). when we speak God's Word with our mouths, we hear it and faith comes. That faith breeds confidence, which brings us into rest.

The battlefield is our minds, the devil wants to fill it with things for us to think over. We need to take control over that and meditate on the Word, confess the Word, believe the Word.

God went to great lengths in the Scriptures to tell His people to keep the Word in front of the eyes, in their mouths – why? It will bring you into the place of rest!

## **7. A Mind Stayed on God**

We were looking last week at Hebrews 4.11 “[Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...](#)” and said that we have to put in great effort in order to get to the place where we rest.

Not only does the word **diligent** mean ‘*great effort*’ but also ‘*prompt*’ ‘*endeavour*’ and ‘*study*’.

I believe this last understanding to be of great importance here as the next verse goes on to say “[for the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...](#)”

There is a verse in the Bible (2 Timothy 2.15) which says: “[Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth](#)”

- In the AV this word is translated as ‘*study*’ “[Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.](#)”

This is where we finished last time - saying that we need to put great effort into studying the Word of God and confessing it with our mouths. This confession of the Word plants it deep in our hearts. It is the Word of God that produces faith in us ([Romans 10.17](#)). when we speak God's Word with our mouths, we hear it and faith comes. That faith breeds confidence, which brings us into rest.

The battlefield is our minds, the devil wants to fill it with things for us to think over. We need to take control over that and meditate on the Word, confess the Word, believe the Word.

God went to great lengths in the Scriptures to tell His people to keep the Word in front of the eyes, in their mouths – why? It will bring you into the place of rest!

### **Isaiah 26.3**

We are going to finish this set of teaching by looking at the subject of this Old Testament verse.

“[You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.](#)”

There are two key words in this verse both of which contain the idea of rest – they are ‘*peace*’ and ‘*stayed*’

The word 'peace' is the Hebrew word *shalom*, this is correctly translated as peace but *shalom* is much more than what we understand as peace, i.e. a state of tranquility or freedom from war and violence. A deeper look at the meaning of this word reveals a wider application

The following meanings of *shalom* are taken from James Strong's Hebrew Dictionary (JS):

safe	friendly	prosperity
well	welfare	peace
happy	health	rest

Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew Definitions (BDB) adds:  
completeness, soundness tranquility relationship peace from war/violence

Notice that rest is one of the meanings of *shalom* -

The second of these key words in this verse is 'stayed': You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.

This is the Hebrew word *samak* and means 'to prop, lean on, take hold of, rest, stand fast, stay and sustain' (JS). BDB adds 'to refresh, or revive'

So what the prophet is saying to us is that the man/woman who has their mind totally resting in and being refreshed and revived by God will themselves be kept in a state of total rest, completeness and soundness. Doesn't that sound good?

### **Colossians 3.1-2**

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Paul is telling us to set/fix our minds on the higher things – not the temporary things of the world but the higher things of God. As we said too often we focus on the temporal needs instead of the higher things.

Later in the chapter he tells us (**vs15-17**) "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"

We need our minds stayed on Him so that we can enter into the promised rest. This word peace is also rest – we can let the rest of God rule in our hearts through the word of Christ which is dwelling in us.

This same thought is portrayed in

Philippians 4.6-9

"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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren,

whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you”

- *Be anxious for nothing* – anxiety is not at rest
- *prayer and supplication.. requests be made known to God* – lifting our eyes off the things of earth
- *peace will guard our hearts* – the peace /rest of God will keep and guard our hearts
- *meditate on these things* – having your mind stayed on Him
- *God of peace be with you* – you will have rest and be at rest

Let us close with these verses from Jesus’ own teaching on the subject.

### **Matthew 11.28-30**

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light”

Come to Me... I will give you rest  
Learn from Me... you will find rest for your souls.

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*For a free audio mp3 of this teaching and others, please visit the ministry web-site of Peter Warren at [www.voice-faith.com](http://www.voice-faith.com) and connect with us on Facebook (Voice of Faith Ministries International) and Twitter (@VOF\_Ministries)*