

**Hebrews 4: 1-11; “Entering in to God’s Rest”, Sermon # 15 in the series –
“Holding Fast Our Confession”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on December 6th, 2015, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Being saved by God from all of your sins, by exercising faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is a responsibility which God has given to you. Oh, I know that salvation is of the Lord; that it is all of grace, and that it is not of yourselves, lest any should boast. But believing in the gospel is nevertheless, something which you must do. It is a God-given duty. The duty is, that you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. In doing this, you are acknowledging to Him, and before all men, that you approve of this way of God’s appointment; that you are willing to rest in the truths that you find in the gospel, and that you do desire to enter in to the reality of them and rest in them. Verse 1 says that each person hearing the gospel promise ought to fear lest they seem to have come short of this rest. Why does it read this way, you ask? It is said this way because it is most certainly true that a person can hear the gospel many times, and yet do nothing about it. And even many Christians fail to find rest for their souls even though they have heard the truth many times. This, I pray, will not be the case of anyone here in this assembly this morning. I want to open up for you now, the eternal blessedness of what it means to enter in to God’s rest. The question which I would have each one ask themselves is this: What must I do to enter in to God’s rest, so that I will find rest for my soul? 1st of all – In order to find rest you must know what the rest is, which God has prepared. (verses 1-3) 2nd – In order to find rest you must receive the truth of the gospel and not harden your heart. (verses 4-7) And 3rd – In order to find rest you must cease from your own works, and show that forth, by observing the Christian Sabbath.

1st of all – To find rest you must know what the rest is, which God has prepared.

Let’s read verses 1-3 again. “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.” “For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” We see here in verse 1 that a promise remains, for us living in New Testament times, of entering God’s rest; that is, for all the people who hear the sound of the gospel, and who will believe in Jesus Christ. Entrance is to be found into true and everlasting spiritual rest when you believe the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. But how was the gospel preached to people in those times before Christ came into the world? Well, the way of entrance to eternal salvation in Old Testament times, we should understand, was by believing in the works which God did; works which became in themselves types of Christ. They were works which pointed to Him, and the great salvation which is found, only in Him. The object in hearing this gospel of God’s working, was to rest your whole soul’s weight on what God had said and what He did, in such times of revelation and confrontation; to by faith enter in to what God would do for you, if He revealed Himself to you.

Now God did not reveal Himself, savingly, to all the nations, during the time of the Old Covenant dispensation. He revealed Himself savingly only to the Jews, and a few proselytes (that is, converts) from the nations surrounding; women such as Ruth who was a Moabitess. Let’s think about her for a few minutes. God preached the gospel to her through circumstances which He brought to her, related to her losing her husband. Turn with me over to Ruth chapter 1, verse 1, and I will show this to you. “Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.” “The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion – Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah.” “And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.”

“Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and two sons.” “Now they took wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and name of the other Ruth.” “And they dwelt there about ten years.” “Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so that the woman survived her two sons and her husband.” “Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread.” “Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.” “And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘God, return each to her mother’s house.’” “The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.” “The Lord grant that you find rest each in the house of her husband.”

Now this is an amazing statement, is it not? “May the Lord grant that you find rest each in the house of her husband.” But let us remember that God was in these statements. “Naomi had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread.” Bread was the staff of life, and Naomi would go where there was bread. She wished her daughters-in-law well, and she hoped that they would each find rest for their earthly hearts in finding other husbands in the land of Moab. Naomi knew that there was an earthly rest in the house of a husband, and she wished the best for her daughters-in-law. But she knew that she could not have other sons, now that her sons had died. But let this fact be taken notice of, it was through this means of Naomi’s showing Ruth her faith in God, and her kindness to her in wishing her well, wishing that she would find an earthly rest in finding another husband, that she as it were, preached the gospel to Ruth. Ruth was coming to see that Naomi’s God was the only true and living God. And so let me finish relating this story. Verse 9b – “So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.” And they said to her, ‘Surely we will return with you to your people.’ “But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me?’ “Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?’ “Turn back, my daughters, go – for I am too old to have a husband.” “If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown?’ “Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands?’ “No, my daughters; for it grieves me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!”

“Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.” “And she said, ‘Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’” “But Ruth said: ‘Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.’” “Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried.” “The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.” You see here, that Ruth was giving herself away to Naomi, and to Naomi’s God. She was publicly declaring her faith and allegiance to the God of her mother-in-law Naomi, who was an Israelite. That was a public declaration of her faith in the God of Israel. How was the gospel preached back in those days? It was preached in relation to God’s first work, of creation, revealing the need for a second and better work; that of redemption. There was no flaw in God’s handiwork in the first creation; the failure was in the first man Adam to keep himself from sin in relation to that first creation. But we should understand that this was actually a part of God’s eternal plan and purpose. God’s purpose is to lead us to see our need of His greater work in the second creation; that is, in Christ’s work of redemption which He worked out for each one who believes. This is His finished work, in righteous acts and His sufferings, on the cross, for your sins, if you will believe in Him.

God created the world in six days, and on the 7th day He rested from all of His works. Why did He rest? Not for His own sake, surely. But for our sakes, that He might establish for us a day of rest that we would need; a day of rest from all of our earthly labors, and one day in seven,

in which we would give ourselves to worship Him. And yet it was not this work of the first creation that saved us. Indeed, God had expected Adam to obey His one good commandment to him, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam could not keep that commandment, and he sinned, and plunged our whole race into ruin. Therefore, Christ had to come looking for Adam in the garden, to give Him a promise of His future work on his behalf. With Ruth, this revelation of the gospel came to her through her providentially losing her first estate, as well. She lost her husband somehow; we are not told how. But nothing of her own works could restore the blessings of this marriage. She became desolate and needy because of losing her first husband. But when she trusted in her mother-in-law Naomi's God, and determined to go where Naomi went, and to live where Naomi lived, and to make Naomi's people her people, then God made a way for her, and saved her life from all of her distresses. Was salvation by her works? Absolutely not! But her faith in God produced these good works. God, in this gracious and merciful way of providing for her through His works, would also save Ruth from all of her sins. In time, God would so order things that she was providentially allowed to meet Boaz, who was a near relative of Naomi's, and Ruth was able to work in his field and glean among the sheaves. In just a short time after this, we see Boaz undertaking to become her kinsman-redeemer; the one who would marry her, and provide for her, and her mother-in-law. All this was the gospel being preached to her.

This is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning; a story which gives us much insight into how "the gospel" was believed in those times. The gospel was preached to her in terms of the failed first creation pointing her to her great need of the second creation in redemption. When Naomi lost her husband, and Ruth lost her husband, Naomi had prayerfully said to Ruth and to her other daughter-in-law Orpah, "May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each the house of her husband." But Ruth was not simply interested in finding an earthly rest. It was not enough just to live in a nice house for a few years. The grace of God was at work in her heart. She was interested in finding rest for her soul; an eternal rest, where God Himself would become a refuge to her. Indeed, when Boaz sees her faithfulness in regard to her work in his fields, he says to her in Ruth 2: 11 – "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before." "The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." This was Ruth's faith being rewarded with blessings. The person who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11: 6) Let me ask you whether you have entered in to God's rest? Do you rest yourself in His promises and His providential care over your life? Do you believe that He is your exceeding great reward, and that He will reward you when you diligently seek Him?

2nd – To find rest you must receive the truth of the gospel and not harden your heart. (verses 4-7)

Look at verse 3 once again. "For we who have believed, do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." "For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'; and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.'" It is eternal blessedness to receive the truth of what Jesus Christ has done for you as sinner, into your heart. This is because God communicates certain tangible blessings to your heart and mind when you believe in Him; when you believe in what he has done, by means of the grace which He purchased for you at the cross. Salvation is a real transaction with God where you declare your own insufficiency to save yourself, and when you come to believe in His real sufficiency to save you from the guilt and the power of all and every sin. When you come to the Lord Jesus by faith, you will most certainly find the reality of His grace coming to work in

your heart. You will have entered God's rest, and you will come to believe the love that God the Father has for you for yourself. God removes your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. He takes and washes you with pure water in regeneration and cleanses your soul. He breaks the ruling reigning power of sin's hold over you, and He sets you free. As a Father, He adopts you into His own family; to be His son or daughter because of what Christ has done for you.

But turn with me over to Matthew chapter 11, verse 28. Here we find our Lord Jesus declaring the gospel to all who will have Him to be their Savior. He says: "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Here we find gigantic promises with immense implications to the person who comes to Jesus in faith. The promise of the gospel is, that if you are continually laboring, trying to do the right thing and failing; finding yourself burdened with sin and yet unable to bear it, or throw off the accursed load, you will find that Jesus can take that burden, and you can find rest for your soul. You can find grace, and you can know peace, by exercising faith in Him. As you trust in Him, your heart will not be continually tormented and in the agony of frustration and despair. Why? Because Jesus Christ has suffered and died, just for these sins of yours. His was a particular redemption of particular persons; sinners who know that they have need of Him. And so, Jesus Christ suffered, and He was raised from the dead, and He is alive forevermore. He is right there with you, to be able to help you in particular. What is so very wonderful about the Lord Jesus is that He now holds all power and authority in heaven and earth. He now sits at the right hand of the Father. And He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to Him. He is able to pay particular attention to every one of God's elect people, and He is well able to care for all of their spiritual needs, and deal with their particular sins, as though they were the only one in the whole world that He had to take care of.

Perhaps this is where your faith needs to grow, dear Christian. You must come to believe the things that I just said to you about Jesus' care for you; or perhaps you may harden your heart to the truth of this great reality of Christ's care over your life in particular. You know that He has helped others. But you are unsure of His help to you. But Jesus says to you, "Do not be afraid." "Only believe." All of God's works of creation were finished from the foundation of the world. But do not forget that God upholds and sustains all of his creation moment by moment and day by day. And therefore you should come to believe that having trusted in Christ, He will never fail you nor forsake you. Why was it that many of the children of Israel did not enter in to God's rest? It was because when the truth was preached to them they were disobedient and did not believe in God's wonderful ability to care for them, in every aspect of their lives.

Turn over to Exodus chapter 17, verse 1. "Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink." "Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, 'Give us water, that we may drink.'" "So Moses said to them, 'Why do you contend with me?'" "Why do you tempt the Lord?" "And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, 'Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'" "So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, 'What shall I do with this people?'" "They are almost ready to stone me!" "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel.'" "Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go." "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." "And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." "So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'"

Beloved brethren, this is the incident that brought the response from God which is spoken of in our text in Hebrews: “So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.” It was that, even though they had seen God’s mighty works on their behalf before, they did not believe that He was for them now, or that He was willing to help them now. Notice that this was called, “tempting the Lord”. It was tempting Him to bring judgment upon them because of their flagrant unbelief. Even though there was no indication that God would not perform all of His good will in regard to them, they still doubted and blamed God and Moses and Aaron for bringing them to that place. There is such a thing as the obedience of faith. It is learning to believe in God, learning to trust in the Almighty, even when you cannot see how God will be able to help you, you still believe that He is helping you, and He will you, through Jesus Christ your Lord.

And then 3rd – To truly find rest you must cease from your own works, and show that forth by observing the Christian Sabbath.

Now when I say you “must” cease from your own works I am only saying what the Bible clearly says is a “must” in regard to entering in to God’s rest. You must not think that your works in any way contribute to your having been forgiven of all of your sins, and your being given grace on a regular, on-going day by day basis to live for God. Your own strength and your own zeal will not be the reason that you persevere in faith and good works. It will not be the basis for your going to heaven in the end. It is true that God is expecting that you will persevere in faith in the promises of His word. The only reason that you will enter God’s eternal rest is because God has shown you the mercy of giving you grace to enter His rest right now, here in this life. Eternal life begins for you when you enter in to God’s rest by believing the gospel. And spiritual rest will be your continued state because He has shown you this mercy in saving you. It is because of this, that you now have come to have the power to do what is right. Therefore you must deliberately remove the thought from your mind that somehow your eternal destiny rests upon your good works in any shape or form; because if you will do this, and if you will believe that your whole salvation really does rest upon Christ, it will indeed become the basis of your truly being able to engage in good works to the glory of God as a Christian.

Remember, first of all, that your eternal destiny rests solely upon Christ’s finished work of righteousness and sufferings. Your resting in that, will free your conscience to understand that in the pursuit of good works, that you are acceptable and pleasing to God in the doing of them, even when there is not complete perfection to be found in them. God looks at the heart. He knows your full intent. He is looking for a sincere obedience. He knows that the perfect obedience was found in His Son, not in you. And so it is through Christ that all of your good works will be accepted by God after conversion. It is through Christ’s grace that you will come to have the willingness and the power to do what God is commanding you to do in His word, including persevering to the end of your life in your faith. You will be engaging in good works, and you will be making progress in righteousness, holiness, and truth, as you look to Christ in faith. All of this will come, because you have already entered God’s rest. This is what it means when James says, in James 2: 21 – “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?” “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says: “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “And he was called the friend of God.” “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”

Let me close by making these few comments. The doctrine of justification has two aspects to it. You are justified by faith in God’s work, through what Christ has done for you, as an act of God at the beginning of your Christian life. This declaration continues with you, and it is over you, as an umbrella which shields you from the disapproval of God. God Himself through Christ is your shield and your exceeding great reward. You were declared righteous by God solely on

the basis of Christ's finished work. And you under this umbrella of Christ's finished work as you go on to be justified (declared righteous by God) by your learning obedience. To be justified by works is when your faith has been tested, and you obey God by overcoming the temptation to sin and you succeed in keeping His commandments. You have then been perfected in faith to the point where you will actually do what is right, and prove the reality of God's grace in your heart and actions. You are seen by God, in the justification by works, as the genuine article; He has built your faith, and it works. This is not two separate justifications; they are one; the works flowing from the faith. He has tested you faith and found that you will obey him, even when tempted not to. God proves this to himself and to you.

What should a Christian person do, therefore, to show forth the fact that they are ceasing from their own works in terms of their salvation? I believe that our text tells us that the best way to show it forth is in the regular and on-going observance of the Christian Sabbath day. This is the way that both God and men will know that you have ceased from your works even as God has ceased from His. Look at what verse 8 says: "For if Joshua had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day." "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." How did God cease from His works? Well, God the Father through God the Son created all things in the Beginning in six days. And then He rested from all His work that He had done in the creation, on the 7th day. This was the 1st creation Sabbath; God resting from His own work because it was done, it was complete, and it was good. However, because of Adam's sin in the garden, a New and second creation had to come, and this work of creation would also be done through Christ. But it would be far more costly. It would involve the giving of God's only-begotten Son to be our Savior; to purchase grace at the expense of His sufferings. And Christ would have to suffer for all of God's elect people; Jew and Gentile, to bring them to Himself.

Well, when this work was accomplished, and Christ died, He was buried, and His body lay in the grave until Sunday morning. And one of the reasons that his body had to continue to lay there all Saturday, the then Sabbath day, was to show that Christ had accomplished the whole work of our redemption and a new day was coming. In Christ's blessed work lay all the application of grace to fallen and needy sinners. Christ had to rest from His labors so that you and I could enter God's rest. Then on the first day of the week, Christ rose from the dead. His work had been to fulfill the holy law of God in all of its righteous particulars so that God the Father would be perfectly satisfied. And this was confirmed by the Father's raising Him from the dead. Everything related to the first creation and the law was fulfilled by Him so that sinners everywhere could now enter God's rest. Even, the seventh day Sabbath day in both its senses, in the law of nature and the law of God, it was all fulfilled in Him. And therefore, Christ, having ceased from all of His works, brought to all of His dear people a spiritual and eternally blessed rest. And this is shown forth by our God in the reality of a new and different Sabbath day; not of the old creation, but of the new. He who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from His works. Therefore, dear Christian, if you want to show forth the fact that you have ceased from your own works in order to be saved, keep the Christian Sabbath day holy. Cease from your six day work, come and worship the Lord, on Sunday, the first day of the week. This shows forth your belief that Christ completely fulfilled the law on your behalf. It shows forth the fact that you believe that it was Christ who has purchased your redemption. It was not of your works. There remains therefore a rest (a Sabbatismos), a Sabbath day, for the people of God.