

1) “Be Diligent to Enter His Rest”

2) Introduction

a) When I was in college, my grandmother had a stroke. They did not give her long to live.

i) You need to understand that I absolutely adored my grandmother.

ii) Growing up it was very rare that I did not see her everyday.

(1) She fed me breakfast—almost everyday.

(2) She taught me math and spelling and reading.

(3) We worked side by side in a big garden every year.

(4) I loved her so much that one time I wore a pair of her hose socks under my coveralls while I worked on my tractor because she was really worried about me being cold and she said they would keep me warm.

(5) Very few people ever knew it except her, me, and now you.

(6) I loved this woman, and she loved me.

(7) She modeled Christ for me.

iii) Well, one day, we got the call—she had had a stroke.

(1) For about two weeks, we practically lived in the hospital by her side.

(2) My granddaddy refused to leave her, because he was so scared that she was going to die.

(3) After about two weeks, he started getting really tired, and we finally convinced him to go home to get some rest.

(4) I went to see him the next day, and he was coughing up blood.

(5) The next day he died.

b) We had no idea to even think about him—we were so busy thinking about her.

i) All of our attention was on her.

ii) All of his attention was on her—he gave no thought to himself . . .

iii) But silently, secretly my granddaddy was dying—and we never knew it until it was too late.

c) Here is what I believe: something similar is happening to professing Christians; they feel fine and look fine and think they are fine—but silently, secretly sin is at work in their lives, keeping them from enjoying Christ and from being effective, and in some cases dragging them to hell.

i) And they will go to hell wearing a Christian t-shirt, holding a Bible and clinging to a baptism certificate.

(1) I want to ask you this morning to ask God to use His word to examine your heart.

(a) Pray—Heb 4:12-13

3) Last week we heard from Gen 2:1-3

a) In that text, we get a picture of God resting from His work.

i) In 6 days, He created the whole universe—including bugs and trees to 70 sextillion stars.

- ii) And on the 7th day, He rested—not because He was famished but because He was finished.
- 4) We saw last week that God later commanded that the seventh day be set aside for rest to remind God's people of His creative power and His finished work.
 - a) The Sabbath was a humbling day because it reminded His people of their weakness and that ultimately, everything we work for comes from God.
 - i) We labor, but ultimately He is the One putting food on the table.
 - (1) It was a reminder that He is the Provider.
- 5) I also tried to make clear that the Sabbath day and its laws were meant to point us to Christ.
 - a) In Genesis, we see God working to create, and in Christ, we see God working to re-create.
 - i) Jesus' work was to live in perfect obedience—and He did so perfectly.
 - ii) Jesus' work was to announce the Kingdom of God and call people repent and believe—and He did not perfectly!
 - iii) Jesus' work was to remove the curse of sin by dying in the place of sinners—and He did so perfectly.
 - (1) For hours, He was punished—not because He is a criminal—but because I am!
 - (2) He underwent incredible torture—not for His immorality—but for mine!
 - (3) He endured excruciating pain—not because He was disobedient—but because I have been!
 - (4) He was completely humiliated—not because of His pride—but because of mine.
 - (a) “Every sin on Him was laid” . . . “And on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied!”
 - (i) **And in a moment of triumph and satisfaction, He cried out from that cross, “IT IS FINISHED!”**
 - (ii) And His Father forgave my sin and raised Him from the dead!
 - 1. And having finished His work, guess what Jesus did? Genesis 2 gives us a clue—the writer of Hebrews says, “He sat down!” (1:3).
 - a. Why? Because all His work was finished.
 - b. There is no more work for me to do to get myself right.
 - i. All I do is trust in Him.
- 6) And we saw last week that I need to trust in Him alone to make me right with God.
 - a) **If we try to work to earn God's love, we make a mockery of Jesus' work.**
 - i) What would you think, guys, if your wife went out of town for a week and you decided to do something really nice to surprise her.
 - (1) You took off work . . . took the phone off the hook and worked from sun up to sundown to surprise your wife by cleaning the house.
 - (2) I mean you did everything—I mean you went so far as to clean behind the fridge and the washer and dryer (and its scary back there).
 - (3) At the end of the week, the house shone like a new penny.
 - (4) There was not a spot of dust within 100 feet of the house in any direction—because you had vacuumed the grass!
 - (a) You had the carpets professionally cleaned.
 - (b) Windows spotless.
 - (c) Bathroom spotless.
 - (d) You got your house smelling like the laundry aisle at Walmart.

- (e) Even your workshop was neatly organized and dusted.
 - ii) Now, what would you think if your wife walked in from her trip and said, “Thanks for straightening up. Could you hand me my cleaning supplies, I am going to give it a once over because we are having company tonight.”
 - (1) Usually, you are happy when she cleans the house, but today you are furious. Why?
 - (2) Because she is trying to add to your perfect labors and it is an insult to your week’s worth of work.
 - (a) Are you following me?
 - (i) What Jesus has done is perfect and complete.
 - (ii) If you and I try to add *anything* to what Jesus has completely accomplished, we insult Him.
 - 1. **In Romans 4:5, Paul says that the one who is saved is “the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly.”**
 - (3) Jesus calls us to rest from our work because He has completed it, and He is now resting.
 - (a) That’s what I believe the Bible teaches about the Sabbath.
- 7) But, I know, the question remains, “How are we as Christians to think about the Sabbath.”
- a) “Can we work? Can we fish? Can we hunt? Can we play games? Can we go to the movies? Can we read the paper? Can we mow the yard? Can we ride the 4-wheeler?”
 - i) We need to make two points to answer that question:
 - (1) Point #1: I do not believe that there is a Law that is binding on Christians regarding the Sabbath day.
 - (a) ^{NAU} **Colossians 2:16** Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— ¹⁷ things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.
 - (i) Nobody can act as your judge because God hasn’t given Christians a law regarding the Sabbath day.
 - (ii) The Law has been fulfilled in Christ.
 - 1. Think about others ways we see this:
 - a. Sacrifices (Heb 10:1-14) → fulfilled in Christ
 - b. Circumcision (Gal 5:1-6) → the circumcision of our hearts
 - c. Food laws of clean & unclean (Acts 10) → God used to show Peter that the Gentiles were now acceptable to Him; and God commands Peter to kill and eat things that were previously unclean.
 - d. Sabbath (there is no indication that New Testament believers observed the Sabbath)
 - ii) Point #2—There is no biblical directive for Christians to view Sunday as the Sabbath. There is no place in the Bible where the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.
 - (1) But we do see early Christians meeting on Sundays, presumably to commemorate the resurrection, which happened on Sunday (Acts 20:7; implied in 1 Cor 16:1)).
 - (a) There is no command by God that we know of to the church to observe Sunday, but there was been a strong tradition since the time of disciples to do so.

- b) Having said all of that, let me be very clear—I **believe that there is a definite link between the Sabbath and how we spend our Sundays**, but I think it has very little to do with the Sabbath and a whole lot to do with the **rest that the Sabbath points to**.
- i) Say that again: “I believe that there is a definite link between the Sabbath and how we spend our Sundays, but I think it has very little to do with the Sabbath and a whole lot to do with the rest that the Sabbath points to.”
- 8) Heb 3:7-4:11 (Listen for the themes of “rest” and “Sabbath”)
- a) Heb 4:9-11
- i) Notice with me a couple of things:
- (1) #1: The real Sabbath is still ultimately future.
- (a) There was an Old Testament Sabbath day.
- (b) In the Promised Land, Israel was supposed to experience “rest.”
- (c) But the real “rest” is still to come.
- (i) This “rest” is called various things in the Bible:
1. Old Testament picture: the Kingdom of God where God’s Messiah rules over His enemies without any fear of challenge. When Jesus is King, there will be rest.
 2. Revelation: “New heaven and new earth” where Jesus “will wipe away every tear” . . . where there will be no more death . . . mourning . . . crying or pain.” In that place, we will have “rest.”
 3. Hebrews 11: “the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”, “a better country, that is a heavenly one”
 - a. One day, when Jesus is King, all of His children will have perfect rest—and we are called to enter that rest right now spiritually.
 - b. We enter that rest when we stop working to earn God’s love and in Christ to earn it for us.
- (2) #2: (very important) we are to “be diligent to enter that rest” (v11)
- (a) Means, “make sure nobody falls away before they get there.”
- (i) At first, this sounds a little weird doesn’t it—“be *diligent* to enter *rest*”—
1. But I think that his point is very clear: “**You need to pay very close attention to make sure that you don’t lose the free gift that God is offering you.**”
- 9) See, it is easy to hear, “Stop working and just believe,” and think, “All I have to do is believe in Jesus? That’s easy! Sure I believe in Jesus.”
- a) Listen to me—if **it is were easy**, the writer of Hebrews would not be giving **warnings** like this and saying, “Be *diligent* to enter His rest.”
- i) It is true that we enter this rest by faith in His completed work (Are you with me?)
- ii) But this kind of saving faith is not idle, not dormant, not shriveled up in a closet somewhere.
- (1) Real faith is alive and active.
- 10) For the rest of our time together, I want us to look this passage in Hebrews and see three things about real faith—the kind of faith that gives us access to the rest that Jesus is promising:
- a) Real faith is **practical** faith
 - b) Real faith is **present** faith
 - c) Real faith must be diligently **preserved**.

11) **3:7-11**—Let’s orient ourselves

- a) Quote from Psalm 95, which is retelling of Israel’s early history after they were rescued out of slavery in Egypt and were on their way to inherit the Promised Land of Canaan.
 - i) Here is the story:
 - (1) God’s people, Israel were slaves in Egypt.
 - (a) Hard life.
 - (b) Pharaoh was cruel—at one point he was so determined to keep Israel in bondage that he gave an order that any Egyptian citizen found an Israelite baby boy, they were to drown it in the Nile River.
 - (i) Think about that for a second—that’s cruel.
 - (c) But God told Pharaoh—“Let My people go!”
 - (i) When Pharaoh refused, God punished him with all kinds of amazing miracles (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, cattle diseases, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and even the killing of every firstborn son in every Egyptian household).
 - (ii) As Israel left Egypt, God parted the Red Sea in front of them, and they walked through the sea on dry land, but when Pharaoh’s army tried it, every one of them drowned.
 - (iii) In Exodus 15, they sing and dance and praise the LORD.
 - 1. Let me give you just a flavor:
 - a. Exodus 14:30-15:3
 - b. 15:18-21
 - 2. In Exodus 16, we have the first keeping of the Sabbath, but listen to what happens in Exodus 17:1-7
 - a. They have just seen God do amazing miracles, but then they get thirsty . . . and they doubt God—“Is the LORD among us, or not?”
 - 3. Do you know what ends up happening? All of these people who doubted God died before they reached the Promised Land of rest. Of the people who left Egypt—only two people lived long enough to receive what God had promised—all the others died along the way, and their children were the ones who entered the Land.

12) **Listen to me very carefully,**

- a) Remember the goal of the this passage—the writer is pleading with us to “be diligent to enter Jesus’ rest”—in other words, “make sure you are trusting in Christ so that you can enter His rest”
 - i) And so he quotes this text to warn us.
 - (1) “You must be diligent to enter His rest!”
 - (2) “You have to keep trusting Christ! . . . Look at what happens when people stop trusting!”
 - (3) “God swears, ‘They shall not enter my rest!’”
 - (a) Do you see why real faith is such a big deal?
 - (i) Let’s take a look at it . . .

Real faith is practical—and it permeates every area of life

- 1) Think about this:

- a) To show us what unbelief looks like, the writer of Hebrews could have chosen any number of passages.
 - i) Israel’s history is chocked full of all kinds of wicked stuff that they did because they did not trust God.
 - (1) But here—there is no sexual immorality . . . no murder . . . no rape . . . no worship of idols . . .
 - (a) Why is God so upset?
 - (i) Because they complained about not having enough water!
 - b) Put yourself in their shoes.
 - i) Imagine being led away from you home—sure it’s not perfect, but it’s the only place you have ever known.
 - ii) And some guy you barely know has led you into a desert wilderness where there is no water.
 - (1) Sure it was great when God was right there with you—working all of these signs, but now He is no where to be found, and all of your little children are standing around you tugging on your leg and telling you that they are thirsty→dehydrated.
 - (2) What do you do when it gets desperate and you think you and your kids are going to die of thirst?
 - (a) They started complaining.
 - (b) They started grumbling against their leader.
 - (c) They started doubting the love and power of God.
 - (i) And the writer of Hebrews wants to make it very clear that **it may sound like normal response, but it was a horrible insult to God!**
 1. And so He swears, “They shall not enter my rest!”
 2. Pointing to their example in v12—he turns toward us and says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you and [this kind of] evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”
 3. Do you hear the warning?
 - a. “If these people who have seen such amazing stuff can start to doubt God—so can you!”
 - b. “If these people can fall away from God—so can you!”
 - c. “Don’t think you are immune to disbelief—if it can happen to them, it can happen to you!”
 - d. My guess is that you have complained about much less serious stuff.
 - i. You ever complain?
 - ii. You ever worry?
 - iii. You ever pout?
 - iv. What does it say about your trust in God?
 - v. When we complain, we ask the same thing they did, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”
 - e. The writer of Hebrews says, “You’d better be careful!”
 - i. Real faith is **practical**.
- 2) Next, he wants us to see that: [Real faith is present—it is alive right now]

Real faith is present—it is alive right now

- 1) There is a theme in these two chapters about the time.
 - a) v7—“The Holy Spirit says” is literally, “The Holy Spirit is saying”
 - i) Interesting because he quotes something that was written along time ago, but he says that in this passage, the Holy Spirit is presently speaking—right now on Nov 9, 2008.
 - b) “Today” (vv7-8)
 - c) vv12-15—
 - i) I know a lot of people who are hoping to make it to heaven on yesterday’s faith.
 - ii) I know a lot of people who are hoping their loved ones get to heaven on yesterday’s faith.
 - (1) They look back to an experience where they walked down and aisle . . . prayed a prayer . . . felt sincere . . . cried . . . got dunked in water.
 - (a) And they say, “I know I am going to heaven because of what happened way back then.”
 - (i) The writer of Hebrews wants to kill that kind of theology.
 1. The only faith that matters is what you have right now.
 2. Yesterday’s faith has already expired.
 3. Yesterday’s faith won’t do you a bit of good.
 - a. v14
 - i. The Israelites made a good showing in chapter Exodus 15, but Chapter 15’s faith did not help them when they ran out of water—and their unbelief keep them from entering God’s rest (3:19).
 - (ii) Listen to me: Baptists often say, “Once saved always saved,” and that is true if understood properly.
 1. What the Bible teaches is that “Real faith is practical and lasts forever, and if it doesn’t last, then it isn’t real.”
- 2) Do you see why He says, “We must be diligent to enter His rest”?
 - a) You and I have hearts that are prone to complain and grumble, which shows that we have:
 - i) Hearts that are prone to doubt.
 - ii) . . . prone to fall away from the living God.
- 3) So what’s the remedy:
 - a) I think that if you read the whole book of Hebrews, you would agree that God’s tool for keeping people in the faith is **real church’s where the gospel and the relationships are authentic.**
 - i) vv12-13
 - ii) Hebrews 10:23-25 says the same thing even more directly:
 - (1) ^{NAU} **Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- 4) So listen to me, you **don’t need to “go to church” on Sundays to keep some sort of law about the Sabbath**—but here is what you do need:

- a) **You need to be diligent to enter the rest that Jesus is providing by keeping on trusting in Him—everyday—in the nitty gritty areas of real life!**
- i) And here is how you do that—**with deep, faith-encouraging relationships**
- 5) Look at v13 again:
- a) In the midst of all of these warnings about falling away from practical faith, his solution is encouragement from God’s people.
- b) Notice:
- i) Regular (“day after day”)
- ii) Purpose: “so that none of you is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”
- (1) Sin is deceitful.
 - (2) It is tricky.
 - (3) It blinds people.
 - (4) You can’t figure it out by yourself!
 - (a) I used to go camping with the Boy Scouts for days at a time.
 - (b) When my family picked me up—when the car doors shut, they would say, “Whoa, you need a bath—you smell terrible.”
 - (i) I would say, “What are you talking about? I smell fine.”
 1. But after my shower, I would go to pick up those dirty clothes—and phew—they would peel wallpaper—but I never knew it.
 2. I had gotten used to it.
 3. See, I hadn’t fallen into a manure pile all of a sudden.
 4. The stink came little by little . . . moment by moment . . . and I never detected it.
 - a. Sin is the same way—it’s deceitful.
 - i. And you and I need another set of eyes.
 - b. **If we are going to know the truth about our lives, we need other noses smelling us.**
- 6) *Listen to me: I know what is going on in my life and in the lives of some godly men that I am close to. I study the Bible for hours on a pretty much daily basis. Therefore, if I am struggling, if these other godly men are struggling, I know that sin is lurking in the secret places in your life as well—especially if you aren’t regularly under God’s word and in relationships where people are asking you hard questions and encouraging you.*
- 7) So why is the church so important?
- a) #1: Need to be under the **preaching of the word**
- i) Isn’t that what the writer of Hebrews is doing?
- (1) Preaching an exegetical sermon of Psalm 95.
 - (2) Says that as he does it, the Holy Spirit is speaking.
 - (a) ^{NAU} **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.
 - (i) You need this word!
 1. It is really important to study on your own, but it is not enough—it is too easy to skip over the hard stuff.

- b) #2: Because we all need relationships where people **encourage** us and ask us **hard questions**:
- i) We need to be in each other's lives because:
 - (1) On those weeks when the well runs dry . . . the money runs out . . . when the doctor gives bad news . . . when the marriage is hard—I need brothers and sisters to encourage me with promises!
 - (a) Need to be reminded from Heb 4:1 that God is promising me rest—and so I keep on clinging.
 - (b) . . . from Heb 11 that there is *a better country, a heavenly city* that is coming.
 - (c) . . . from Heb 11:6 that “God is a rewarder of those who seek Him”
 - (i) (because I am so prone to seek rewards from other sources)
 - (d) I need to be reminded that I will not receive everything He promises on this side of the grave—I have to keep on believing even when cancer strikes.
 - (e) I need to be reminded that “faith is the conviction of things not seen.”
 - (i) I can't always see what God is up to—and I need to be reminded that I don't have to—His promises are just as real when I can't see—and so I need to keep trusting.
 1. I need that!
 2. You need that!
 3. And so does that little old lady that you don't know and have never visited!
 - a. We have to be here because we are in this thing together!
- c) **If we are to enter the rest He is promising, we must keep trusting Christ in the practical areas of our lives, and if we are to do that we need each other!**
- i) One example:
 - (1) Titus 2:3-5
 - (a) I don't think Paul envisions a seminar—or even a classroom.
 - (b) He is talking about real church-life.
 - (c) I think he envisions older women with a commitment to the Bible, in trusted relationships with younger women.
 - (d) Relationships where older women are trusted and have invested in young women's lives to the point that they can ask, “Does your family have your heart?”
 - (i) “Does your husband have your heart?”
 - (ii) “Do your children have your heart?”
 - (iii) “Is your mind been pure?”
 - (iv) “Are you focusing on your work at home or are you distracted?”
 - (v) “Have you struggled this week to be kind to your family? Tell me about it.”
 - (vi) “Where have you been tempted this week to subvert your husband's authority?”
 1. See, the writer of Hebrews wants to be clear—**your faith is being worked out in the details of your everyday life—or is not real!**
 - a. And so we need people to love us enough to ask **hard questions**—“so that we don't become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

- b. And then we need people to love us enough to follow up these questions with encouragement by reminding us of **promises**.
 - i. When we get that we have just experienced biblical, faith-preserving, God-honoring, rest-entering, Hebrews 3:13 kind of encouragement.
- 8) These kind of relationships don't happen with a "here today and gone for two weeks" level of commitment to the church.
- a) Aren't built with a slip and slip out approach to attending church.
 - i) Attending church isn't enough, but it is essential—foundational.
 - (1) Important for relationship building
 - (2) But it is also important because what we want is a body who is *together*:
 - (a) Under the preaching *together*.
 - (b) Being shaped *together*.
 - (c) Working *together*.
 - (d) Moving *together*.
 - (e) Making decisions *together*.
 - (f) Growing *together*.
 - (g) Following Christ *together*.
- 9) So, the question isn't, "Is it unlawful for me to do such and such on Sunday," but rather, "Does this kind of togetherness and Christian community have a position of absolute priority in my life?"
- a) Listen to me:
 - i) We must be diligent to enter the rest that Jesus is promising—need practical faith—and so we need each other.
 - ii) "Today if you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts!"
 - (1) Submit to the reign of King Jesus—even if it means you have to find another job.
 - (2) Make togetherness a priority even if it means you can't stay out late on Saturday nights—so that you will wake up at the right time—and so that you'll be awake during the sermon!
 - (3) Make real community a priority—even if it means your kids can't play on ball teams that play or practice on Sunday.
 - (4) Make God's people a priority—even if it means you lose a day of hunting or fishing or golf or NASCAR.
 - (a) Listen to me, I don't know hearts, but do have a pretty good idea of attendance patterns—and my guess is that it signals a lack of commitment to biblical togetherness.
 - (i) If that's you, bring it before the Lord—ask Him to search you—ask Him to point out sin—and ask Him to change you.
- 10) Do you feel resistance to what I am saying?
- a) Have I said anything that isn't biblical?
 - b) "The Holy Spirit speaks thru His word, if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart."