

The Soul at Rest: *Let Us Labor*
Hebrews 4:7-11

Rest is used ten times in Hebrews 4 and means to cease from work, to be at peace, and to relax. “*Let us labor [be diligent] to enter into that rest*” (Hebrews 4:11). Doesn’t that seem odd to say? Not when you understand that the hardest thing you will ever do, the most difficult labor you will ever perform, is “*laboring to enter into God’s rest for your soul.*” There will be a terrible temptation inside you to place your faith in your own conduct and performance and not in Christ.

I. The Hebrew Sabbath was established to be a sign or type of deliverance in Christ.

“*Speak unto the children of Israel ‘My Sabbaths you will keep: for they are a sign between Me and you; that you may know that I am the LORD that sanctifies you’*” (Exodus 31:13). Sabbath keeping was a legal type of our salvation in Christ in the Old Covenant. Like the Passover and circumcision, once Christ came and fulfilled the types, these rituals ceased. In the NT we are strictly forbidden to keep any of those “carnal ordinances” (Hebrews 9:10). “*Let no one judge you in what you eat or drink, or in respect of any holy day, or of the new moon, or the Sabbath: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*” (Col. 2:16-17).

But the word translated *rest* in Heb. 4:9 is the actual word “Sabbath” (NAS uses the word). “*There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*” There *is* a Sabbath we are to keep.

II. The New Covenant believer keeps the Sabbath by resting in the work of Christ.

Our rest is not the keeping of Moses’ law, or the entering into Joshua’s Promised Land, but entering into the rest of Christ. “*Come unto me ... and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28). “*In that day... the root of Jesse will stand ... and his rest will be glory*” (Isaiah 11:10). As God the Father rested on the seventh day because his work of creation was finished, so God the Son rests from His work of deliverance for His people and His rest will be glory! “*Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us*” (Rom. 8:34). He stands for us. Everything in the Old Covenant Law pointed to Christ and His obtaining salvation for us. “*In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave*” (Matthew 28:1). The verse literally reads, “*In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the Sabbath.*” When Christ died and rose again, the old Sabbath law ended and the new Sabbath of grace began!

III. The hardest fight of your life is the tendency you have to believe you earn God’s favor.

“*Let us labor to enter into that rest*” (Heb. 4:11). Why do you have to labor to enter into it?

A. Religious people will tell you it is about your performance.

You will be accused of being “against the Law” and you will respond, “I am in Christ.”

B. Religious leaders will condemn you for your lack of performance.

They will attempt to turn everything about the church, including your giving, your attendance, your commitment, your service into a gauge of your genuineness of faith.

C. Religious upbringing ingrained within you will fight against your rest.

“But disobedience to God will not give anybody rest!” Agreed. But ask yourself this question. What is true disobedience to God? It is defined for us in Hebrews 4:7-11.

Disobedience is hearing God’s voice, “Rest in my Son!” and refusing to enter into it!