

## “Our Sabbath Rest”

### Hebrews 3:18-4:10

The gospel of Jesus Christ is really quite simple to understand, and simple to receive. One need only repent and trust Christ fully to be saved. So you would also think it would be simple for a person to continue trusting Christ for the rest of his life. But strangely enough, that's not true. It can be quite a challenge to keep resting in His finished work. The natural impulses of human pride, the eroding influence of false teachers and the persistent temptations and pressure from the devil to turn life-giving faith into religious bondage can transform the heart of a believer into a battlefield of confusion. And if we're not careful, what was once complete confidence in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can morph into a modified confidence in Jesus Christ. It becomes Jesus Christ plus a laundry-list of do's and don'ts that I must fulfill if I'm to go to heaven or at least be fully acceptable to God. In today's lesson the author of Hebrews warns his readers about the danger of not entering into the "Sabbath rest" which God has provided for His people. So let's discover what he means by that "Sabbath rest" and discover how it is we enter into and remain in that rest.

#### 1. Overview of verses 1-9

Verse 1: In case anyone doubts the possibility of not holding fast to Jesus "firm until the end" is a real danger the author of Hebrews warns us to "fear" the consequences of abandoning Christ. In other words, people can still sin the sin of the Exodus-generation.

Verse 2: Both the Exodus-generation and Christians have had "good news" preached to them. Moses proclaimed freedom and a promised land to Israel, and Jesus proclaimed freedom from slavery to sin and the devil and eternal life to the entire human race. Hearing good news is not enough, it must be joined in the heart with faith ("mixed together with")... the kind of faith that perseveres through hardship and persists over a lifetime.

Verse 3: What sort of rest did the Exodus-generation forfeit when they refused to believe God's promises? Was it simply the "rest" of entering the promised land and no longer wandering as nomads or was it something greater?

Verses 4, 5: The rest they forfeited was not a national homeland, it was God's invitation to rest with Him from their works just as He has rested from the work of creation since the seventh day. God Himself models the rest He wants to give us.

Verse 6: Though the Exodus-generation didn't gain that rest, the offer is still being made by God.

Verse 7: Through Psalm 95 the Holy Spirit invites everyone for whom it is "today" to enter that rest.

Verse 8: The proof that the "rest" God meant was not a national homeland is the fact that centuries after Joshua led the nation into the promised land the Holy Spirit warned people that the danger of not entering God's rest still existed.

Verse 9: The "Sabbath rest" God invites us to is the righteousness of faith. Believers in Jesus Christ cease working for their salvation and rest as completely in Jesus' cross and resurrection as God rested from His work of creation.

#### 2. What is the "rest" God calls "My rest"?

Answer: God is inviting us to rest with Him. He has been resting from His work since the seventh day of creation. We enter His rest by resting from our works.

#### 3. Two roads to salvation

A) Gift: The gift of righteousness which God gives to those who hear the gospel and receive it by faith.

B) Works: The righteousness earned by performing religious rituals.

We cannot serve both at the same time. We must choose one or the other.



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#### 4. Some important definitions

- A) Ritual law: Religious behaviors (prophetic shadows of Christ)  
Moral law: Christ-like character (eternal heart of God)
- B) Legalism: Reinstating ritual law  
Lawlessness: Discarding moral law (Mt 7:23)
- C) Exodus-generation: Abandoned God before reaching the promised land  
Christian danger: Abandon Christ before reaching heaven
- D) God's rest: He rested from creation on the seventh day  
Joshua's rest: Led Israel into the promised land where they could rest from their wanderings  
Christ's rest: Believers stop working to earn righteousness
- E) Righteousness: God accepts me as His child

#### 5. Listen to Paul on this subject

- A) Galatians 2:11-21; 3:1-5; 10-14
- B) Philippians 3:1-9
- C) Romans 9:30-33

No one has ever been saved by the law. That was not its purpose. People in the old and new covenant are saved by faith.

#### 6. The obvious question

The obvious concern that this workless gospel raises is, what will motivate people if fear is removed? Why would I live a Christ-like life if I'm saved by repentance alone?

- A) New covenant: God's law written on the heart (Jesus: Luke 22:20; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Jeremiah 31:31-34).
  - 1) My conscience is sensitive (Ro 2:11-16)
  - 2) I want to please God
  - 3) I can now hear and see the guidance of the Holy Spirit

Jesus said: (Mt 7:16-23)

- Good tree: good fruit
- You who practice lawlessness, I never knew you

#### 7. Why do people return to works-based religion?

- A) Human pride: It's hard to admit I'm helpless to earn God's favor.
- B) False teachers: Deceived teachers who present a different gospel (Ga 1:6-9). Also manipulators who use fear to control the naive.
- C) Temptations from the devil (1Ti 4:1, 2; 2Co 11:3): Religion is the most effective tool the devil has to keep people from Christ. He doesn't try to stop us from being religious, he tries to stop us from believing the gospel.

#### 8. Conclusion

I serve God because I'm thankful and His love moves me. I serve because I am saved, not to get or stay saved. God's love compels me to care for the needs of others and bring people with me to heaven. I now understand the purpose of life.

Should I be: Sharing my faith? reading the Bible? going to church? giving to the Lord? serving others? praying for others? Yes, of course. But it's very easy to subtly shift into doing them for the wrong reasons. Am I trying to earn God's approval or joyfully thanking Him for my salvation and wisely nurturing my trust in Christ?

#### 9. Questions

- A) Have you every caught yourself falling back into legalism? What was it and what was the truth God showed you?
- B) Lawlessness is also a very strong temptation today. Some people use the gospel as an excuse to keep on violating God's moral standard. What is the proper motivation for a Christian to live a moral life?
- C) Name some ways God has changed you since you became a Christian.