

How Can We Strive to Enter God's Rest?

[Hebrews 4:1-11](#)

Hebrews, Day 13

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ² For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest,’”

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵ And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

- Hebrews 4:1-11, ESV

Baseball and golf are both sports where trying too hard can quickly get you into trouble. A batter who steps into the batter's box trying desperately to hit a home run is more likely to strike out than get a hit. (I'm an Orioles fan. Trust me, I know this is true.) A golfer who grips his club too tightly and tries to control his swing too exactly is likely to shank it badly. (I've tried golf myself. This one I know from experience.)

God has a Sabbath rest for His people, and He calls us to enter it. In fact, He even calls us to strive to enter His rest. But, as in golf and baseball, if we try too hard in the wrong way, we will end up doing it all wrong and swinging and missing, badly.

The Exodus generation is set forth as an example of those who failed to enter God's rest. God brought them out of Egypt, out of bondage, through great miracles and a powerful deliverance. But that generation died in the desert wilderness. Most of them never even saw the Promised Land. What went wrong?

Hebrews 4:2 tells us: "*For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*" The Exodus generation heard the Gospel. They were told who God is and how God could save them. They were told all about God's plan for them as His cherished people. They heard, but they did not believe. They saw astounding miracles, but still they did not believe.

Sometimes I'm tempted to think I would have more faith if I had seen more miracles. But that's not how it usually works. The two generations in history who saw the most miracles were the Exodus generation and the generation who saw Jesus' earthly ministry. God did indeed save some out of those generations. Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, made it into the Promised Land. Yet the Exodus generation as a whole was condemned, as was the generation of Jesus' day. Why? Was it because they weren't deserving or didn't want salvation enough? No. It was because they did not believe.

Faith is the only way to be saved. Faith takes God at His word and says, "Yes, Lord, I believe what You say is true." When we believe in the promises of God, Hebrews says we rest from our works, just as God has rested from His work. The work of salvation has been accomplished. Jesus has paid it all, and it is finished! Faith says, "I believe," accepts the price paid, and loves the Savior who paid the price.

This is how we strive to enter: We believe. We embrace what God has done. Out of that faith, we then obey. This doesn't mean we stop sinning and we suddenly get really good at keeping the rules. Rather, we love Jesus because He has first loved us, and we follow Him because He has rescued us to make us His.

Yet here's where we need to be careful: We can't fall into the trap of thinking our good works are earning us rest in heaven. To do so is to abandon faith and to seek to rest on works. This kind of "trying too hard" will lead us away from the Gospel and back into the trap of trying to earn what has already been purchased for us.

So, how can we strive to enter God's rest? By faith alone in Christ alone, a faith which leads us to love Christ above all else and to obey Him out of loving gratitude for all He has done for us.