

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Coming to Rest (Part 4)

Hebrews 4:11

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.

We come this morning to the final point of consideration regarding God's rest as found in Hebrews 4:1-11. Remember that we have already considered the Reality of Rest, namely that it is God's intention that we enter into that consideration, contemplation and celebration of the works of God both now and more fully in the future in glory. We also have considered the Requirements of Rest, namely that both a proper fear of coming short of God's rest and the proper exercising of faith are necessary elements for those who are entering into God's rest.

This morning then we look at the third point, which is the Responsibility for Rest. By responsibility, I mean what is it that we, who are entering into God's rest are responsible to do in order to fully and completely experience this rest. The author of Hebrews writes in verse 11, *"Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest..."* We must come to learn then what it means to be diligent.

Remember that the greatest concern of the author of Hebrews in this section of the letter is that all those who would read this letter would be certain of their standing before God, that they would be fully trusting in Christ and Christ alone, and that they would have complete confidence in living for Christ in a world that was hostile to Christ.

This is indeed my prayer for each one in this place this morning. I care not if you are old and grey or young and inexperienced. It matters not if you have been in church for years and years or if you have just recently begun a serious journey with the Savior. It is my prayer that not one of us here this morning would be deceived into thinking that some religious works or some personal efforts are the surety of our salvation. It is my prayer that we would see more clearly that the Christian life is not simply the ability to say the right things but more importantly that we would truly experience the reality of faith in the living God by our very actions, the way we live our life from day to day and even moment by moment. As the apostle John put it,

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18).

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

It is my prayer we will come to see that while the Christian life is certainly not one of pursuing personal merits to present before God as a means of entrance into His divine rest, *this life is nonetheless a life of pursuit, of work and of effort; seeking Christlikeness, holiness and godliness as the manifest experience and expression of one's life.*

So, when we are called to be diligent, as we are in Hebrews 4:11, we must not make the mistake of thinking God's rest is something worked for and earned by our efforts, but rather it is the knowledge of the reality of God's rest that motivates and drives us to work and labor so that we might offer our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. In other words, how do you know if you are working for or to obtain God's rest, or if you are working as a result of having received God's rest? It is for the knowledge of having received this rest that we must be diligent, for if we find ourselves working for God's rest, we will come short of it, being disobedient, for in Hebrews 4:10 it is made very clear that entering God's rest is realized not as a result of our own works. It says,

For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

This seems to present to us another paradox, the paradox being, how does being diligent (which does require effort and work) not contradict the idea of rest? We cannot forget that the rest spoken of in this passage is not the cessation of all work, but rather is a focused attention upon the works of God. It is the entering "*into the joy of your master*" as realized by the faithful slaves of Matthew 25. It is being called into God's "*eternal glory in Christ*" as taught in 1 Peter 5:10. If misunderstood, Hebrews 4:10-11 do contradict each other. However, according to Hebrews 4:10, to enter God's rest requires the cessation of seeking to merit entrance to God's rest through our own works (the text says one has "*rested from his works*"). But then in Hebrews 4:11 we are told that entering God's rest also requires diligence (an effort). But who is the cause or agent of such a work of diligence? I tell you that it is God. We read this very idea in Philippians 2:12-13

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

Yes, we must "work out" our salvation, but what does the next verse tell us? It says,

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

I hate to make this kind of comparison, but by way of illustrating this truth please picture a toaster. What does a toaster do? It makes toast. How does it make toast. It passes electricity, an outside power, through some resistance wires, creating heat, thereby toasting the bread. In order for the toaster to work, it is dependent upon some outside power, that is the electricity. And once connected to the electricity, what does the work, the toaster or the electricity? We might well say, both. The toaster “works out” that is uses the power of the electricity to accomplish that which it was designed for – toasting bread. But the toaster itself is absolutely useless without the electricity. And so it is with the believer. He has been recreated in Christ Jesus for good works according to Ephesians 2:10, works which he can only do as he is connected to the power source, that is Christ. And so the words of Christ become more meaningful in John 15:4 –

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

Now, to apply this idea to Hebrews 4:10-11 and the paradox of simultaneously experiencing rest and exercising diligence, we must know that God’s rest is a gift, not something earned, and yet once that gift is realized it comes with a power, a motivation to exercise the reality of that gift, which as we saw last week includes the fear of not really being in that rest and the faith, the actions, that reveal I am in God’s rest.

Allow me to explain this yet another way by use of physics. In physics, the science of how things work, work is defined as the **transfer of energy**. In physics we say that work **is done on an object** when you transfer energy to that object. If you put energy into an object, then you do work on that object. If a first object is the agent that gives energy to a second object, then the first object does work on the second object. The energy goes from the first object into the second object. I hold a clock here before you. Does it work? No, there is no energy or power given to it right now by which it may work. Now, according to our little physics lesson, if I give the clock power by means of a battery, transferring energy to the clock, does the clock work? Yes, the clock is working out the energy given to it, but according to the laws of physics it is the one who put energy into it that does the work. Did the clock “will” to work? No, it was dependent upon my will to

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

have it work. The clock did not work in order to please me so that I might then give it power, rather, it pleases me to give the clock power so that it might work. Similarly, we do not work in order to please God so that we might gain the hope of rest and eternal life. Rather, it pleases God to give us the hope of rest and eternal life, a motivating power, and we then use that God given power to carry out the purpose, the work which God designed for us. There is no conflict between the ideas of the believer having “rested from his works” – which means that he ceases in his attempts and his “willing” to please God by his works under his own power; and the believer being diligent, that is working because he has been given the power do to so, to enter God’s rest.

Now, with all that said, I told you that if we are to rightly understand Hebrews 4:11, we must understand what it means to be diligent. So then, I would like to present to you some important considerations in this regard. Let us begin first by giving you a more complete definition on the word “diligent” as found in our text. I have already referred to it as a work or effort, but let us go a little deeper.

The word “diligent” literally means “to use speed; to make an effort; to be prompt.” Hebrews 4:11 is another warning of sorts, calling believers to make every effort in their entering God’s rest. This warning is a companion to verse 1 where we read, *“Therefore, let us fear if...any one of you may seem to have come short of [God’s rest].”* Do you remember what it means to “come short”? It means “to fall behind.” We pictured a company of soldiers with one who is falling further and further behind, not keeping up with the rest. We are called to fear that we might even seem to be in that circumstance. Now, in Hebrews 4:11, we are called to “get up to speed, to catch up and keep up” with those who enter God’s rest. This is what it means to be diligent. To be diligent is effort, much effort and great work. By using this word “diligent” we are being told that the Christian life is a battle that requires a constant and sustained effort. We must be reminded of a three-fold front that will assail our efforts to rightly enter the rest of God, that is the world, the flesh and the devil. To be diligent then means to make use of every God-given means to defeat these enemies and realize God’s rest.

Is this not true, beloved, how difficult it can be to be so diligent? It is one thing to shout out, “Do all to the glory of God,” and yet quite another thing to carry it out in practice. It is one thing to pray *“as we have forgiven our debtors,”* but then to really forgive. And it is one thing to declare that Christ is Lord, Head of your home and yet actually recognize Him as Lord by submitting every important question to Him in prayer and by obeying His every command. Do not all such things require being diligent – being up to speed and making every effort?

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Rather than being diligent is it not rather the tendency of the heart to be spiritually slothful and sluggish? I look upon many of the sons of men, the people of this world, and I so often find in them no sluggishness in their pursuits. They labor for gain and toil for pleasure and in such things they are rarely found upon the bed of sloth. I see people rising early, working late and employing every means so that they may obtain the supposed prize of their efforts, a temporary satisfaction, a restless rest and a corruptible crown. And sadly, when I compare the sons of men with the sons of God I see how slow we can be to run the race, how feebly we fight against the foe and how distracted we are to fully lay hold of eternal life. Beloved, these things ought not to be so.

Our text calls us to a position, to a title. It says, “*let us be diligent...!*” Are you diligent? What does the diligent soul look like? Let us spend the rest of our study looking at this question, “what does the diligent soul look like?” I present to you four pictures.

1. The Diligent Soul does not simply desire rest.

Let me begin here by making an important distinction that I believe has too often escaped the notice of many professing believers. There is a difference between desire and diligence. Many who call themselves believers desire and do nothing more. Many would sincerely desire to be saved, but make no efforts toward salvation. Many desire right practice before God and yet practice little before God. Many desire holiness without seeking holiness. Many desire the fruit of godliness without being tapped into the root of godliness. Many desire the reward of labor without the labor that secures the reward. Many desire the conquest of sin in their lives without the battle that ensures such a victory. My beloved, the problem is that many desire to look heavenward and yet fail to take one step heavenward. Our text does not say, “Let us desire to enter that rest,” rather it says, “Let us be diligent to enter that rest...” Consider with me Proverbs 13:4 (and I read now from the NKJV):

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

The soul is in view here, depicting the spiritual side of man. Notice that Proverbs 13:4 tells us that simply desiring something is not enough. Beyond simply saying that you desire to be a better Christian, you desire to know more about God, you desire to read more of God’s Word, you desire to memorize portions of Scripture you must be diligent in such things. For our text does not suggest in any fashion that those who desire God’s rest will enter, rather it tells

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

us that only those who are diligent so enter. To be diligent then allows for no sluggish effort, but does as the Lord Jesus Christ has said in Luke 13:24, “*Strive to enter through the narrow door...*” The word “strive” literally means “to agonize.” Are you diligent to agonize in those things that reveal you are entering God’s rest? And when we are considering the salvation of our souls, what can be more important or pressing? How can the cares and pleasures of this world compare with the eternal destiny of our souls? In comparison, all other considerations must be to us as mere shadows on the wall. For what is at stake but eternal life or eternal death, of endless bliss or endless woe, of heaven or hell? Do not merely desire God, godliness and salvation, rather be diligent to God, godliness and salvation. Remember that the lazy man ends up with what? NOTHING. It is the diligent that are spiritually rich.

2. The diligent soul has experienced true conversion

I said earlier that the word “diligent” pictures a title or position. In the case of Hebrews 4:11 it is the title of a true saint, a holy one, one who has been genuinely converted by the power of God and the blood of Christ. To be converted means to be changed. The Scriptures are full of pictures of the change that takes place in the life of the believer. In John 5:24 believers are those who have been changed or converted from death to life. In Ephesians 5:8 believers are those who have been converted from darkness to light.

The point is that it is the diligent soul that has seen and continues to see the changes that God’s Word says are part of the converted nature of the believer. Prior to coming to Christ, a person only loves darkness. John 3:19 tells us -

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

Upon coming to Christ, the heart is converted and transformed, longing to become more and more like Christ. This idea is expressed in 1 John 1:6-7 which says,

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Have you seen your heart and life converted? Do you see the contrast between how you used to live and think and how you live and think now in

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Christ? Do your thoughts and actions portray the attitude of a converted life or do they look more like that of the world? It is by these we may come to know if we are being diligent. Make the efforts to see your life be a testimony of transformation.

3. The diligent soul aims after sanctification (holiness)

It is the diligent soul that aims to be like God, that makes sanctification, a word which means to become holy, its primary duty. This is not the soul that says, "I hunger and thirst after righteousness..." rather it is the soul that actually "hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The diligent soul knows that if left to its own devices, it would not seek after God and therefore, with all vigilance, it seeks to walk with God in purity, in righteousness, in accordance with the precepts of God's Word.

The diligent soul is painfully aware that while there is a struggle with its own flesh for purity, it also dwells within a world of extreme perversity, a world that so continually stains it, that without diligence, without incessant watchfulness on the part of the soul, it would easily become accustomed to the stain and smell of the world. The only means of purification, of holiness is a closer walk with God and the diligent use of the means of grace. Consider the words of 2 Peter 1:5-8 which says,

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must know that it will take every fiber of our being to maintain a daily and experiential holiness with God. Be diligent in this pursuit of holiness.

4. The diligent soul increases in love for the Savior

The final picture I offer you is that the diligent soul increases, not desires to, but actually increases in its love for the Savior. I often hear of people who say they have grown to love their spouse more and more over the years, as myself would say. But if you want to know whether or not you are truly being diligent in your relationship with Christ, you must be able not only to say, but also to recount how your love for Christ is increasing. Do you love the Savior more today than you did yesterday? Do you love Him more today than when you first began your

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

journey with Him, when you knew very little of Him but enough to be saved? Have your knowledge of Him been accompanied with an ever-greater appreciation and an ever-intensifying love for who He is and what He has done for you?

What comes to your mind when you hear the following words:

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND (Matthew 22:37).

There is so much more of me that needs to so love the Lord. It is my prayer that day-by-day I may love God truly with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind. I trust that is your prayer as well. But know this, my beloved, it is much easier to make this a simple and well-intentioned desire rather than being diligent to see it as a reality in your life. It sounds awfully religious to recite the words, but it is a testimony of God's grace when those words are revealed by the life of the truly diligent believer.

May our prayer wholly and truly be, "Lord, help me to love you with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind. Help me not to rest in myself, to trust in myself, to think that within myself is a shred of dependability. Lord, may I come to you both now and for all time to be my only refuge, my only stronghold, the only source of strength and power that I trust. Lord, help to know the reality of a life so lived in Your grace and by Your power."

The truth beloved, is that a "desire" to live any less than this renders the words of Proverbs 13:4 to become our lot, "*The soul of the lazy man desires and has nothing...*" It is the diligent who know that Christ alone has the power to save; that Christ alone grants the power by which we might live for the Lord and to Christ alone belongs all our heart, soul and mind. Have these become the Lord's in your life? Pray it be so.

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2005 Edward K. Godfrey. This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, 2300 South 13th Street Rogers, AR 72758.

*The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ
Hebrews 4:1-11: Coming to Rest (Part 4)
November 13, 2005*