

# Hebrews 4:11 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST  
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The Epistle to the Hebrews				
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MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DOCTRINE				DUTY
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68AD				

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
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Hebrews 4:11 [Therefore](#) let us be [diligent](#) to [enter](#) that [rest](#), [so](#) \* that [no one](#) will [fall](#), [through](#) following the [same example](#) of [disobedience](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [spoudasomen](#) (1PAAS) [oun](#) [eiselthein](#) (AAN) [eis](#) [ekeinen](#) [ten](#) [katapausin](#), [hina](#) [me](#) [en](#) [to](#) [auto](#) [tis](#) [hupodeigmati](#) [pese](#) (3SAAS) [tes](#) [apeitheias](#)

**Amplified:** Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Let us then be eager to enter into that rest, lest we follow the example of the Israelites and fall into the same kind of disobedience. ([Westminster Press](#))

**NLT:** Let us do our best to enter that place of rest. For anyone who disobeys God, as the people of Israel did, will fall. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Let us then be eager to know this rest for ourselves, and let us beware that no one misses it through falling into the same kind of unbelief as those we have mentioned. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Let us give diligence, therefore, to enter that rest, lest anyone fall in the same example of disobedience;

**Young's Literal:** May we be diligent, then, to enter into that rest, that no one in the same example of the unbelief may fall

#### LET US THEREFORE BE DILIGENT: [spoudasomen](#) (1PAAS) [oun](#):

- He 4:1; 6:11; Matthew 7:13; 11:12,28, 29, 30; Luke 13:24; 16:16; John 6:27; Philippians 2:12; 2Peter 1:10,11
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

"Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves]" (Amplified Version)

**Let us** is a frequent phrase in Hebrews introducing an **exhortation** which is a word that describes the writer's act of advising or urging strongly, of persuading earnestly, of warning or making urgent appeal to these first century readers. A doctrinal truth is presented - in this case, the truth of a remaining rest available by faith - then the truth is applied. Modern readers also do well to pay careful attention to the "let us" passages! Notice how the writer includes himself in this exhortation ("let **us**").

**Let us** - This great exhortative prefix occurs 13x in 12v - Heb 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1 (2x), He 12:28; 13:13, 15

**Leon Morris** - The idea of the rest of God is not simply a piece of curious information not readily accessible to the rank and file of Christians. It is a spur to action. So the writer proceeds to exhort his readers to make that rest their own... These earlier people had perished. Let the readers beware! ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament](#))

**Therefore** ([3767](#)) ([oun](#)) means consequently and introduces a logical conclusion, result or inference based on the preceding verses. In Inductive Bible Study "**therefore**" is referred to as a **term of conclusion**. In Hebrews 4 (which also begins with a **therefore**) the writer gives a strong exhortation based upon a clear Old Testament example calling on his readers...

"**Therefore**, let us fear (combination of admiration and fear, awe and dread, wonder and terror) lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest (cessation from labor) any one of you should seem to have come short of (miss or not reach) it. For indeed we have had **good news preached** (euangelizo =English "evangelized") to us (we have been evangelized), just as they (Israel in the wilderness) also (were evangelized); but the word (logos) they heard did not profit (accomplish the goal in) them, (Why not?) because it (the Word) was not united (mingled, mixed, blended thoroughly together) by faith (saving faith is evidenced by obedience not disobedience) in those who heard... it remains for some to enter it (God's rest or cessation from labor), and those who formerly had **good news preached** (euangelizo = in effect were "evangelized") to them failed to enter (God's rest) because of disobedience (obstinate and rebellious disbelief, unwillingness to be persuaded, equating with absence of saving faith)... " (Hebrews 4:1-2, 6)

And thus we see that based upon what the writer has just said about entering or not entering God's **rest**, he is cautioning his readers to not make the same mistake that the majority of Israel in the wilderness made.

**Be diligent** - **Diligence** is the opposite of **drifting** (He 2:1-note) and is the admonition that some of these hesitating, vacillating Hebrew readers needed to hear. How? By hearing and heeding the sharp Word of God (cp Ro 10:17-note). That was the very

problem the writer had alluded to with ancient Israel in the wilderness. They heard but they did not heed and as a result they fell in the wilderness.

**Be diligent** ([4704](#)) (**spoudazo** [word study] from **spoude** = earnestness, diligence) means to apply earnestness and speaks primarily of an attitude which then is associated with or leads to an appropriate action (in this case "entering God's rest"). The readers (the verb **spoudazo** is plural) are to hasten or hurry to enter God's rest, to do this quickly, earnestly applying themselves to this pursuit.

**Spoudazo** conveys the idea of hastening to do something with the implication of associated energy or with intense effort and motivation. **Spoudazo** means to be marked by careful unremitting attention or persistent application. The idea is to give maximum effort, to do your best, to spare no effort, to hurry on, to be eager! Hasten to do a thing, exert yourself, endeavour to do it. It means not only to be willing to do something with eagerness, but to follow through and make the effort. In other words **spoudazo** does not stop with affecting one's state of mind, but also affects one's activity. **Spoudazo** means to be conscientious, zealous and earnest in discharging a duty or obligation. It speaks of **intensity of purpose** followed by **intensity of effort** toward the realization of that purpose.

**Wuest** - The words "let us labor" (KJV) are the translation of **spoudazo** which means "**to hasten, make haste, to exert one's self, endeavor, give diligence.**" It is used in the papyri in such senses as "do your best, take care, hurry on the doing of something." The verb speaks of **intensity of purpose** followed by **intensity of effort** toward the realization of that **purpose**. These first-century Jews who were on the point of renouncing their professed faith in Messiah and of returning to the abrogated sacrifices of Judaism, are exhorted to give diligence, take care, exert themselves, hasten to enter the rest in Messiah. The readers are warned not to fall as did the generation under Moses. That generation died a physical death in the wilderness. Those to whom this warning was issued, would die in their sins and be lost forever. The example of the wilderness wanderers should deter them from committing the same sin of unbelief. ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Newell** notes that "We shall find that this "universal earnestness" is a great secret of progress, and the great guardian against the sad condition of the Hebrew believers; who, we are to see in Chapter 5, became "needers of milk, and not of solid food ... without experience of the word of righteousness," instead of teachers of others. Remember, believer, that this world is an "Enchanted Ground." Here again Pilgrim's Progress, which astonishes us by its pictures of spiritual facts and folks, illustrates the danger of lack of diligence in our Christian path. See note† below! ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** has an interesting comment - It is an extraordinary injunction, but I think he means, let us labor not to labor. Our tendency is to try to do something in order to save ourselves; but we must beat that tendency down, and look away from self to Christ. Labor to get away from your own labors; labor to be clean rid of all self-reliance; labor in your prayers never to depend upon your prayers; labor in your repentance never to rest upon your repentance; and labor in your faith not to trust to your faith, but to trust alone to Jesus... I remember an old countryman saying to me, long ago, "Depend upon it, my brother, if you or I get one inch above the ground, we get just that inch too high"; and I believe it is so. Flat on our faces before the cross of Christ is the place for us; realizing that we ourselves are nothing, and that Jesus Christ is everything.

Paul uses **spoudazo** in his last letter to Timothy writing for his young disciple to **Make every effort** (**spoudazo** in the form of a command) to come to me soon" (2Ti 4:9-note)

The **KJV** translates it "**let us labor**" which picks up on the idea that there effort is necessary. Don't misunderstand. The writer is not calling us to work to enter into His rest (in the sense that we in any way might be able to **earn** or **merit** salvation). **Rather what does he specifically say we are to do?** We are to believe the promise of God's Word and His work. One who has entered His rest of salvation is then God's...

workmanship (**poiema** = the result or product of someone's work = sounds like "poem" = believers are now God's "masterpiece" as it were), created in Christ Jesus for (expresses a believer's purpose) good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (it follows that if the works are "our" works, not "His works", they may look "good" but they are not truly "good works" - Jesus said "apart from Me you can do nothing" good - see **Good Deeds**). (Ep 2:8, 9-note, Eph2:10- note)

Concentrate your energy on achieving the goal of entering His rest. This is similar to Jesus' invitation to...

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you **rest**. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND **REST** FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." (Matthew 11:28, 29, 30)

In short, the warning from the OT calls for active, intense, eager, energetic exertion by the reader who is wavering or who is simply professing and not yet possessing saving faith!

Jesus in a similar passage issues a similar call for personal responsibility in one's conversion experience (though not a call to work for one's salvation) commanding His listeners to...

**Enter** (aorist imperative) by the narrow gate (in Lk 13:24 Jesus says "**strive** [agonizomai in the present imperative = continual action called for] to enter by the narrow door door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."); for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it (**Comment:** Jesus says that most people will never be saved in spite of the fact that He offers salvation as a free gift to all who will receive it in faith). (Matthew 7:13-note)

**Peter** gave a similar command to his readers whom he assumed to be believers but among whom he knew there might be some professing faith but not possessing genuine saving faith...

Therefore, brethren, **be** all the more **diligent** (spoudazo - aorist imperative) = Do it now! Don't delay. Conveys a sense of urgency) to make certain about His calling and choosing (electing) you (this speaks of the assurance of salvation obedient believers will experience); for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2Pe 1:10, 11-note) (**Comment:** As a corollary, the idea is that a devout and holy life proves the reality of one's salvation.)

Later the writer uses the related noun **spoude** (diligence) writing...

we desire that each one of you show the same **diligence** (as those among them who had ministered to the saints) so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:11, 12-note)

**Barnes** explains **let us be diligent** writing that...

Let us earnestly strive. Since there is a rest whose attainment is worth all our efforts; since so many have failed of reaching it by their unbelief; and since there is so much danger that we may fail of it also, let us give all diligence that we may enter into it. Heaven is never obtained but by diligence, and no one enters there who does not earnestly desire it, and who does not make a sincere effort to reach it. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary).

**Ray Stedman** writing about the paradoxical association of **diligence** (or diligent effort) and **rest** explains that...

Of course, effort is needed to resist self dependence. If we think that we have what it takes in ourselves to do all that needs to be done, we shall find ourselves *rest-less* and ultimately ineffective. Yet decision is still required of us and exertion is needed; but results can only be expected from the realization that God is also working and he will accomplish the needed ends. This is also the clear teaching of Psalm 127:1, "Unless the lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain." Human effort is still needed, but human effort is never enough." ([Hebrews 4:8-11 The Rest Obtained Is New-Creation Rest](#))

#### TO ENTER THAT REST: eiselthein (AAN) eis ekeinen (that) ten katapausin

- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Enter** (1525)(**eiserchomai** from **eis** = into + **erchomai** = come) means come into. The writer's point is that God's salvation **rest** in His Son Christ Jesus is there and is available, but He will not force us to rest (a "forced rest" would hardly be a true rest!). Each individual must enter His rest, an entrance not by works but by faith.

**John MacArthur** explains that "The need for God's **rest** is urgent. A person should diligently, with intense purpose and concern, secure it. It is not that he can work his way to salvation, but that he should diligently seek to enter God's rest by faith—lest he, like the Israelites in the wilderness, lose the opportunity. God cannot be trifled with. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#))

**William MacDonald** adds that "We must diligently resist any temptation merely to profess faith in Him and then to renounce Him in the heat of suffering and persecution. The Israelites were careless. They treated God's promises lightly. They hankered for Egypt, the land of their bondage (Ex 16:2, 3, Nu 11:4, 5, 6) They were not diligent in appropriating God's promises by faith. As a result, they never reached Canaan. We should be warned by their example (1Co 10:6, 11). ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible](#)

**Newell** - Here "**that rest**" is seen to be a spiritual thing, a Divine return for "diligence" toward the things of God. Then we have, that no man fall—Let me quote here Charles Hodge, the Calvinistic theologian: I copy from his Commentary on Romans... "Believers [the elect] are constantly spoken of [in Scripture] as in danger of perdition. They are saved only if they continue steadfast [in faith]. If they apostatize, they perish. If the Scriptures tell the people of God what is the tendency of their sins as to themselves, they may tell them what is the tendency of such sins as to others. Saints are preserved not in spite of apostasy, but from apostasy."

**John Piper** explains the seemingly paradoxical phrase **Be Diligent to Enter God's Rest** noting that this is...

the main point of the paragraph: Fear unbelief. In the last sentence of the paragraph he says the same thing in different words. Verse 11:

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.

In other words, Israel fell from the promised joy of God because of the disobedience of unbelief. And the same thing can happen to any **professing** Christian. To keep it from happening -- and to show that we are more than mere **professing Christians** (**Ed**: Their lips speak but their ungodly life does not support their profession) -- he says, "Be diligent to enter God's rest" -- God's heaven. Be diligent! Pay close attention to what you've heard (He 2:1-**note**); don't neglect your great salvation (He 2:3-**note**); consider Jesus (He 3:1-**note**); do not harden your hearts (He 3:8-**note**); take care against an unbelieving heart (He 3:12-**note**); exhort one another every day against the deceitfulness of sin (He 3:14-**note**); and FEAR the unbelief that will keep you from your promised rest (He 4:1-**note**). ([Hebrews 4:1-11 Be diligent to enter God's rest](#)) (Bolding added)

**Rest** (2663) (**katapausis** from **katá** = down and thus speaks of permanency + **paúo** = make to cease) describes a ceasing from labor. In one NT use **katapausis** refers a place of rest or dwelling. The primary meaning in the present context is that of ceasing from work or from any kind of action. **Katapausis** describes that state in which action, labor, or exertion is finished. Applying this definition to the present context, specifically God's **rest**, **katapausis** means no more self-effort as far as salvation is concerned. It is the end of trying to please God by our own fleshly works.

As has been alluded to in previous notes on Hebrews 4 is possible to interpret God's "**rest**" in at several ways...

(1) The **rest** associated with placing one's faith in Christ (see Mt 11:28, 29, 30). In the context of the entire epistle, this appears to be the primary meaning, that is, of coming to Jesus by faith and entering His **salvation rest** where self effort is replaced (or at least can and should be replaced) by Spirit initiated and empowered effort.

(2) The rest of those who are believers in Christ, and who are living their Christian life in the power of the Spirit, keeping short accounts, and thus experiencing the "peace of God". This aspect of rest is that which is associated with sanctification, our day to day living out of the Christ life. Ray Stedman speaking of those who have entered this salvation rest by faith explains that tragically many believers experience breakdown in their Christianity (not referring to a loss of salvation but a loss of joy and sense of His presence and power) under the pressures of stress or responsibility because they try to work out their salvation in their power (cp Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note) and have not learned to "operate out of rest". ([Stedman, Ray: The Rest Obtained Is New-Creation Rest](#))

(3). Some who believe in a literal 1000 year kingdom (see **Millennium**) feel that the **rest** that is promised to Israel (and applies to all believers) will be partially fulfilled in the reign of Christ on earth ("the Messianic Age"), the "rest" of which Isaiah records...

Then it will come about in that day (when Messiah takes His throne in Jerusalem after the **Great Tribulation** - see **Daniel's Seventieth Week** - and the defeat of the Antichrist) that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse (the Messiah), Who will stand as a signal (a banner lifted up to be a rallying point) for the peoples; and His **resting place** (LXX uses the related word **anapausis**) will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10)

(3). The rest associated with eternity and which is described by John who...

heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest (anapauo)** from their labors, for their deeds follow with them. (Re 14:13-[note](#))

The **KJV Commentary** emphasizes that "**Rest** involves more than mere inactivity. It is that which follows the satisfactory completion

of a task. Salvation rest is the gift reckoned to the believer resulting from Christ's finished work. Heaven (Ed: #4 above) and millennial rest is the reward of the believer's labors for the Lord (Re 14:13-[note](#)). Hebrews 4:11 records the warning one more time: Do not miss through unbelief what God has promised. ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#) )

**Matthew Henry** explains the **rest** this way: The end proposed-rest spiritual and eternal, the rest of grace here and glory hereafter—in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. The way to this end prescribed- labour (KJV), diligent labour; this is the only way to rest; those who will not work now shall not rest hereafter. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now will make that rest more pleasant when it comes." (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

#### SO THAT ANYONE FALL: hina me en to auto tis hupodeigmati pese (3SAAS):

- He 3:12,18,19
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So that** ([2443](#)) (**hina**) is a marker of purpose. The idea is that the reader is to be diligent to enter God's rest **so that** (lest) they don't "fall dead" like the Israelites did in the wilderness. See discussion of the importance of prayerfully pausing to ponder strategic **terms of purpose or result** (so that, in order that, that, as a result).

**Fall** ([4098](#)) (**pipto**) can describe a literal fall or can be used figuratively (as in the present context) describing a fall into a similar ruin as did disobedient Israel in the wilderness. In an earlier use of **pipto**, the writer asked his readers to recall...

And with whom was He (God) angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies **fell** (could describe their bodies literally falling down, but figuratively also speaks of their falling into death) in the wilderness? (He 3:17-note)

So the writer is warning his readers not to **fall** as did that generation of Israelites who died physically in the wilderness. Those to whom this warning was issued (specifically the group identified as "**lest anyone**"), would die in their sins and be lost forever. This example of "falling" should deter the hearers from the same deadly sin of unbelief which is manifest by disobedience (note that this disobedience is not speaking of a single act or a few acts of disobedience, which even genuine believers are guilty of, but it speaks of an recalcitrant, unrepentant, obstinate disobedience originating from a hard heart and a stiff neck). The writer then proceeds to emphasize the seriousness of this call to obedience by painting the picture of these words of warning as a sword, emphasizing that this warning is so serious and must not be ignored

#### THROUGH FOLLOWING THE SAME EXAMPLE OF DISOBEDIENCE: tis hupodeigmati pese (3SAAS) tes apeitheias

- Acts 26:19; Romans 11:30, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:2; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; Titus 1:16; 3:3;
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Through following the same example** - We may fall, even as the children of Israel did in the wilderness.

**Example** ([5262](#)) (**hupodeigma** from **hupo** = under + **deiknúo/deínumi** = to show, to point to something, to make known the character or significance of something) means literally that which is shown below. It means an example, pattern, illustration. It refers to a sign suggestive of anything, an outline, a delineation, a suggestion.

**Barclay** writes that **hupodeigma** means...

a specimen, or, still better, a sketch-plan

**Vine** writes that **hupodeigma** signifies...

(a) a sign suggestive of anything, the delineation or representation of a thing, and so, a figure, "copy"; in Heb. 9:23

(b) an example for imitation, John 13:15; Jas. 5:10; for warning, Heb. 4:11; 2 Pet. 2:6.

In the present context **hupodeigma** is a model of behavior which is an example the readers should avoid. In other words, the word is used here in the sense of a warning sign. **Hupodeigma** refers not to an example of disobedience, but to an example of falling into destruction as a result of disobedience.



In contrast is the good **example** of **Jesus** the Servant Who instructed His disciples to wash one another's feet because...

I gave you an **example** (hupodeigma) that you also should do as I did to you. (John 13:15)

**Comment:** Here the meaning is that of a model or pattern of behavior used for the purpose of moral instruction.

**Richards** notes that...

In the NT the pattern is nearly always established by a person whose words and actions provide a living expression of that which Scripture calls for from all believers. At times the example found in the Bible is negative (Heb 4). But the concept of example is essentially positive.

Here are the 5 other NT uses (other than the above use from Jn 13:15 - there is only one LXX use - Ezekiel 42:15) of **hupodeigma**

**Hebrews 4:11** (note) Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same **example** of disobedience.

**Hebrews 8:5** (note) who serve a **copy** (image, pattern) and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Comment: Here hupodeigma is used as a representative copy or likeness of the original and/or genuine. What Moses saw on the mountain was the original, and the constructed tabernacle [and the furnishings] the copy which reflected the original, as well as the model which pointed to the original.)

**Hebrews 9:23** (note) Therefore it was necessary for the **copies** of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

**2 Peter 2:6** (note) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an **example** to those who would live ungodly thereafter; **Comment:** The meaning of **hupodeigma** is similar to Hebrews 4:11, where the example is a "negative" one, something that should be avoided.)

**James 5:10** As an **example**, brethren, of suffering and patience (literally a long holding out of one's mind before giving room to passion = reflects emotional calm in face of provocation or misfortune - see makrothumia), take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

What did the patience or endurance of the prophets demonstrate? They serve as an example of the perseverance of the saints demonstrating that it is possible to endure to the end (in His power not our power).

As the writer of Hebrews reminded his readers earlier - "we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast (if we are genuinely saved, we will hold fast - holding fast is not a meritorious work and does not earn salvation, but only "proves" one is saved) the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (He 3:14-note)

**Newell** - The last word in Heb 3:19 "**unbelief**," or want of faith, described a condition of heart—not having God and His power and former blessing in view. "Disobedience" is the action of the natural heart in this condition. (Ibid)

**Spurgeon** - Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives. Let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Disobedience** (543) (**apeitheia** [word study] from **a** = without + **peitho** = persuade) describes a refusal or an unwillingness to be persuaded and thus describes an obstinate and rebellious unbelief. Men do not avoid God's promised **rest** because of insufficient facts but because of proud and unrepentant hearts.

Paul gives us an example of **obedience** testifying before King Agrippa declaring...

I did not prove **disobedient** (adjective **Apeithes**) to the heavenly vision but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. (Acts 26:19)

Paul explaining to the Ephesian believers their pre-conversion state declared...

you were dead (spiritually dead - past tense - before you placed your faith in Christ) in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of **disobedience** (apeitheia). (Ephesians 2:1; 2:2-note)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of **disobedience** (apeitheia). (Ephesians 5:6-note)

In Romans again Paul equates **disobedience** with **unbelief** writing to the Gentile Roman saints...

just as you (Roman Gentile believers) once were **disobedient** (verb form **apeitheo**) to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their (the Jew's) **disobedience** (**Apeitheia**), so these (Jews) also now have been **disobedient** (**apeitheo**), in order that because of the mercy shown to you they (Jews) also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all (Jews and Gentiles) in **disobedience** (**Apeitheia**) that He might show mercy to all. (Ro 11:30, 31, 32-note)

Writing to **Titus** on Crete warned him about false believers declaring that...

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny (present tense = this is their habitual practice, their lifestyle) Him, being detestable (abominable, abhorrent = from root word meaning to "stink"! ) and **disobedient** (apeithes [545](#)), and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:16-note)

Finally **Paul** reminded **Titus** about their pre-conversion condition declaring that...

we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3, 4, 5, 6-notes)

In summary, it is clear that this disobedience is used by the Holy Spirit as a synonym for unbelief. Conversely saving faith is accompanied by sure (albeit not perfect) obedience.

**Newell** - Analyze this carefully. All unbelief is evil; but an "evil heart of unbelief" is that set over, in the parable of the sower, against the good-ground hearers: "These are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast and bring forth fruit." An evil heart of unbelief is one that holds fast to sin, and tries to believe at the same time! But this terrible state Paul shows up, in the words, "Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). You cannot ride two horses going in different directions; you must let one go. So "an evil heart of unbelief" has chosen evil. Let us remember that Paul says an apostate is not a backslider: an apostate is one who has, by his own will, turned his back on Christ and Christianity. Having "tasted" all things, he has "fallen away," as we show elsewhere (Heb 6:4-8).

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**Salmon Run** - Salmon fascinate me. Each August I drive a few miles north of my home in Idaho and watch them make their weary way through the last stages of their spawning run to the sandbars along Lake Creek. I always think of the long journey they've taken.

Some months earlier, they leave the Pacific Ocean and begin their run up the Columbia to the Snake River, then up the main fork of the Salmon River to the East Fork, up the Secesh River to Lake Creek—more than 700 miles.

Driven by instinct, they swim against currents, up waterfalls, and around hydroelectric dams. Despite eagles, bears, and many other predators, they struggle to reach their ancestral spawning grounds to lay their eggs.

Their journey reminds me of the human journey. We too have a homing instinct. "There exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, a sense of Deity," John Calvin said. We are born and we live for the express purpose of knowing and loving God. He is the source of our life, and our hearts are restless until they come to Him.

Are you restless today, driven by discontent and a longing for that elusive "something more"? Jesus Christ is the source and satisfaction of all you seek. Come to Him today and find rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28). —David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Looking to Jesus, my spirit is blest,  
The world is in turmoil, in Him I have rest;  
The sea of my life around me may roar,  
When I look to Jesus, I hear it no more.  
—Anon.

Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Christ.

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## Man's Share in God's Rest

### ■ Alexander Maclaren's sermon on Hebrews 4:11

WITH this simple, practical exhortation, the writer closes one of the most profound and intricate portions of this Epistle. He has been dealing with two Old Testament passages, one of them, the statement in Genesis that God rested after His creative work; the other, the oath sworn in wrath that Israel should not enter into God's rest. Combining these two, he draws from them the inferences that there is a rest of God which He enjoys, and of which He has promised to man a share; that the generation to whom the participation therein was first promised, and as a symbol of that participation, the outward possession of the land, fell by unbelief, and died in the wilderness; that the unclaimed promise continued to subsequent generations and continues to this day. All the glories of it, all the terrors of exclusion, the barriers that shut out, the conditions of entrance, the stringent motives to earnestness, are one in all generations. Surface forms may alter; the fundamentals of the religious life, in the promise of God, and the ways by which men may win or miss it, are unchangeable.

And so the reiterated appeal comes to us with its primeval freshness, saying, after so long a time,

**'Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'**

We have, then, in the words before us, these three things — the rest of God; the barriers against, and the conditions of, entrance; and the labour to secure the entrance.

#### **I. Note then, first, the rest of God.**

Now it is quite possible that the Psalmist, in the passage on which our text foots itself, may have meant by 'My rest' nothing more than repose in the land, which rest was God's since He was the giver of it. But it seems more probable that something of the same idea was floating in his mind, which the writer of this Epistle states so expressly and strongly — viz., that far beyond that outward possession there is the repose of the divine nature in which, marvelous as it may seem, it is possible for a man, in some real fashion, to participate.

What, then, is the rest of God? The 'rest' which Genesis speaks about was, of course, not repose that recruited exhausted strength, but the cessation of work because the work was complete, the repose of satisfaction in what we should call an accomplished ideal.

And, further, in that august conception of the rest of God is included, not only the completion of all His purpose, and the full correspondence of effect with cause, but likewise the indisturbance and inward harmony of that infinite nature whereof all the parts co-operant to an end move in a motion which is rest.

And, further, the rest of God is compatible with, and, indeed, but another form of, unceasing activity. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' said the Master; though the works were, in one sense, finished from the foundation of the world.

Now can we dare to dream that in any fashion that solemn, divine repose and tranquillity of perfection can be reproduced in us? Yes! The dewdrop is a sphere, as truly as the sun; the rainbow in the smallest drop of rain has all the prismatic colours blended in the same harmony as when the great iris strides across the sky. And if man be made in the image of God, man perfected shall be deiform, even in the matter of his apparently incommunicable repose. For they who are exalted to that final future participation in His life will have to look back, too, upon work which, stained as it has been in the doing, yet, in its being accepted upon the altar on which it was humbly laid, has been sanctified and greatened, and will be an element in their joy in the days that are to come. 'They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them' — not for accusation, nor to read to them bitter memories of incompleteness, but rather that they may contribute to the deep repose and rest of the heavens. In a modified form, but yet in reality, the rest of God may be possessed even by the imperfect workers here upon earth.

And, in like manner, that other aspect of the divine repose, in the tranquillity of a perfectly harmonious nature, is altogether, and without restriction, capable of being reproduced, and certain in the future to be reproduced in all them that love and trust Him, when the whole being shall be settled and centred upon Him, and will and desires and duty and conscience shall no more conflict. 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name,' is a prayer even for earth. It will be fully answered in heaven, and the souls made one through all their parts shall rest in God, and shall rest like God.

And further, the human participation in that divine repose will have, like its pattern, the blending without disturbance of rest with motion. The highest activity is the intensest repose. Just as a light, whirled with sufficient rapidity, will seem to make a still circle; just

as the faster a wheel moves the more moveless it seems to stand; just as the rapidity of the earth's flight through space, and the universality with which all the parts of it participate in the flight, produce the sensation of absolute immobility. It is not motion, but effort and friction, that break repose; and when there is neither the one nor the other, there will be no contrariety between activity and rest; but we shall enjoy at once the delights of both without the wear and tear and disturbance of the one or the languor of the other.

This participation by man in the rest of God, which has its culmination in the future, has its germ in the present. For I suppose that none of the higher blessings which attach to the perfect state of man, as revealed in Scripture, do so belong to that state as that their beginnings are not realised here. All the great promises of Scripture, except those which may point to purely physical conditions, begin to be fulfilled here in the earnest of the inheritance. And so, though toil be our lot, and work against the grain, beyond the strength, and for merely external objects of passing necessity, may be our task here, and the disturbance of rest through sorrows and cares is the experience of all, yet even here, as this Epistle has it, 'we who have believed do enter into rest.' The Canaan of the Jew is treated by the writer of this Epistle as having only been a symbol and outward pledge of the deeper repose to which the first receivers of the promise were being trained, if they had been faithful, to look forward and aspire; and the heaven that awaits us, in so far as it is a place and external condition, is in like manner but a symbol and making manifest to sense of the spiritual verity of union with God and satisfaction and rest in Him.

## **II. So look, secondly, at the barriers against, and the conditions of, entrance into that rest.**

My text says, 'Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.' Now it is to be observed that in this section, of which this is the concluding hortatory portion, there is a double reason given for the failure of that generation to whom the promise was addressed to appropriate it to themselves; and that double representation has been unfortunately obscured in our Authorised Version by a uniform rendering of two different words. Sometimes, as here in my text, we find that the word translated 'unbelief' really means disobedience; and sometimes we find that it is correctly translated by the former term. For instance, in the earlier portions of the section, we find a warning against 'an evil heart of unbelief.' The word there is correctly translated, Then we find again, 'To whom He 'swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest; but unto them that believed not,' where the word ought rather to be 'them that were disobedient.' And in the subsequent verse we find the 'unbelief' again mentioned. So there are not one but two things stated by the writer as the barriers to entrance — unbelief and its consequence and manifestation as well as root, disobedience.

And the converse, of course, follows. If the barrier be a shut door of unbelief, plated with disobedience, like iron upon an oak portal, then the condition of entrance is faith, with its consequence of submission of will, and obedience of life.

Notice the important lessons that are given by this alternation of the two ideas of faith and unbelief, obedience and disobedience. Disobedience is the root of unbelief. Unbelief is the mother of further disobedience. Faith is submission, voluntary, within a man's own power. If it be not exercised the true cause lies deeper than all intellectual ones, lies in the moral aversion of his will and in the pride of independence, which says, 'Who is Lord over us?' Why should we have to depend upon Jesus Christ? And as faith is obedience and submission, so faith breeds obedience, and unbelief leads on to higher-handed rebellion. The two interlock each other, foul mother and fouler child; and with dreadful reciprocity of influence the less a man trusts the more he disobeys, the more he disobeys the less he trusts.

But, then, further, note the respective influence of these two — faith and unbelief; and the other couple, obedience and disobedience, in securing entrance to the rest. Now I desire to bring into connection with this duality of representation, which, as I have said, pervades this section of our letter, our Lord's blessed words, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn' of Me

'and ye shall find rest.' There again, we have the double source of rest, and by implication the double source of unrest. For the rest which is given, and the rest which is found, that which ensues from coming to Christ, and that which ensues from taking His yoke upon us and learning of Him, are not the same. But the one is the rest of faith, and the other is the rest of obedience.

So, then, consider the repose that ensues from faith, the unrest that dogs unbelief. When a man comes to Christ, then, because Christ enters into him, he enters into rest. There follow the calming of the conscience and reconciliation with God, there is the beginning of the harmonising of the whole nature in one supreme and satisfying love and devotion. These things still the storm and make the incipient Christian life in a true fashion, though in a small measure, participant of the rest of God.

People say that it is arbitrary to connect salvation with faith, and talk to us about the 'injustice' of men being saved and damned because of their creeds. We are not saved for our faith, nor condemned for our unbelief, but we are saved in our faith, and condemned in our unbelief. Suppose a man did not believe that prussic acid was a poison, and took a spoonful of it and died. You might say that his opinion killed him, but that would only be a shorthand way of saying that his opinion led him to take the thing that did kill him. Suppose a man believes that a medicine will cure him, and takes it, and gets well. Is it the drug or his opinion that cures

him? If a certain mental state tends to produce certain emotions, you cannot have the emotions if you will not have the state. Suppose you do not rely upon the promised friendship and help of some one, you cannot have the joy of confidence or the gifts that you do not believe in and do not care for. And so faith is no arbitrary appointment, but the necessary condition, the only condition possible, in the nature of things, by which a man can enter into the rest of God. If we will not let Christ heal our wounds, they must keep on bleeding; if we will not let Him soothe our conscience, it must keep on pricking; if we will not have Him to bring us nigh, we must continue far off; if we will not open the door of our hearts to let Him in, He must stop without. Faith is the condition of entrance; unbelief bars the door of heaven against us, because it bars the door of our hearts against Him who is heaven.

And then, in like manner, obedience and disobedience are respectively conditions of coming into contact or remaining untouched by the powers which give repose. Submission is tranquillity. What disturbs us in this world is neither work nor worry, but wills unconformed to our work, and unsubmitive to our destiny. When we can say, 'Thy will be done,' then some faint beginnings of peace steal over our souls, and birds of calm sit brooding even on the yet heaving deep. The ox that kicks against the pricks only makes its hocks bloody. The ox that bows its thick neck to the yoke, and willingly pulls at the burden, has a quiet life. The bird that dashes itself against the wires of its cage bruises its wings and puts its little self into a flutter. When it is content with its limits, its song comes back. Obedience is repose; disobedience is disturbance, and they who trust and submit have entered into rest.

### **III. Now, lastly, a word about the discipline to secure the entrance.**

That is a singular paradox and bringing together of opposing ideas, is it not, Let us labour to enter into rest? The paradox is not so strong in the Greek as here, but it still is there. For the word translated 'labour' carries with it the two ideas of earnestness and of diligence, and this is the condition on which alone we can secure the entrance, either into the full heaven above, or into the incipient heaven here.

But note, if we distinctly understand what sort of toil it is that is required to secure it, that settles the nature of the diligence. The main effort of every Christian life, in view of the possibilities of repose that are open to it here and now, and yonder in their perfection, ought to be directed to this one point of deepening and strengthening faith and its consequent obedience.

You can cultivate your faith, it is within your own power. You can make it strong or weak, operative through your life, or only partially, by fits and starts. And what is required is that Christian people should make a business of their godliness, and give themselves to it as carefully and as consciously and as constantly as they give themselves to their daily pursuits. The men that are diligent in the Christian life, who exercise that commonplace, prosaic, pedestrian, homely virtue of earnest effort, are sure to succeed; and there is no other way to succeed. You cannot go to heaven in silver slippers. But although it be true that heaven is a gift, and that the bread of God is given to us by His Son, the old commandment remains unrepealed, and has as direct and stringent reference to the inward Christian life as to the outward. 'In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread,' though it be at the same time bread that is given thee. And how are we to cultivate our faith? By contemplating the great object which kindles it. Do you do that?

By resolving, with fixed and reiterated determinations, that we will exercise it. 'I will trust and not be afraid.' Do you do that? By averting our eyes from the distracting competitors for our interest and attention, in so far as these might enfeeble our confidence. Do you do that? Diligence; that is the secret — a diligence which focuses our powers, and binds our vagrant wills into one strong, solid mass, and delivers us from languor and indolence, and stirs us up to seek the increase of faith as well as of hope and charity. Then, too, obedience is to be cultivated. How do you cultivate obedience? By obeying — by contemplating the great motives that should sway and melt, and sweetly subdue the will, which are all shrined in that one saying.

'Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price,' and by rigidly confining our desires and wishes within the limits of God's appointment, and religiously referring all things to His supreme will. If thus we do, we shall enter into rest.

So, dear friends, the path is a plain enough one. We all know it. The goal is a clear enough one. I suppose we all believe it. What is wanted is feet that shall run with perseverance the race that is set before us. The word of my text which is translated 'labour,' is found in this Epistle in another connection, where the writer desires that we should show 'the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' It is also caught up by one of the other apostles, who says to us, 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith' the manifold virtues of a practical obedience, and so 'the entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' A more authoritative voice points us to the same strenuous effort, for our Lord has said, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you,' and when the listeners asked Him what works He would have them do, He answered, bringing all down to one, which being done would produce all others, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

So if we labour to increase our faith, and its fruits of obedience, with a diligence inspired by our earnestness which is kindled by the thought of the sublimity of the reward, and the perils that seek to rob us of our crown, then, even in the wilderness, we shall enter into the Promised Land, and though the busy week of care and toil, of changefulness and sorrow, may disturb the surface of our souls, we shall have an inner sanctuary, where we can shut our doors about us and enjoy a foretaste of the Sabbath-keeping of the

heavens, and be wrapped in the stillness of the rest of God.