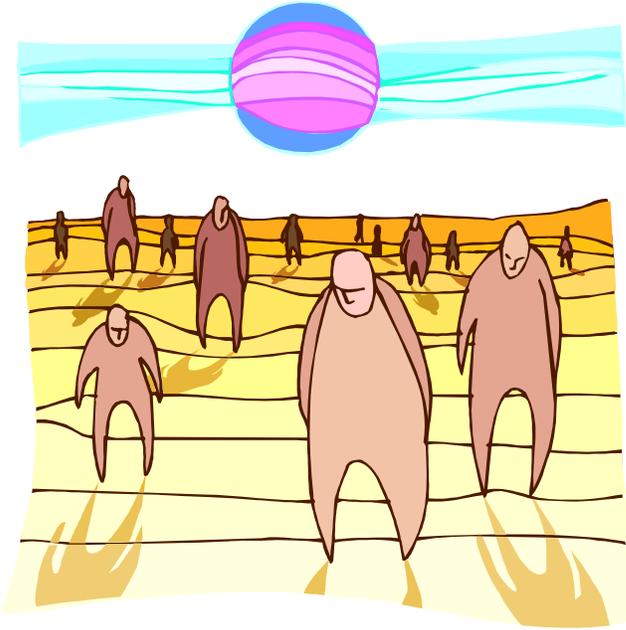


Rest For The Weary



Pastor George Stahnke 03/12/2000

It's so easy to be driven by our responsibilities, our desires and the expectations of others. Perhaps you're experiencing hard times. You have done everything you know to do but there seems to be no positive response. Or maybe you are in the midst of change and your life seems out of control. Perhaps you are mentally fried unable to function or on the edge of burnout. Are there times when you feel as though you will drop, mentally, physically or spiritually, exhausted in your tracks? Take courage my friend, we have a precious promise from God!

I. God's promise of rest

Hebrews 4:1-11 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as

they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." "And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." 5 And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." 6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

In the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews the word "rest" is used in three different applications.

1. Deliverance from oppression and the burden of excessive work (Egypt) and finding *rest* in the Promised Land of Cannon.

Exodus 31:15 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

Exodus 34:21 "Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest.

Leviticus 25:4-5 But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest.

Mark 6:31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said

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to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

2. Deliverance from oppression of the soul, the result of disobedience and sin and finding *rest* through forgiveness and a right relationship with God.

Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Psalms 55:6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest--

Psalms 62:1 For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David. My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.

Psalms 62:5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

Psalms 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalms 116:7 Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.

3. Deliverance from the limitations of this life as we pass through death to life everlasting and our eternal *rest*.

2 Thes. 1:7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

Rev. 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

II. How do we enter into the rest of the Lord?

Philips 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

"Like Israel of old, you and I in Jesus have been delivered from slavery. Sin's power in our lives has been broken, and we are called by God to enter a spiritual "Promised Land" where we will find rest. We are to enjoy the benefits of the work Christ has done for us. The Christian life is not one of struggle to carve out a bare living in some wilderness. The Christian life is one of appropriating all the benefits of the spiritual abundance that Jesus so richly provides . . . We are to come to the place where we appropriate fully what God has done and, while never becoming inactive, are to stop *laboring*. The Christian life that so many experience as an exhausting struggle is not God's intent for us. The life of rest God has for us is experienced only as we respond to His "today" voice, showing us the way we should go to tread pathways He has marked out ahead of time for us. Fear of the future, uncertainty, are taken from us when we realize that our whole duty is to let God guide, and respond when He speaks to us in our "today."...

—The Victor Bible background Commentary

III. The critical problem of attitude

Hebrews 3:12-19 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." 16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

"In chapter 3's final analysis of the early generation, we saw that the critical problem was one of attitude toward God. The people heard what He said. But they hardened their hearts and would not respond. Unwilling to trust God, they were unable to obey. . . Modern psychology describes an "attitude" as a disposition or tendency to respond. Attitudes are always linked to behavior. To say a person has a critical attitude implies that in many situations he will tend to criticize rather than appreciate others. The rebellious attitude exhibited by the men and women Moses led out of slavery had behavioral consequences. When God spoke to them, their tendency was, first of all, to fail to trust His word, and second, to disobey. . . In Scripture these two characteristics, trust and obedience, are always linked. Trust in God leads us to believe that what He says to us is prompted by love. This attitude is critical to the kind of obedience that God desires. A person who does not trust, but fears, might outwardly conform to the orders of a tyrant But only trust and love enable us to make a willing, inner commitment to follow the instructions of our Heavenly Father. When we trust God, we are freed to obey God from the heart. . . Thus the writer tells us to make every effort to enter God's rest He does not tell us to struggle to obey God, for this would be useless. But if we make every effort to love God and develop that attitude of simple trust, then when we hear His voice in our "today," we will obey. And in this kind of obedience we will find rest."

—The Victor Bible background Commentary