

The Rest Principles
Part Two
Rest from Guilt and Condemnation

Hebrews 10:31 NKJV

³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- *Sometimes Christians distort the Gospel message by misinterpreting Scripture and God's character. Their unbalanced view of Scripture focuses solely on God's love and mercy, but fails to acknowledge God's judgment, justice, and righteousness.*
- *This can eventually lead some into the error of Universalism where they believe everyone will eventually be saved regardless of whether they have repented and put their faith in Christ.*
- *Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26). Jesus stated the prerequisites for resurrection life: "whoever lives and believes in Me." We must believe in Jesus and confess Him as our Lord and Saviour while we are still alive.*
- *We should rejoice and be thankful because God is loving, long-suffering, and merciful. We should also be thankful that He is just, righteous, and will one day bring an end to all rebellion, sin, and evil works. There will be no sin, rebellion, or suffering in Heaven because our Righteous Judge will bring all unrighteousness to an end.*
- *He is just and everyone will be accountable for how they lived their lives. For that reason Scripture says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*
- *However, those who have repented and put their faith in Jesus will rejoice that God is righteous because He paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary. Jesus put right every wrong we as believers are guilty of because He bore our sins and the consequences of our rebellion on His own body and soul.*

Luke 12:4-5 NKJV

⁴ "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

- *Jesus warned His listeners that God is not only merciful but just. There is eternal condemnation in Hell awaiting those who choose to reject Christ and His salvation. — "Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"*

- *The Gospel message contains not only a message of hope, but a message of warning—a message of hope for those who put their faith in Christ, and a message of warning for those who choose to reject His plan of salvation.*

Revelation 6:15-17 NKJV

¹⁵ **And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,**

¹⁶ **and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"**

¹⁷ **For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

- *Revelation, Chapter Six, provides a glimpse of how unbelievers and those who oppose Jesus Christ will react when He returns to bring judgment and justice to the earth. — “and they will say to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!””*
- *People who rejected Christ will face the terror of standing before God to be judged, where they will experience God’s eternal condemnation, judgment, and wrath.*

John 5:24 NKJV

²⁴ **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**

- *Jesus promised that those who repent and put their faith in Him will not face God’s wrath, judgment, or condemnation. Instead, they will receive everlasting life because they have passed from death into life.*

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 NKJV

⁹ **For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

¹⁰ **who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**

¹¹ **Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**

- *In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter Five, Apostle Paul reinforced the truth that God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *What a wonderful comfort and joy to know that because of Jesus Christ, God’s wrath or condemnation no longer hangs over us, but instead He has poured out His mercy and grace on us.*
- *We need to remind one another daily that we, as believers, are no longer under God’s wrath and condemnation, but His mercy and grace. This truth should be a source of great joy, thanksgiving, and comfort. — “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”*

- *What a wonderful comfort to know that whether we are alive or with the Lord we are not under condemnation, we are alive together with Christ. — “who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”*

John 3:16-18 NKJV

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

- *John 3:16 is probably one of the best known Bible verses. It declares that all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ have received salvation and eternal life.*
- *However, the verses that follow provide a more complete picture.*
- **“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (Verse 17).**
- *God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but to save the world. It was God’s love, not His wrath, that caused Him to send His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be born into this world and become the offering for sin at Calvary.*

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (Verse 18).

- *Those who are in unbelief and have rejected Jesus Christ are already condemned.*
- *However, those who put their faith in Christ have received salvation, and therefore are no longer under condemnation!*
- *This biblical truth that believers are no longer under condemnation leads to an important question that appears to contradict what we have just learned.*
- **“Why do so many Christians struggle with condemnation, guilt, and shame if we are supposed to be free from condemnation, guilt, and shame?”**
- *To answer this question we will need to study the first rest principle.*
- *This rest principle addresses those who struggle with guilt, shame, and condemnation because of past sins or present failures.*
- *Some of the symptoms of unrest due to shame, guilt, and condemnation are as follows:*

- *Those Christians may have a general sense of unworthiness that hinders their ability to pray or give thanks to the Lord. In fact, when they try to pray or read the Bible, their sense of unworthiness and condemnation may increase causing them to withdraw even further from God.*
- *They may become preoccupied with their failures and sins. Even when God reassures them of His love, they soon begin to doubt His love because of their guilt and condemnation.*
- *They may think that they are always letting God down. At times, they may even doubt if their repentance is sincere enough. They feel chained to their past and believe it is impossible for them to move beyond their failures.*
- *There are two main reasons why a believer can experience condemnation:*
 1. *He or she can choose to continue to live contrary to God's Word, in other words, in unconfessed and unrepentant sin, which allows the enemy to heap condemnation on them.*
 2. *He or she can desire to serve God and confess their sins, but still struggle to fully accept God's forgiveness, resulting in feelings of condemnation.*

Romans 8:1 NKJV

¹ **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

- *If a believer chooses to walk in the flesh and in rebellion to God's Word, this opens the door for the enemy to heap condemnation on them.*
- *The condemnation is not from God. It originates from their conscience that is being defiled or from the negative consequences of their ungodly choices.*
- *Unconfessed sin and rebellious choices ultimately lead to destructive and painful consequences in one's life as the person begins to experience greater and greater degrees of shame, guilt, and condemnation.*
- *However, the rest principles are for believers who desire to enter into that place of rest that Christ has for us, resulting in living fruitful lives for the glory of God. A carnal Christian does not seek to be led by the Spirit or to enter into the place of rest.*
- *The first rest principle focuses on believers who want to serve God, but because of their past failures or present struggles, are burdened down by a sense of unworthiness, shame, and condemnation.*
- *The solution to setting them free from this feeling of condemnation is faith in God's Word.*

- *When a person repents and puts their faith in Jesus Christ they are born again and justified. They are no longer under God's condemnation because they have passed from death unto life.*
- *However, as believers we must learn to walk with faith in God's Word and to embrace the truths found in Scripture, regardless of how we feel, the circumstances we face, or what the enemy may try to heap upon us.*

1 John 1:9 NKJV

⁹ **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- *1 John 1:9 provides us with foundational truths that will help us to find freedom from shame, guilt, and condemnation.*
- *God has promised that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just—not only to forgive our sins, but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- *As we confess our sins to God, He will not only forgive us, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness by leading us through the process of repentance where He will redeem us from all the destructive consequences of our past ungodly choices.*
- *The first step in finding rest from condemnation is embracing the truth that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*
- *Notice that the reason God forgives us is because He is faithful and just. It does not say that He forgives us because He loves us, but because He is faithful and just. In fact, if the Bible said that the reason God forgives us is because He loves us, He would not be just.*
- *If God said, "Because I love you I will simply disregard and overlook your sins and pretend they never took place," God would be an unrighteous judge.*
- *The reason God forgives us is because Jesus went to Calvary and paid the full price for every one of our sins. In other words, justice was satisfied at the cross as Jesus paid the full price for our rebellious and sinful actions.*
- *However, the Bible does say that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."*
- *Because God loves us, He gave Jesus to die for us, so He could forgive us. Motivated by love, Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for sin with His own sinless life, as He redeemed and forgave us. God is just and righteous and the price of sin had to be paid so forgiveness could be attained.*

- *1 John 1:9 says we can be confident that if we confess our sins He will forgive us because He is both just and faithful. Not only has the price of all our sins been paid at Calvary, but we can have full assurance that when we come to God and confess our sins He will immediately forgive us. God has given us His Word that He will forgive us and because He is unchanging, He is faithful to keep His promises.*

Hebrews 10:19-22 NKJV

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,
²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,
²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God,
²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- *These verses in Hebrews, Chapter 10, provide insights into how we can approach the very throne room of God with confidence.*
- **“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus”**
- *This Scripture is addressed to believers — “brethren”*
- *As believers, we can always have confidence to boldly approach God’s very throne, the Holy of Holies, regardless of how many times we have sinned or how terrible our failures.*
- *As believers, we can have confidence to approach our Heavenly Father, whether it is on a day we have walked in victory and joy, or on a day when we experienced defeat and failure, knowing He is there to receive us—not as servants, but as His own beloved sons and daughters.*

“by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God”

- *There is only one reason we can so confidently and boldly enter into the very presence of God—because of the blood of Jesus that He shed for us on the cross.*
- *As Jesus’ body was torn, the veil which separated us from a Holy God was also torn. Now the way is open to come into His presence.*

“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

- *As believers, we can draw near to our holy God with a heart full of assurance and faith that He will lovingly and graciously receive us.*
- *As we approach God, confessing our sins or failures, He cleanses us from an evil conscience—“having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”*

- *To have a heart cleansed from an evil conscience can refer to at least two things:*
- *1. To have an evil conscience can speak about a conscience that has become defiled by sin, where we no longer recognize sin as sin.*
- *2. To have an evil or vexing conscience can speak about a conscience that continues to condemn us even after we have repented and confessed our sins to God.*

“our bodies washed with pure water”

- *Many times the Word of God is represented in Scripture as water, specifically in relationship to the tabernacle. The laver was located in the outer court where the priests washed their hands and feet before they could minister before the Lord.*
- *Having “our bodies washed with pure water” can represent coming into God’s presence to have His Word cleanse and change the way we live, act, and even think.*
- *When the author of Hebrews says, “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” he is also alluding to the tabernacle and the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law where the blood of animal sacrifices was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat to atone for sin.*
- *There is an enormous difference between the sacrificial system under the Mosaic Law and Jesus’ blood shed at Calvary.*

Hebrews 10:1–4 (NKJV)

¹For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

- *The Mosaic Covenant was never meant to provide the remedy for sin. The law was “a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things.”*
- *In fact, it clearly states that “these same sacrifices” cannot “make those who approach perfect.” Those who offered these sacrifices still had imperfections and that is why they continued to offer up sacrifices year after year.*
- *If the sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law had purified the worshipers then they “would have had no more consciousness of sins.” Instead, they continued to offer up the same sacrifices each year.*

- *However, instead of the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law providing a clear conscience, they had the exact opposite effect for “in those sacrifices is a reminder of sins every year,” because their sin was covered over, not removed.*
- *The purpose of the Mosaic Law was not to remedy sin or bring about redemption. The Law made the people aware of their need for redemption and pointed to the New Covenant and the Messiah who would come and make the perfect sacrifice. “He takes away the first (the Mosaic Covenant) that He may establish the second (the New Covenant)” so that “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” we would be sanctified. (Hebrews 10:9–10).*
- *A startling fact about the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law is that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:4).*
- *Of what benefit was making animal sacrifices if the blood of bulls and goats could not take away the worshiper’s sins?*

Leviticus 4:20 (NKJV)

²⁰And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

- *The blood of bulls and goats was not able to take away or wash away sin. It was only able to atone or cover their sins so the worshipers were no longer under judgment and wrath.*
- *The Hebrew word for “atonement” means simply to cover over.*
- *The Old Testament sacrifices never washed away sins but simply covered them.*
- *The sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the blood of His sacrifice do not cover over or atone for our sins. Jesus’ blood washes away our sins so they are totally removed and taken away, eliminating any consciousness of sin.*
- *The difference between the atonement which the blood of bulls and goats provided and the removal or taking away of our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, can be seen in the difference between sweeping dirt under the carpet or vacuuming the room and removing the dirt from the room.*
- *In the first case, the dirt is still in the room, but it is not visible. In the second case the dirt is totally removed without a trace.*
- *The person who swept the dirt under the carpet is still very conscious he hasn’t really cleaned the room. He is reminded each time he walks into the room and sees the bump in the carpet where he swept the dirt.*

- *Hebrews 9:9 and 9:14 provide a stark contrast between the blood of bulls and goats and the blood of Jesus that was shed for us at Calvary.*
- *The blood of bulls and goats were “symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience” and thus the worshipers were still conscious of their past sins and failures. (Hebrews 9:9).*
- *However, “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” so we can have a good conscience because the blood of Jesus does not simply cover over our sins but washes them away freeing us from any sense of shame or condemnation because of our past sins and failures. (Hebrews 9:14).*
- *All the Old Testament saints had consciences that reminded them of their failures and sins. Although there is not a single mention of the word conscience in the Old Testament, the word conscience is used 32 times in the New Testament. Only through the blood of Jesus can our consciences be cleansed.*
- *The blood of bulls and goats under the Mosaic sacrificial system was unable to cleanse one’s conscience from the shame and condemnation of sin. The Old Testament saints had to contend with their bad consciences and with faith look forward to the day when Jesus, the Messiah, would wash their consciences clean by His own blood.*

John 1:29 NKJV

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

- *The zenith of John the Baptist’s ministry was when he pointed to Jesus and made the announcement, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*
- *He didn’t say “Behold! the Lamb of God who atones for the sin of the world,” but “Behold! Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*
- *No Old Testament prophet ever spoke those words regarding any of the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law. No Old Testament priest every proclaimed those words as he sacrificed bulls and goats.*
- *But here, John the Baptist made the announcement that would change the course of mankind and pave the way for those who put their faith in Christ to have a good conscious cleansed from every shred of shame, guilt, and condemnation — “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*
- *As believers, what can we do when we have repented and confessed our sin, but we continue to struggle with feelings of condemnation and shame because of our sin?*

- *This is where we enter into the place of rest “through faith in God’s Word.”*
- *Sometimes our conscience may not yet have taken hold of the truth that Jesus has forgiven us and removed our sins as far as the east is from the west.*

1 John 3:20 NKJV

²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

- *“If our hearts condemn us” — Sometimes our conscience may not always agree with God’s Word. Then, we must look to God because “God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” and choose to believe God’s Word instead of the voice of our conscience.*
- *As we exercise our faith and choose by faith to accept that God has forgiven us and thank Him for forgiving us, we will enter into that wonderful place of rest—free from condemnation, guilt, and shame.*
- *As we continue by faith to accept that God’s Word says that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sin, our conscience will slowly begin to come into alignment with God’s Word. We will develop a disciplined conscience that is submitted to the Word of God.*
- *The process of confessing our sins is:*
 - *First—turn to God and clearly acknowledge our specific sins.*
 - *Second—accept by faith that through Jesus’ sacrifice our sins have been paid for in full.*
 - *Third—embrace His forgiveness and give thanks that He has fully forgiven us.*
 - *Fourth—rejoice before the Lord for His generous love and forgiveness.*
- *We don’t have to plead with God to forgive us as though He is reluctant to forgive us.*
- *We are not to torture ourselves with feelings of shame and self-condemnation, feeling that we somehow need to suffer and be tormented before God will forgive us.*
- *We are to simply confess our sins before Him believing that what Jesus suffered for us on the cross is completely sufficient for us to receive total forgiveness. Only God can absolve us of sin. There is nothing we can or need to add to His sacrifice for us to be forgiven.*

1 John 1:9 NKJV

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- *There is one more component found in 1 John 1:9 that is essential for us to embrace so we can find rest from condemnation — “and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

- *What does it mean to be cleansed from all unrighteousness?*
- *1. This speaks about areas of unrighteousness in us that caused us to sin in the first place.*
- *2. This speaks about areas of unrighteousness, such as habits and wrong ways of thinking and acting that He will cleanse us from.*
- *3. This speaks about Jesus redeeming the negative consequences of our sinful actions and choices as He uses them to produce good.*
- *God does not eliminate or cause the consequences of our choices to simply disappear. He does something much more wonderful—He redeems them and takes the very things that were painful or destructive and uses them for His glory.*

Romans 8:28 NKJV

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

- *As we love and trust God and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will take every detail of our lives—the good and the bad, the joyful and the painful, the easy and the difficult—and weave them into a tapestry to form something wonderful.*
- *This Scripture does not say all things are good. It says He will bring good out of all things if we truly love Him and submit to Him.*
- *When we are feeling shame and condemnation it does not allow God to work in our hearts and lives and bring redemption to the consequences of our past wrong choices. However, when we know we are forgiven then we can draw close to God and face our past failures knowing that God has a wonderful plan for our lives.*
- *The steps the Holy Spirit leads us through to free and cleanse us from all unrighteousness:*
- *Regret — we recognize what we have done is both wrong and hurtful.*
- *True repentance — we turn away from our sins and turn to God.*
- *Confess our sins — we acknowledge our sins to God and to those whom we have wronged.*
- *Restitution — we allow the Holy Spirit to show us if there are actions we should take to bring restoration and healing to those we have hurt and wronged.*
- *God will turn the shame of our failures and sin into a testimony of God's grace which brings glory to His Name. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus!*

- *True repentance brings rest. We can face our past failures and sins without feeling condemnation.*
- *True repentance brings peace and joy and freedom.*
- *Those who have truly repented never get angry or discouraged or ashamed when someone brings up their past. Instead, they see it as an opportunity to share how the grace of God brought redemption.*

1 Corinthians 15:9-11

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

¹¹ Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

- *Paul was able to face the fact that he had at one time been a persecutor of the Church and was responsible for the arrest and imprisonment of many believers. He was also complicit in the death of many Christians.*
- *However, even though he openly acknowledged his past sins it did not hinder him from receiving forgiveness and even ministering to the very people he once persecuted.*
- *Paul was not under the weight of condemnation but he himself often openly acknowledged his past. — “who am not worthy to be called an apostle”*

1 Timothy 1:15-16 NKJV

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

- *Paul regarded Himself as the chief of sinners because he had been a persecutor of the church. — “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”*
- *However, Paul no longer lived under the weight of condemnation because he fully embraced the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Paul rested, knowing he had been completely forgiven.*
- *Even more astounding is why Paul was chosen to be an apostle and to pen over a quarter of the New Testament. — “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”*

- *Paul was not chosen by God because he was smart, or had been so zealous for the Law, or because of his family background. God chose Paul to make him an example of the grace of God.*
- *If God could use Paul to be an apostle of grace after his hands had been stained with the blood of many innocent Christians, then God's grace could be extended to everyone no matter how great their sins or failures. No one's sin is so great that they can't be mightily used by God.*

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.” (1 Corinthians 15:10-11).

- *Let us reiterate Paul's words over our lives, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.”*