

The Freedom to Rest

True freedom in Christ gives us the permission to rest.

Text: Matthew 11:28-30

When I say the word "rest," some of you instantly hear "rest in peace" or "eternal rest." Your mind goes to funerals, cemeteries, and finality. That is not what we are talking about today. This is not a funeral sermon; this is a freedom sermon. We are not discussing our departure from this earth. We are discussing the quality of our life on this earth—right now, while we are still breathing, parenting, working, serving, and dancing. Jesus promised rest to the living—the weary, the burdened, the overwhelmed. So take a deep breath. We are talking about your life, not your departure.

It is the last Sunday of July. Many of you are packing suitcases this week or just returning from a trip. And if we are honest, most of us view this vacation as a reward. We think: "I have worked so hard for eleven months. I have pushed through burnout. I have earned this break. Now I get to collapse."

Rest is not a reward for hard work—it is part of the process. It is the soil where your strength grows.

If rest is a reward, you will always wonder if you've done enough to deserve it. You will pack your guilt right into your suitcase. But if rest is Part of a process—a divine design built into creation before the fall of Adam, then you don't earn it; you simply enter it as a child of God. Rest is not a paycheck; it is your daily bread.

The Physiology of Rest: There is Strength in the Pause

- We need to understand that rest is not a luxury for the lazy; it is a necessity for the growing.
- Yesterday I had a video call with someone and they were in bed at 11am. The first words from their mouth was an apology for "being lazy".
- **Genesis 2:2-3 (NLT)** *On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.*
- **Mark 6:31 (NLT)** *Then Jesus said, 'Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.' He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.*
- **Psalms 23:2-3 (NLT)** *He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. ³He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.*

Notice that God rested before humanity ever broke a sweat. Adam didn't have to earn the Sabbath; he was given it. In our modern world, we treat rest as the finish line—"I'll rest when this project is done, when the kids graduate, when I retire." But physiologically, your muscles do not grow during the workout—they tear. They repair and grow during rest. Your brain consolidates memory during sleep. Your immune system fortifies when you stop. Spiritually, it is the same. We do not grow in the hustle; we grow in the hush. That vacation you are taking? It is not a gold star for past performance. It is a greenhouse for future strength.

The R.E.S.T. of Faith

R – Return to God (Repentance & Reorientation) - True rest begins when we stop running and return to the Father.

- **Isaiah 30:15 (ESV)** *For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.'*
- We have learned about the gifts of the spirit and the gift of righteousness but how often do we think about the Gift of rest?
- **Jeremiah 31:25 (NLT)** *For I have given rest to the weary and joy to the sorrowing.*
- **Exodus 33:14 (NLT)** *The Lord replied, 'I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.'*
- In Psalm 51, David returns to God after his sin. He doesn't try to fix his reputation; he returns and finds restoration.

E – Enter His Presence (Sabbath Rest) - Rest is not just ceasing activity; it is entering into the finished work of Christ.

- **Hebrews 4:9-10 (NLT)** *So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.*
- **Hebrews 4:10 (ESV)** *For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*

- **Matthew 11:28 (NLT)** *Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'*
- The "Rest of Faith" means trusting that Jesus finished the work of salvation on the cross. We stop trying to earn God's love through performance and simply rest in what He has already done.

S – Stillness & Silence (Quiet Confidence) - Rest requires us to be still and know that He is God.

- **Psalms 46:10 (NLT)** *Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.*
- **Isaiah 30:15 (NLT)** *...In quietness and confidence is your strength...*
- **1 Kings 19:12 (NLT)** *And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper."*
- Elijah: After a great victory, Elijah was exhausted and depressed. God didn't give him a sermon; He gave him sleep, food, and rest. It was only after resting that Elijah heard the gentle whisper of God.

T – Trust His Faithfulness (Cease Striving) - Rest is the ultimate expression of trust that God is working even when we are not.

- **Hebrews 4:11 (ESV)** *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*
- **Psalms 37:7 (NLT)** *Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act...*
- **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. "Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*
- Joseph: Joseph rested in God's faithfulness despite being sold into slavery and imprisoned. He didn't strive to take revenge; he trusted God's timing, and God exalted him.

Heroes of Faith Who Modeled Rest

- David: He rested in the Shepherd's care. He found rest not in his circumstances but in his relationship with God.
- Jesus: He rested in the middle of a storm (Mark 4:38). He rested at Jacob's well when He was tired (John 4:6). He modeled that rest is holy and necessary, even for the Son of God.
- The Disciples: Jesus invited them to "come away and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). He knew they couldn't pour out what they didn't have.
- Daniel in the Lions' Den: What does rest look like when you are thrown into a pit of hungry lions, designed to destroy you? It looks like Daniel.

Daniel 6:10 (NLT) *But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.*

Daniel 6:22-23 (NLT) *My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have done nothing wrong before you, Your Majesty. ²³ The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him because he had trusted in his God.*

Daniel's "rest" wasn't a nap. It was a posture of his soul. While the entire kingdom was in turmoil and the king couldn't sleep (Daniel 6:18), Daniel slept peacefully in the den. Why? Because his "R" (Return) and "T" (Trust) were already established. He had a structure of prayer that was unshakable. He didn't frantically seek a new strategy when the decree was signed; he continued his routine of resting in God's presence. The lions didn't just lose their appetite—they lost their power because Daniel's rest was anchored in the faithfulness of Jehovah. Rest is not the absence of lions; it is the presence of peace in the middle of their roar.

The Paradox of Freedom: True freedom is not the ability to do everything; it is the freedom to rest in the One who has done everything.

The Vacation Reframe: As you pack your bags this week, do not pack your guilt. Leave it here. You are not "escaping" your responsibilities to go earn a break. You are entering a divine design that God established at the dawn of creation. Your vacation is a prophetic act of trust—it declares that the world will keep spinning and your bills will get paid because God is on the throne, not your hustle.

Jesus says, "Come to me... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Not "I will give you more work," but "I will give you rest."

What do we do with this message?

1. Physically: Schedule a Sabbath. Put the phone down. Sleep until you wake up naturally. no
2. Emotionally: Stop carrying burdens that aren't yours to carry. Cast them off of you and onto the Lord.
3. Spiritually: Enter the "Rest of Faith"—stop trying to earn God's favor and just receive it. Let this be the most restful summer you have ever had—not because you did less, but because you trusted more.