

UNIT 6

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BE HOLY,

BECAUSE

I AM HOLY

“I Will Give You Rest”

by Sarah Walton

I was seventeen, and my world was falling apart.

A patient on suicide watch, I walked back to my lonely white room after a visit from a pastor, sat down on the bed, and stared at the Bible in my hands that he had given me. I was at a crossroads: I wanted to feel in control of my life, but I no longer wanted to live it. A battle was waging within me, and I knew something had to change, but I felt helpless to do anything about it. Deep down, I knew—although I desired to follow the Lord, my rebellious heart was constantly rearing its ugly head, demanding its own way. Now I was experiencing the consequences, discipline, and cost of a hurting and unsubmitive heart.

God, in His severe mercy, was allowing the pain of my own choices to come crashing down upon me, through not in cruelty or disdain. With profound love, the heavenly Father was not only seeking my holiness but pursuing my heart.

THE REBELLION OF OUR HEARTS AND THE HOLINESS HE DEMANDS

As we read through the Old Testament, it doesn't take long to see God's relentless pursuit of His people to pour out upon them the blessings of walking faithfully in trust and obedience. Yet despite God's loving pursuit, humanity's sinful, rebellious, and stubborn hearts are bent on going astray and demanding our own way (Rom. 3:12).

After the miraculous rescue of the Israelites from their slavery of Egypt, God called His people to walk with Him in faith and obedience as He led them toward the promised land. Yet time and time again, God's people responded to their Savior with doubt and disobedience, trusting in what they could see rather than the God who had rescued them from captivity. They accused Him of leading them into the wilderness to die. And they rebelled against Moses' God-ordained leadership.

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But despite all of this, God was faithful. He led them to the land He prepared for them, a good land where they could find rest and peace. But when faced with the opportunity to enter and receive this blessing from God, they refused. They could only see the might of those already living in the land, and like those nations, the Israelites chose to be blind to God's ability to hand them over to His people (Num. 13:31–14:4).

This final act of unbelief—this last straw—cost them everything, and they would die in the wilderness as a result, with the promise of rest in the land given to the next generation (Num. 14:5-38). Even Moses, their faithful-but-flawed leader, would face this consequence for sin. He would see the land from a distance, but he would not enter it (Num. 20:1-13).

When the Israelites realized the cost of their faithlessness on the edge of the promised land, they tried to take the land by their own effort. Ignoring Moses's pleas and proclamation that God would not go with them, they charged ahead anyway, and of course, they failed (Num. 14:39-45). They could not enter and conquer the promised land by their own power any more than they could escape the painful consequences of their lack of faith in God and His promises.

Now here I was, experiencing my own painful consequences of a lack of faith in God's promises and a heart bent on its own way, despite God's relentless and loving pursuit of me. But in His kindness and mercy, God allowed me to feel the consequences of my choices in order to draw me to repentance—to see my sin for what it is and to see my helpless estate. I needed to be rescued not merely from my suffering but from my own deceptive and rebellious heart.

GOD'S GREAT RESCUE

As I sat on that hospital bed, a broken and hurting seventeen-year-old, I opened the Bible and found the words of Isaiah 55 calling me to come to the Lord and listen to Him. I was told to seek the Lord and

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may reflect the holiness of our Savior, we can rest in this: Through salvation in Jesus, we are declared righteous and made ready for our eternal promised land (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

One day, the weariness of the wilderness will fade in the distance as we enter our eternal rest, where faith will turn to sight, rebellion will turn to worship, doubt will turn to confidence, and sorrow will turn to unimaginable joy as we taste and see the glories of our heavenly home. Until then, may we strive to live holy and faithful lives in the strength of Christ, all while resting in the promise that because of His death and resurrection, our hope doesn't lie in the strength of our faith or our obedience but in the perfect righteousness of Christ alone (Isa. 53:5).



to call upon Him while He is near, a command coupled with the instruction for the wicked person to forsake his or her evil thoughts and ways. Rather than consequences, the one who returned to the Lord would find His compassion and His willingness to forgive completely.

Like an arrow that pierced my heart, I knew—God was holy and I was not. When life was difficult, I wanted His rescue, but when life was comfortable, I wanted my own way. Like the Israelites, I was suffering the temporal consequences of my own rebellion, faithlessness, and wandering. But in His great love and mercy, Jesus took upon Himself the eternal consequences of God's wrath and judgment that I deserve as He was beaten, crushed, and crucified on the cross. In God's great love, He drew my heart to repentance that day, and He met me with the abundant forgiveness, strength, and peace of His Spirit.

We all fall short of God's holiness. Yet in Christ, when we come to Him in repentance, we stand forgiven in Him and are cloaked in His perfect righteousness. Although we may still experience the discipline of the Lord in order that we