The Work of Righteousness Shall Be Peace, the Fruit of Righteousness Rest for Ever

Let us open the Word of God to Matthew, chapter 11. Let us read verses 28 and 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."* Amen.

It is the Lord Jesus who is speaking to us here. He is speaking about rest, the peace of the heart, which is found in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is a full and everlasting rest.

And He calls all of us who labour and are heavy laden to come to Him. We come out of this dark world, which offers us a false peace and gives us a false rest. It promises us all kinds of things, but in the end it only wears us out and weighs us down.

And the Lord Jesus calls us to Himself to give rest to our souls. Many seek the Kingdom of God for the streets of gold, because there is no more suffering there, because it gives us a house, a dwelling place to live in.

But very few want to seek the Kingdom of God for the rest that is in the Kingdom of God. Those who seek only the streets of gold will not find rest.

Let us also go and read in Hebrews, chapter 3, verses 7 to 12: *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."* Amen.

These people walked through the wilderness for forty years. And God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest. What is it that man is really looking for? The spirit that goes out of someone who has swept his house clean seeks rest and does not find it. That is what Scripture tells us in Matthew 12:43: *"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none."*

We can seek rest and not find it, because we are not seeking it on the terms of the One who is able to give us rest. God tells us very plainly. He swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest. And the same thing can happen to us. God may swear that we will not enter into His rest.

Let us remember, there were 600,000 men. Of those 600,000, few, very few, entered into His rest, because they had not known His ways. They always erred in their heart.

And let us keep in mind that the Lord Jesus calls all of us who labour and are heavy laden, so that He may give us rest. What is more precious than rest for the soul? *"Come… learn of me… and ye shall find rest unto your souls,"* says the Lord Jesus.

All people are looking for joy, looking for happiness. But they do not look for it by the Lord Jesus' recipe. There is rest in one place, and in one place only. We read in Isaiah 48:18: *"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."*

The Lord Jesus tells us in John 14: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life,"* says the Lord Jesus. In Him we find peace like a river, and rest, if we learn of Him and if we walk in His way, which is the truth and the life.

We read in Hebrews chapter 3, from verse 15: *"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."* Amen. I met someone today, a man of 54, and he told me he has had diabetes for 13 years. I asked him, "How did you get diabetes so young, at 41?" He told me there had been a painful event in his family.

A very painful one, and the diabetes was triggered. It was not so serious at first, but now he is on insulin.

When the soul has no rest, it brings sickness and suffering to the body as well. But what is far more serious is that God swears we will not enter into His rest. That is very serious indeed.

"And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" We read on in chapter 4, verse 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."* Amen.

We want to enter the Kingdom of God, and that is good. But in the Kingdom of God is found the rest of God. That is God's offer. Yet many do not want to seek the rest He offers us. People want another kind of rest, the kind that comes from living according to the course of this world. They sit in front of the television, they sit on the internet, on Facebook, on YouTube, and on other things. Why?

Because they are not seeking the rest that the Lord Jesus can give us. They do not have this rest, and their soul is always searching. The unclean spirit sought rest and did not find it. And what did it do? It went back and took with it seven other spirits, and the man's condition became worse, because he had put nothing in its place. One way or another, we are all looking for rest. That is why we take holidays, to rest. And the unclean spirit sought rest and did not find it. The

way it was looking, it could not find it, because only God can give rest, and the Lord Jesus is the One who offers us this rest, but only if we follow His rules.

He puts it to us: Come and learn of Me, and so you will find rest for your soul. Whoever seeks it on His terms will find it.

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest."

We read from verse 6: *"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: 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 had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."*

You cannot enter this rest just any old way. That is what the Word of God tells us. There is a rule, there is a way we must walk in order to enter this rest.

The first thing we must do is this: today, if we hear His voice, we must not harden our hearts, because if we harden them, an evil heart of unbelief separates us from the living God. And a day comes when He will swear that we will not enter into His rest.

Let us also read verses 12 and 13: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* Amen.

Let us think about the dwelling place of the heart. Thoughts live in the dwelling place of the heart. It is a place where thoughts are formed, and the Word of God is quick and powerful. It discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. When it judges them, we are judged; and when we are judged, we are condemned; the things we do condemn us.

If they condemn us, we will have no peace deep within ourselves; even if we don't want it, they condemn us.

Let us read a few verses and go through a few things about the peace that is found in the Kingdom of God. Some think only of outward conflicts, but there are inner conflicts too: there is a conflict between God and our inner world of wicked thoughts.

And if we come to God and want to be with God, **the Word of God** judges us. We must let ourselves be judged. And there is Someone else who judges us. John chapter 16, verses 7 and 8: *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the

Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* Amen.

The Holy Spirit will not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, that will He speak, and He will show us things to come. He teaches us all truth, He guides us into all truth. And He does something more: He reproves us of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He uses the Word to judge the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

Let us read and see when we will have peace and when we will not, when we will not find rest. Some hope to get it like a prize, like a gift. But that is not how rest and peace are received.

Let us read from Isaiah 59, verses 7 to 11: *"Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace,"* or rest.

It is quite clear to us why that people did not know God's rest. When God asked them to walk in His paths, they said, "We will not walk therein, we will not."

Only those who walk in God's way find peace. It is a way of peace. The Lord Jesus came to guide our feet into the way of peace, of rest. Come, learn of Me! Only from Me can you learn how to find rest for your souls.

"Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us." Amen.

The wicked have no peace. We can keep calling on the name of the Lord, we can keep singing to Him and saying, "Let us go to the house of the Lord, the house of the Lord!"

If we do not learn to live as He lived, we will not enter into His rest, we will not have peace. There is only one recipe by which we can enter into this rest of God.

Let us remember that we read in verse 7: "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity."

We read in Isaiah 66, verse 18, the first part: *"For I know their works and their thoughts."* Amen. Many of us probably imagine that God punishes only deeds. But here He tells us that He deals with thoughts too. We do not see other people's thoughts. I don't see what Michael is thinking. I don't see what Ralph is thinking.

Everyone wears a mask, and I don't know what is inside them, what they are thinking. But God knows even our thoughts. He knows the heart, and He knows whether our thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.

He says, "I know their works and their thoughts." Those who have wicked thoughts in their hearts do not know peace. The wicked have no peace, however much they claim to have it. You may have a false peace of your own making, but it is not God's rest. There is only one rest that is true. It is found only in God's offer. Many want only the streets of gold, but God offers His rest, which can be had only on the terms He sets.

So it is very important that we find this recipe that leads us to rest. We also read in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 7 to 9: *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Amen.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. The man who does not walk according to God's law is unrighteous, and that man, who does not have God's law, should forsake his thoughts and return to the Lord today, if he hears His voice, and He will have mercy on him.

"To our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways." And there is a very great distance between our ways and God's ways. *"As the heavens are higher than the earth,"* so far are God's thoughts above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways.

To have rest and to have peace, we must have the mind of God, the mind of Christ.

Let us read from 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 15 and 16: *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."* Amen.

Paul says of himself: we have the mind of Christ. What can we say of ourselves? We will have rest when we have the mind of Christ.

The wicked have no peace. They do not know the way of peace, the way that brings rest. Let us also read from 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 3 to 5: *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* Amen. You and I must cast down imaginations. Imaginations are the thoughts the mind conceives; the mind gives birth to thoughts, wicked thoughts, and we cast them down.

Man has wicked thoughts; the wicked have thoughts of iniquity.

These wicked thoughts we must place under the law of Christ, until we come to have the mind of Christ. We must bring every thought of ours into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Then we will have peace and rest.

Let us take note of how rest comes. There are steps we have to take. It is work we have to do on ourselves. Reaching rest involves a thorough work on ourselves.

The Word of God is quick and powerful. It judges my thoughts and the intents of my heart. The Spirit does the same: He takes the Word, uses it and cuts. I must work together with them, I must let myself be shaped; otherwise I will be wicked in my thoughts and in my deeds.

Someone was telling me the other day about a man who lived centuries ago. He was in a church and looked very devout on the outside. He seemed devout, but he betrayed his brothers and sisters, and they were put to death. The wicked have no rest. Judas had neither peace nor rest in his soul.

The turmoil of his soul led him to death. He could no longer bear himself, and he hanged himself. He could hold out no longer. His soul could find no peace, could find no rest. The spirit went wandering through dry places and found no rest.

People who do not find rest are troubled, stressed, depressed. A large percentage of the population is diagnosed with depression. Those are the doctors' figures, counting the people who have gone to see them and are already starting to take pills for it.

All who are wicked and have wicked thoughts will at some point fall into depression. They have no peace because they have nowhere to get it from, for peace and rest belong only to those who follow Christ.

Let us also read from Philippians, chapter four, verses 6 and 7: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Amen.

God counsels us and encourages us not to be anxious about anything. God is greater than he that is in the world. We need not be anxious about anything. He has promised us that He is faithful and that He cares for us. "I am with you alway." It is a promise God keeps faithfully, and the peace He gives us is a peace that passes all understanding, and this peace will keep our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus.

This peace keeps our hearts and minds. Many are seeking peace, and we too are seeking peace and rest, and few find it.

Because they do not seek it according to God's rules. Only obedience brings us peace. *(O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Isaiah 48:18)*

If we keep God's Law, it brings us peace; there is nothing left to condemn us. Paul says of himself: I no longer condemn myself, I have nothing against myself, because I live in obedience and I bring every thought of mine into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (1 Corinthians 4:4: For I know nothing by myself.)

He brought every thought of his before the Word to be judged and made captive to Christ.

Let us also read from Luke 19, verses 41 and 42: *"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."* Amen.

With this city to which the Lord Jesus came, exactly the same thing happened as with the Hebrew people whom God brought out of Egypt.

Neither the one nor the other knew the rest that comes from obeying God. Because they always erred in their ways. We read that they did not know the way of peace. What was it that these people in Jerusalem did not know?

The same thing. The Lord Jesus wept over the city. If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace. And the Lord Jesus longed for Jerusalem, for His own, to know it.

He came to earth so that we might know peace, so that He might guide our feet into the way of peace. That is why the Lord Jesus came, and they said to Him: We will not walk in this way. We know other ways, much better ones.

We like going to the mall, to the beach, to the stadium, to the television, to the world's internet. What do we find at the mall? Do we find God's rest there? Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. The lust of the eyes, the things of the world, where do they come from?

Going to the mall is innocent, it's innocent enough, but what does the mall feed? I remember, when I was young there was no such thing. I was in secondary school, and we had a Sunday habit. We would stroll around the town centre to feed the flesh. Afterwards we would go to the cinema. Did I know God's rest?

There is no way we can know it like that. The wicked, the Word of God tells us, have no peace. Only the things that are above can give us peace; those are what we must seek.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Many things in the world seem innocent.

Many will say, "What's wrong with going to the mall?" Nothing in itself. But what is it feeding in me? The Word of God tells us: Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Many say, "So are we supposed to bury our heads in the sand and not see anything at all?"

But why do you think He brought those people out of Egypt into the wilderness? What was there in Egypt? We remember how good the fish in Egypt were, the fish that cost us nothing. Even today it costs us nothing to go strolling around the mall. It really costs us nothing. You don't have to spend any money. Nobody knows we went there just to wander about. We sit at a table, have something to eat, drink a soft drink, and look around left and right.

But where we have gone in is the world and the things of the world, and God says not to love them, because then His love is not in us. May God help us understand what we are called to. These things will not give us rest.

And yet it feels good somehow: we go there, we relax, we feel good. And we receive a kind of relaxation, a peace that the world gives. The Lord Jesus says otherwise: My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, so let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

This is the peace God gives us, and it is found only in the wilderness. It is not found in the world.

Many say of us that we are legalists, that we don't enjoy what God has given on earth. But those who set their minds on earthly things cannot please God, and their end is destruction. That is what the Word of God tells us.

Let us read Romans chapter 8, to see how different the things of the world are from the things that can give us peace. They are very different. Chapter 8, verse 5: *"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."*

The things of the Spirit are very different from the things of the flesh. He came to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem did not know the things that belonged to its peace, that is, the things of the Spirit. Going after the things of the flesh, which seem innocent, which we say are innocent, leads to death.

Why did we come to Christ? What do we want to find? A paradise with streets of gold, or the rest of God? If we do not want to find the rest of God, we will not meet God, and we will not see the streets of gold either.

If what we want is streets of gold, that means we are still carnal. *"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,"* or rest. The things above are as different from the things of the flesh as the heavens are distant from the earth.

So we must discern which are the things above that can give us peace. The things of the flesh are everything we had before we turned to God. All things must become new. Only these things that are made new give us peace. The old things cannot stay, because the old things did not give us rest.

We had wicked thoughts; we did whatever came into our heads, that is what we did. I wanted to go to the disco, so I went. I wanted to go to the cinema, so I went.

Does God still let me do whatever I want, or not? Let us read Galatians 5:16: *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* And we cannot please God, Scripture tells us: *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* Amen.

I've heard some people say, "I go to the seaside, but I don't go where everyone goes, I go somewhere else." But why go somewhere else? You still go there to live in the flesh; you just don't want to see the beaches packed with people half undressed. But why go at all? These things are not among the things of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit wars against the flesh.

"The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." That is what it tells us. And those who do such things cannot please God. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Amen.

Let us ask ourselves: why does God give us the Holy Spirit? So that we can speak in tongues, prophesy, and still go after the things of the flesh? He is given to us so that we may walk after the things of the Spirit, so that He may guide us into all truth, so that we may live as He leads. That is why He comes into us and dwells in us.

But if we like the world and the things of the world, we cannot force God to give us the Holy Spirit. *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,"* that is, the Spirit of God is not in him.

Let us learn which things to go after so that we find rest. Many seek it and don't know how to find it. If we seek the rest God offers, we must come to Him and learn of Him, the Word of God tells us.

Let us also read in Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1, 2 and 3: *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above."* These things can give you peace.

Do not set your minds on, and do not go after, the things on the earth, which bring you death. "For ye are dead" to the things on the earth. We could read: *"and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* Amen.

If we have come to Christ only for salvation, we will not obtain it. We must come to Christ in order to seek the things above, and in that way we have also come for salvation. They could not enter into God's rest because they did not follow God's procedure, God's ways, God's rules.

God has very clear and precise rules. We read on from verse 5: *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,"* the earthly things. Put them to death in your lives: *"fornication, uncleanness,"* the uncleanness of your thoughts, *"inordinate affection, evil concupiscence."* What does lust mean? Lusts must be crucified; evil desire, lust, put it to death, and put to death covetousness too, which is idolatry.

Because of these earthly things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. There are very great differences between the things on earth and the things of the Spirit. Only the

things of the Spirit give us rest, these being the things above. They are completely different from the things on earth. They are not the streets of gold, as most people think. They are not the gates of pearl. Those are not what we should go after. Those are not what we should set our minds on, but rather on the things that can give us peace, or rest.

Let us go and read in Isaiah about one of the things above that give us rest. Chapter 32, verses 17 and 18: *"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."* Amen.

Scripture tells us: *"The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace,"* or rest. *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."* He is King of righteousness, King of peace.

We must walk in righteousness. Whoever lives in righteousness is born of God. See how we can be born of God! I spoke with someone today, and he told me there are a few things that have happened in his life recently.

And he said: Ever since I met you, everything has turned upside down for me. All hell is set against me now. Everything is against me. Things were going well for me before, when I was living a disorderly life, when I wasn't living in righteousness. Everything was going fine.

But when we put things in order, the troubles that come with living in righteousness arrive, yet they bring us rest. The work of righteousness brings rest. The wicked, who live in disorder, have no rest for their soul. What does it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul?

We read further in Isaiah 33, verses 15 to 17: *"He that walketh righteously,* (he has peace and rest, and, as we read, quietness for ever) *and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes..."*

And we could also read it as: he who shakes his hands so as not to give a bribe, not only so as not to take one. Because when you give, it is worse than when you take. Because you put an occasion of sin in front of the other person.

"...that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Such a man finds rest for his soul.

Yesterday and today I spoke on the phone with several people. And some of them told me about the earthquake in Turkey. I don't know how many of you have heard about this earthquake. I knew nothing; I had no information at all. They had lots of information from "Egypt", from the world. They told me, troubled: Have you seen what's happened? People dead, people injured...

Why should I trouble my heart with the things of this world? Will there be earthquakes? That's right, there will always be earthquakes and wars. But what business do we have there, in their

world? Whoever walks in the counsel of the ungodly, as Psalm 1 says, will find turmoil, not rest. Those who walk in the counsel of the ungodly will have no peace.

Blessed is he who stops his ears from hearing of blood.

And the psalmist says: *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."*

If I set no wicked thing before my eyes, I will surely have rest. Flee the lust of the eyes. Where is the lust of the eyes? What food do we give our eyes? What the eye looks at, that you become. I spoke with someone who was with us for a while, and she told me her eyes hurt from spending so much time on Facebook.

Whoever does such things will not find peace and rest. That is why the Word of God tells us: the wicked do not know God's rest. But what is worse is that God swears they will not enter into His rest.

If we have wicked thoughts and do not come to Him so that the Holy Spirit, together with His Word, may do His work, we will not enter into His rest.

Let us allow the Word to judge the thoughts and intents of our hearts. And what should the Word do? Cut like a two-edged sword. Cleanse like a scalpel in a surgeon's hand.

Let us come to the Lord Jesus. He is meek and lowly in heart. Let us learn of Him, and we will find rest for our souls. Amen.

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