

Rest for the people of God

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There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also rest from their own work, just as God did from His. Hebrews 4:10,11

Often God's people are busy, tired, worn out, frustrated, over-committed, burdened..... Sound familiar?

This is not how it should be! There is a rest for the people of God, in which we rest from our own work, just as God did when He finished creating the world.

See Hebrews 4:1-11

- Rest is promised by God. v1. God honours His promises!
- Christians have heard the Gospel so the opportunity to inherit the promise (of rest) is available to us. v2
- God promised the Israelites rest when they entered the Promised Land. They heard this promise, but didn't believe it (have faith) so they did not inherit their rest. God was angry with their unbelief and *declared on oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest.* v3
- God rested on the seventh day after he had completed His work of creation. Even God needs to rest! v4,5
- There still remains a rest for God's people. If you are disobedient or harden your heart you will not experience this rest. v6-9. This is called a *Sabbath-rest for the people of God.* v9
- This rest does not mean keeping of a Sabbath day every week. The Sabbath law (Exodus 20:8-11, Exodus 31:12-18, Ezekiel 20:12,20) is not relevant for Christians. The Jewish Sabbath goes from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday and rest during this period is required under the Law. But this was directed to the people of Israel and is a sign of the special relationship between God and Israel. There is no New Testament mandate for Sunday being a special day (or for any particular day being more special than any other. Romans 14:5, says: *Some consider one day more sacred than another; others consider every day alike. Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind.* Colossians 2:6,7 says that no-one is to *judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.* The Emperor Constantine set aside Sunday as a Christian day of rest early in the 4th century AD so that is why we traditionally meet on Sundays. (but that doesn't have anything much to do with rest!).
- The Sabbath-rest for the people of God is to *rest from their own work.* v10. To rest means to lay down your will, and do what God wants you to do, not what you want to do. It means to let Him be your Lord, and live under His Kingship. When He is Lord and you follow His leading you experience His strength; His power; His enabling. You don't have to struggle and strive. When you commit every situation to Him and trust in Him any inner turmoil ceases. You have a confidence in Him and a certainty that He knows what is best. You experience the peace of God. You rest!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. The Lord longs to be gracious to you: He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him. Isaiah 30:15,18.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5,6

- The alternative to rest is religion. When you rest you do what God wants and He supplies all you need to do His will. In religion you do what is expected (or required). You work, push, strive and manipulate to try and gain God's favour. You end up doing things that God has not initiated and so is not in! How much better to let the Lord lead; let Him be Lord! He will then work everything out in accordance with His will.

What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent. John 6:28,29.

In Him we were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:11,12.

Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world. 1 John 5:4.

- Rest does not mean passivity or inaction (doing nothing!). Rather, you cease from your own labours and allow God to do His perfect work in and through your life. It could involve:
 - finding what God wants you to do, and doing it. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. John 15:16.*
 - obeying God when He asks you do something. *Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it. Luke 11:28.*
 - maintaining your relationship with God *My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have neglected. Song of Solomon 1:6.*
 - saying 'no' to things which might be good or right. A 'need' doesn't constitute a call. If you say 'yes' to every need you will quickly get over-worked, exhausted and frustrated.
 - accepting that rest is OK. This may take a renewal of the mind for many Christians in our over-busy world. There is no need for guilt or condemnation if you are resting in the centre of God's will or engaging in restful activities that refresh you or that you enjoy (and not doing things that others may expect of you).
 - repenting of over-activity and selfish desires. *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the presences of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. Acts 3:19,20.*
 - Committing every situation to the Lord and trusting Him, rather than striving in your own strength.
- That's why we are to *make every effort to enter that rest.* v11. Only when rest and refreshment in God's presence are a natural part of our daily lives will you know the central satisfaction of knowing that you are pleasing God, and fulfilling His purposes for your life. Rather than struggling, striving, hassling and manipulating you can rest in Him; trust in Him, believe in Him. When you do this you will be certain that He knows what is best, and that you are in the centre of His will

Jesus said *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, 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 will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light". Matthew 11:28-30*



So, come to Jesus. Get in under His yoke and let Him take all of your burdens. He is strong and can cope with everything that you are going through! Then He can make you strong to do His will and really make a difference in this hurting world. Trust in Him in every aspect of your life. And in fulfilling God's purposes you will be really fruitful in your Christian life. That's when you will truly glorify God.

And that's when you will find rest for your soul!