

Resting in Christ

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into his rest, he
also hath ceased
from his own
works, as God did
from his.”
—Hebrews 4:10***

GOD’S ‘REST’ REFERRED

to in our text is mentioned in Genesis 2:2, which reads, “On the seventh [sixth, *J. B. Rotherham Translation*] day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” We are not to suppose from this that God rested because he had become weary. The thought is that he desisted from his work. Notice the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”—Isa. 40:28

The thought of resting from labor on the seventh day was continued when the LORD gave his Law to the Israelites following their exodus from Egypt. The Sabbath commandment was, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant,

nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”—Exod. 20:8-11

As time went on, religious services were instituted on the Sabbath Day, but this was not a part of God’s original arrangement. The thought of rest was the sole design of the Creator pertaining to this day which he had hallowed. There was a divine purpose behind this which is clearly set forth in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul. Our text pinpoints this purpose, and it is amplified in the context.—Heb. 4:1-11

Paul wrote, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached [to them] did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” (vss. 1,2) Here, the admonition to spiritual Israelites of the present age is that they should be very watchful lest they do not live up fully to the conditions attached to the promises which God has made to them—promises which, when they reach their complete fulfillment in the kingdom, will assure us a position of complete ‘rest’ beyond the veil.

While the Israelites were not of the ‘house of sons’ in the divine arrangement, as servants they were given the opportunity also of resting in the promises of God. The reason most of them failed was their lack of faith both in God and in his promises. Paul explains that the ‘gospel’ was preached to them, as well as to us. The special reference here

seems to be to the assurance given them by God that they would be delivered from Egyptian bondage and led into the land of promise.

Paul continues his explanation of the Sabbath type: "We which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." (Heb. 4:3,4) 'The works were finished from the foundation of the world'—not only had the earth been brought to a suitable condition to be habitable by man, but in his foreknowledge the Creator knew that his human creation would disobey his law and come under sentence of death. Because of this, the plan, or works, for his recovery from death through Christ the Redeemer was also formed.

The Israelites were used by the Lord to picture this glorious future deliverance. First, they were delivered from Egyptian bondage under the leadership of Moses—a type of Christ. Their rest in the Lord in these circumstances was dependent upon their faith and trust in Moses. The majority of them failed to enter into this rest which had been provided, and died in the wilderness. Later, the remaining ones had the opportunity of entering into the rest and security of the promised land under Joshua. Here also, through lack of faith, the majority of them failed. Paul wrote, "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." (vs. 6) Here the reference

seems to relate particularly to those who, through unbelief, died in the wilderness.

ANOTHER DAY

Paul continues, “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [*Joshua, Marginal Translation*] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (vss. 7-9) Thus does the apostle take us forward from the experiences of God’s typical people to the glorious ‘day’ of rest which the spiritual Israelites of the Gospel Age are enjoying, conditional upon their faith.

This brings us to our text: ‘He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.’ As we have noted, God did not rest because he was weary. He completed his plan for human recovery from sin and death—a plan that was to be carried out by his beloved Son, the *Logos*, who later became Jesus Christ. God was so confident in the ability and faithfulness of his beloved Son that his position in the matter is described as a ‘rest.’

Since we have the opportunity of enjoying this rest of the Creator, the thought clearly is that we also should put our full confidence in Jesus and in his ability and willingness to fulfill all God’s good promises to us. What a blessed rest this should be, and what peace of mind and of heart it should afford us as we look unto Jesus, the “author and finisher of our faith.”—Heb. 12:2

OUR WORKS

Within the framework of this lesson, we might think of our own works as all those efforts which in the past we have put forth in order to gain the favor of God and thus to be assured of salvation. The Jewish people of Jesus' day, who were under bondage to the Law, were invited by Jesus to come to him and find rest. Jesus said, "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; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—Matt. 11:28-30

Through the Law Covenant, God had offered the nation of Israel an opportunity, by obedience to its terms, to gain many rich blessings as his people. Doubtless, many of them sincerely tried, but they learned that that which was to give blessings was found instead to be a curse. This was not because the Law itself was imperfect, but because of the inherited imperfections of those who tried to keep it. Writing of his own experiences and the experiences of other Jews formerly under the Law who had since found rest in Christ, Paul said, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were [made manifest] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."—Rom. 7:5

How greatly Paul rejoiced to be free from this burdensome yoke of the Law and to realize that through Christ he had found rest for his soul. He wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1)

The Creator knew that all mankind would be lost under sin, but he also knew that he could trust the plan of redemption to the hands of his Son. Paul enjoyed this same rest in the finished work of Christ, as did all the believing Jews of that time who had been held in bondage by their futile efforts to gain blessings by keeping the Law.

NOT IDLE

Resting in the finished work of Christ does not by any means imply listlessness, or idleness, in the doing of the Heavenly Father's will. Paul admonished that we should work out our own salvation "with fear and trembling," and adds that it is God who works in us to do his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12,13) Yes, there is much 'work' that we are to do. We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, "rightly dividing the word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15

If we humbly search the 'word of truth' in order to rightly apply its principles in our lives, we will be workmen pleasing to the Lord. This will be a lifetime effort. The pathway of the just is as a shining light which shines more and more until the perfect day. By diligence and humility in prayer and study, we will continue to experience an ever clearer understanding of the Father's will for us, and our comprehension of his plan of the ages for the blessing of all mankind will become increasingly clear.

As we work out our own salvation through study, prayer, and application, it should not be with a sense of bondage, or frustration. If we have the right spirit we will endeavor to (Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 31) do all we can in obedience to the Father's will. We will do it in the spirit of restfulness and assurance that our acceptableness to God is not based upon our own efforts but in the finished work of Christ. Our efforts are designed to demonstrate our heart condition of supreme loyalty to God under all circumstances.

The Master's 'burden is light' because he makes it possible for us to bear it. Paul quotes the Lord as having said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor. 12:9) The assurance of this strength, received upon the basis of our faith, enables us to realize that nothing can hinder our complete victory in Christ. Thus we rest in him.

Consider the many assurances Paul gives us in the 8th chapter of Romans: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11) Consider the great power that was required to raise Jesus from the dead. Here we have the assurance that this same power is available to work in and for us.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (vs. 14) If we are humbly following the will of God as outlined in his inspired Word, then we are being led by his Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit leads in difficult paths. The way may not be strewn with roses but, if it is God's way, outlined by his Word, we know that we are his children, and we know that he loves and cares for his children. How sweet is the rest this provides.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children,

then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:16,17) Peter wrote that, through the prophets, the Spirit testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. (I Pet. 1:11) If we have the privilege of suffering with Christ, it means that we are indeed the sons of God and participating in that aspect of the plan of God foretold by the Spirit through the prophets. This means that we are walking in a narrow and difficult way, but always with the assurance from the great burden-bearer, Christ Jesus, that we will not be tried above our ability to bear. Thus we rest in him.

HOPE OF GLORY

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:18) Of Jesus it is written that, “for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) We have a joy set before us also. It is the hope of glory described by Paul in Romans 5:2 as “the glory of God.” It is this hope that helps to lighten the burden of the narrow way and enables us to rest the more fully in Jesus.

“We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24) Not until we have worked out our own salvation completely, and have been exalted to glory with Jesus, will hope give way to reality. For now, our faith enables us to see the otherwise unseen things, and this vision of faith is one

of our greatest sources of strength as we continue to rest in the finished work of Christ.

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) What could give us a greater rest in Christ than to have faith to believe that all our experiences are working ‘together for good’ to us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus? This indicates how fully we are in the love and care of the Lord. This blessed relationship is due to the fact that, as consecrated believers, we have entered into Christ’s rest, having ceased from our own ineffectual works of self-righteousness. Truly this is a blessed rest.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (vss. 31,32) What a blessed assurance this is that our needs as New Creatures, including the need for the robe of Christ’s righteousness, are all provided through Christ, to whom the Creator has assigned the great work of redemption and recovery from sin. We could perhaps condemn ourselves for the imperfections which we know that we have, and certainly others may indeed condemn us. However, no one, not even ourselves, can properly lay any damaging charge against us as long as we are resting in Christ and the precious blood of the atonement.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,

who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom. 8:33,34) Here again, we are provided with a firm foundation for our faith in the finished work of Christ. We know that we must continue to struggle against the imperfections of the flesh, but we know also that we do this under the covering of the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Therefore, we have the continual assurance of divine approval because we have ceased from our own works as God did from his. We are putting our full trust in the provisions of atonement made available through Christ.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (vss. 35-37) Satan and his cohorts will do all in their power to separate us from the love of God, but we have the assurance that greater is he who is for us than all they who be against us. In this blessed assurance, we rest although we be ‘killed all the day long’ and ‘are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’

We cannot be conquerors in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, but we can be conquerors through him that loved us. Knowing this, we can go forth without hesitation, regardless of how threatening the way before us might appear to be. To do this requires faith. The ancient Israelites failed to enter into rest because they lacked the necessary faith. Let it not be so with us, and it will not be so if we continue to look to the Lord for guidance and strength.

That guidance is already provided in his precious Word. Let us lay hold firmly upon it and be alert to its every indication of the Lord's will, for "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (vss. 38,39) What a blessed unity with God and with Christ is here assured. It is a unity indeed that is essential if we are to maintain our rest in Christ throughout all the storms of life. It is through our faith that we are persuaded of this blessed relationship with the Father and with his Son. May our faith ever remain steadfast as an anchor to the soul "which entereth into that within the veil."—Heb. 6:19

THE FUTURE REST

Our rest in Christ while we are still in the flesh depends upon our faith in the promised glory to follow the present suffering of the narrow way. If faithful unto death, we will, beyond the veil, enter even more fully into the rest that has been provided through Christ. However, then, even as now, this will not mean idleness, but a complete and perfect cooperation with Christ in the glorious work of the kingdom, and with the full assurance that the divine plan through him cannot, and will not, fail. ■

"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."

—*Psalm 91:2*