

"The Gift of Rest"

Matthew 11:28-30

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Welcome to our program. Now today I'm going to be preaching from the book of Matthew, The Gospel of Matthew chapter 11 the last three verses beginning at verse 28 where the Lord Jesus Christ stands and issues forth this command: he says, in Matthew 11:28-29, "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." I want to talk to you today about this subject: the gift of rest.

There's nothing like the gift of rest. What is our Lord speaking of here? He says in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The gift of rest, true spiritual eternal rest, is a gift of God's grace. When we think about resting from our labors on this earth, we think about a person that goes out to work and they come home and they rest in the evening or whenever it is they come home to rest and they sleep. In fact, as you get older you find that a good rest, a good sleep is really important isn't it? It's really valuable. It's

really something to be cherished and longed for. At the end of the week people talk about working for the weekends and they rest on the weekend. In the Old Testament, there was a Sabbath. A Sabbath day of rest that was given to the children of Israel under the Law of Moses and we'll talk about that rest in just a moment, but that was a day of rest in which they were to cease from their labors. And it was not only good for them as human beings, we need that physical rest, but it was a time of worship, a time of respect and regard to God. Not that everyday is not supposed to be that way, it is, but this day was set aside under the old covenant for that specific purpose and it was for the good of the nation. Well all of that rest in the Old Testament and in the resting from our labors, these things, especially the old covenant or Sabbath day rest was a picture. It was a type, a symbol, an object lesson, if you will, of a sinner's rest in Christ (spiritual rest, eternal rest, resting in Christ for all salvation) and that's an act of faith, God-given faith, as faith is a gift from God so is this rest.

The thing about it is in the context of this passage Matthew chapter 11, what we find here is that the greatest act of rebellion and sin, the most prevalent evidence of man's sin and depravity is the fact that, by nature, he will not believe God and rest in Christ for salvation. We talk about sin, talk about depravity, and we think about the

heinous acts of man's inhumanity to man and surely those acts like murder or mass murder or things like that, surely those things are the most prevalent evidences of man's sin and depravity. Well my friend, those things most certainly are prevalent evidences of man's depravity and man's sin. I'm not arguing that. Those who commit such things, the scripture says, are deserving of eternal damnation but the Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now that includes the best of us and the worst of us and we have to learn to think biblically. He says in Matthew 11:29a *"take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;"* learn of Christ(5:39) Now we learn of he himself personally, who he is, what he did, why he did it, where he is now. We'll talk about that. Who is he? He's God in human flesh. What did he do? He accomplished the redemption of his people. He didn't come here to try to save anybody. Matthew 1:21 *"...thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."* Matthew 1:23b *"...and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."* The word made flesh and dwelt among us. He went to the cross of Calvary as the substitute and surety of his people, died in their place and put away their sins by the shedding of his blood unto death and established the only righteousness whereby God could be just to

justify the ungodly. He *is* the righteousness of God. He's my righteousness. As my sins were accounted, imputed, charged to him, his righteousness is accounted, charged, imputed to me and so I believe in him. We've got to learn to think biblically and the Bible teaches that ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The Bible says in Romans 3:10-12 "*...There's none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God....there's none that doeth good.*" in other words, among men, fallen sinful men, ruined in Adam, that we're all sinners and we all deserve eternal death. If we ever got what we earned or deserved it would be eternal death. The wages of sin is death and the greatest evidence of that is the fact that man by nature will not come to Christ, rest in Christ and believe in Christ for all salvation. And that's where we get into this thing of working and laboring. You see, man by nature is so proud and self righteous that he must have a part in his own salvation. He must believe and think and imagine that salvation is conditioned on himself. He cannot accept it as a free, undeserved, unconditional gift of God's grace. That's man by nature and we see that after the fall of Cain and Abel.

Here comes Abel bringing the blood of a lamb typifying salvation by grace. Abel had the gift of faith. Here comes Cain, he brought the labor of

his hands, the works of his hands, presented them before God in order to be saved. Cain did not have the gift of faith. The Lord here, he came and he preached the gospel of God's grace: free unconditional salvation by the sovereign grace of God in him, in Christ alone, salvation not by my works, but by Christ's works. You see, he's the one who earned my salvation. He's the one who worked it all out. He's the one who established all righteousness that God requires and that I need in my stead. Everything that God requires of me in order to attain and maintain salvation, Christ did it all. He paid it all. I don't contribute anything. Listen, not even my faith or my decision will work that. My faith is a gift from God. He gave it to me out of his grace in Christ and any decision I make that honors him is a gift from him. You understand that now. Well, Christ, he spoke to his generation here and they hated the gospel. They would not let go of their own labor. "We've worked hard. We're Jews." You know the Jews, they boasted in three things as to the ground and cause of their salvation.

1. The fact that they were born Jews, physical descendants of Abraham

2. Their physical circumcision

3. They kept The law of Moses

"We have Moses; we keep the law. We be not sinners like the Gentiles." That's what they boasted in. That's what they gloried in. It wasn't

glorying in Christ. It was not glorying, as Paul said, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's glorying in their works and they worked hard. You take a person today who's been religious all their lives and who has been (as they say) serving the Lord all their lives and you tell them that none of that can recommend them unto God. None of that can make them righteous and they'll rise up in rebellion. You're not going to tell me that God wasn't pleased with all that I did and has nothing to do with earning my salvation or my reward. You see, they labor, they labor, they labor. Well, it's to those such people that Christ is speaking to here. There's some who are so burdened and heavy laden with religious activities and religious ceremonies and religious efforts and they're just bogged down and they see they cannot fulfill the conditions, meet the requirements, and they've been brought to see their sins by the Holy Spirit in light of the holiness and justice of God who must punish sin. Like Isaiah, when he saw that vision: holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty and he said I'm cut off. In Isaiah 6:5 "*...I am a man of unclean lips.*" Psalm 130:4 "*If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*" I've tried my whole life to be good, but I can't see myself as good enough. My friend, if the Holy Spirit has convinced you of sin, he'll show you this: He'll show you that without Christ all you are is sin. All you can do is sin and it's to such people that

Christ says come unto me. That's what salvation is. It's coming unto Christ. It's not coming to your works. It's not coming to the preacher. It's not coming up the front of the aisle. It's not making a decision for Christ. It's not coming to the waters of baptism. It's coming to Christ who has kept the law in my stead. It's coming to Christ the God-man, God in human flesh, who's able to save me to the uttermost. It's coming to Christ who shed his blood as the full payment of all my sins. "Jesus paid it all, all the debt i owe; sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow." "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

God be merciful to me a sinner. It's coming to Christ as the only righteousness, the very righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel which God will accept and justify me. It's the imputed righteousness of Christ. It's his righteousness charged to me which I receive by God-given faith as the Holy Spirit gives me life and brings me to faith in Christ. Matthew 11:28 *"Come unto me,"* he says, *"all ye that labor and are heavy laden,"* Are you burdened down with sin? Are you burdened down with legalism and religion he says, *"I will give you rest."* Rest in him for all salvation. Rest in him for all forgiveness. Rest in him for all righteousness and eternal life.

Over in the book of Hebrews chapter 4, we're

told of this rest. It says in Hebrews 4:1 *"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."* Now listen to what he's saying. He's saying, *"let us therefore fear."* What fear is he talking about? Romans 3:18 tells us that by nature no man fears God, but this fear here is a reverence and a respect for God who is holy and righteous in all his ways. It's a reverence of faith. It's one that brings a sinner to see that if God were to give him what he's earned or deserved it would be eternal damnation, that he has no hope but to cast himself upon the mercy of God and say God be merciful to me a sinner. In Hebrews 4:1 *"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest,..."* What is that promise? It's the gospel. It's the promise of salvation by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the promise of eternal life and glory through him. It's the promise of the forgiveness of sins through him. It's the promise of being justified, being made righteous, in him. He says this promise of entering into his rest, that is HIS rest. He's resting from his labors. When I come to Christ, I do cease from my labors in this sense: I stop trying to save myself by my works but in reality what I'm doing is entering into his rest. Christ rests from his labors. I'm resting in him and what he accomplished in his work and so he says, *"...any of you should seem to come short of*

it." Now how do you come short of his rest? You come short of Christ. You know there are people who believe that salvation is through Christ plus their decision or their works or their baptism or something else. The apostle Paul wrote about that in Galatians 2:21 he said, ***"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*** Salvation is not Christ plus anything. It's Christ alone and those who come short of his rest are those who stop short of resting in him wholly as all salvation.

He says in Hebrews 4:2 he says, ***"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them"*** (he's talking about the Israelites who were wandering through the wilderness from Sinai and when they came upon the brink of the promised land they did not enter in) he said, ***"...but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."*** They didn't believe God. When God promised them that land, the promised land (that's why it's called the promised land), when did he promise it to the people of Israel? Here they are, they have been delivered from Egypt, the bondage of Egypt. They've been at Sinai and formed as a nation brought under the old covenant, under Moses the mediator of that covenant, and then they wandered, they came to the promised land and they would not enter in. Do you know why they

wouldn't enter in to that promised land? Unbelief. It's recorded over in the book of numbers. They sent spies over into the land and the spies came back and there were two reports. One was the majority report and it went something like this: we went over there and we saw there's a people over there and they're giants, they're too big. He said it is a land of milk and honey. It's a land that's fruitful. It's a land that's promising, but we cannot take that land. We don't have the wherewithal, the power, the numbers, the weapons. We don't have what it takes to possess that land. That was the majority report. Then there was a minority report. It was given by a man named Caleb. Caleb means faithful one and he says, wait a minute, our possessing that land has nothing to do with our power or our weapons or our numbers. God has already given us the land. All we have to do is possess it. Just go over and have it, he said. And they didn't believe it. They didn't believe God and that's the way it is with salvation. Preachers are telling people they got to do this, they got to do that, they have to go here, go there in order to have this promise. No, Christ says, Matthew 11:28 *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* It's a given. You see God promised that nation the land four hundred and some years before that nation was ever formed. He gave it to Abraham and so it's a promise. Well they didn't

enter in because they didn't believe.

He says in Hebrews 4:3 *"For we which have believed do enter into rest,"* (when you believe Christ that means you rest in him) *"as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."* This is a done deal folks. You see, the gospel is not do and live. It's done. In the Gospel it's done and live. Live out of what's been done. He says in Hebrews 4:4, *"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."* That's speaking of creation. God created the world in six days and on the seventh day he rested. Now that doesn't mean that God became physically tired. God is Spirit. But it means God was satisfied with the work that he accomplished. It was finished. And on the seventh day he did no work because it was done.

Then he says in Hebrews 4:5-6, *"And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief."* This is talking about the children of Israel going into the promised land. You remember they had to wander 40 years in that wilderness and that generation passed before they got into the promised land. Hebrews 4:7-8 he says, *"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day,*

after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus... Now that word Jesus there is Joshua. That's referring to Joshua who brought the children of Israel over into the promised land after they had wandered in the wilderness 40 years. You see, Moses couldn't do it. Moses represented the law. Joshua represented Christ. The law cannot give you rest, only Christ can give you rest. So if Joshua had given them rest, "*...then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*" Now that physical rest, that physical land that Joshua brought them into, is not eternal rest. There's another day that he spoke of he says in Hebrews 4:9, "*There remaineth therefore a rest*" (or a Sabbath) "*to the people of God.*" That is even today, in this day and in our day. Now what is that rest? What is the sabbath that he's talking about? It's not a day my friend. It's certainly not Saturday, that was the old covenant sabbath and it's not Sunday. Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath. What is the Christian sabbath? Christ is the Christian Sabbath. He says in Hebrews 4:10, "*For he that is entered into his rest,*" (that is Christ's rest) "*he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*" God created the world in six days and then he rested. The Lord Jesus Christ, he came and he kept the law perfectly as the substitute of his people, God in human flesh, he went to the cross

of Calvary and remember what he said as recorded in John 19:30? he said ***"It is finished."*** The work was done and he ceased from his labor just like God did when he created the world. He created the world in six days, ceased from his labor. Christ, the son of God incarnate, died on the cross of Calvary to put away the sins of his people. He was made sin. The sins of his sheep, God's elect, were accounted, charged, imputed to him and he put them away. And he established righteousness, the righteousness of God that's accounted, imputed, charged to them. He ceased from his labor and entered into his rest. So he says in Hebrews 4:11, ***"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest"*** (let's believe in Christ, Come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest) ***"lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."*** Now back in Matthew 11, he says I'll give you rest. This is the gift of rest.

He says in Matthew 11:29-30 ***"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; 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."*** You know that yoke, that's what they put the oxen in so that they'd all go the same direction, every sinner who enters into that rest does so the same way: by coming to Christ. resting in him, believing in him for all salvation, all forgiveness, all righteousness, all eternal life and all glory. And he says, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The yoke of the law and the burden of the law is not easy. In fact, it's impossible. No flesh will be justified in God's sight by works of the law. By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified. You might work hard all your life and you still cannot be declared or made righteous in the sight of God. You may cry and go through religious exercises and ceremonies all your life and still not wash away one sin. That's a heavy burden to bear. Preachers may put the the black whip of the law upon your back and they may promise you mercenary rewards in order to attain and maintain salvation. That's a hard yoke, that's a heavy burden, but Christ said my yoke is easy, my burden is light. And do you know why? Because it's the yoke of grace. It's the burden of grace and gratitude and love. Paul said the love of Christ constraineth me, motivates me. There is an obedience in this rest. There is a laboring in this rest, but it's not a hard yoke and a heavy burden. It's a delight. That's right, it's a delight to follow Christ because we do it out of love and grace and gratitude and not because of the burden that we cannot bear. *"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."*