

16 – Resting in God

The Present Truth : November 4, 1897

Before we begin the fourth chapter of Hebrews, let us briefly review the third chapter; for, although we have a chapter heading thrown in, there is not the slightest break in the subject. It is impossible to understand the fourth chapter unless the third stands clearly in mind.

In the beginning of the third chapter we are told about the house of God, the rule of which is faithfulness. "God is faithful," and Christ the Son was faithful over His house, even as Moses was faithful as a servant. We are God's house, provided we hold fast our confidence, that is, provided we are faithful to the end.

If we are thus faithful, we shall find rest in God's house, for it is a place of rest. When Naomi told her two daughters-in-law to return to their own people, because she herself was about to go back to Judea, she said, "The Lord grant that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." Ruth 1.9. God sustains many relations to His people; indeed He is the fullness of every relation, so that He is Father, Brother, King, and Husband, for He represents Himself as married to the house of Israel. So He gives us the blessing of rest in His house. We become members of God's household by faith (for it is a "household of faith" (Galatians 6.10), and faith brings rest, as we learn from the statement that "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3.19.

Ancient Israel, like the people of these days, saw the works of the Lord, but did not become acquainted with His ways, and therefore they did not enter into His rest. It needs no argument to prove that it is impossible to enter into the Lord's rest while ignorant of His ways; that is self-evident. To know God is eternal life, and there is no eternal life except in the knowledge of Him; but eternal life is eternal rest, because it is everlasting youth. It is unconquerable. Life in light and the light shines in the darkness, and darkness does not quench it. The darker it is, the more brightly does the true light appear. Rest, therefore, God's rest, the only real and enduring rest, is found only in God's life, in an experimental knowledge of His ways.

The Characteristic of Rest

Rest must follow labor. Indeed, rest presupposes labor. But more than this: rest means labor completed. No one can rest from a work that is unfinished. It is true that we can cease our physical exertions for a time, but we do not rest from the labor until we are done with it. We may say that we are resting; but if we must again take up our round of work that shows that we do not rest from our labor. Still more: one does not rest from a task that is unfinished, even though for a time he remits his exertions, for his mind is not at rest. If the night comes on, and we see that there is a task that we ought to have completed, but which is still unfinished, our rest is unsatisfactory. We have regret for the past and anxiety for the future, and though we lay our bodies down to sleep, our rest is broken. Now it is an undeniable truth that,

**“Labor with what zeal we will,
Something still remains undone,
Something uncompleted still
Waits the rising of the sun.**

**“By the bedside, on the stair,
At the threshold, near the gates,
With its menace or its prayer,
Like a mendicant it waits;**

**“Waits, and will not go away;
Waits, and will not be gainsayed;
By the cares of yesterday
Each today is heavier made;**

**“Till at length the burden seems
Greater than our strength can bear,
Heavy as the weight of dreams,
Pressing on us everywhere.**

**“And we stand from day to day,
Like the dwarfs of times gone by,
Who, as Northern legends say,
On their shoulders held the sky.”**

Perfect Work.—But in order that there shall be real, perfect rest, something more is necessary than that a piece of work shall merely be done, in the ordinary use of the word; it must be *well done*. This is really comprehended in the expression, “work finished,” for nothing is done until it is done right. Perfect rest must follow perfect work—work all done, and work well done. When work is thus done, then rest must follow; one cannot in such a case do anything else than rest, and Oh, how sweet such rest is! How inexpressibly enjoyable! What would not one give for such rest? And then to think of rest not merely for a day or an hour, but for ever! That alone would make heaven, even on this old earth.

Unknown to this World.—Such rest as that this world cannot give, because it knows it not. No man can find it in his own work, for no man can, as already seen, do perfect work. “Every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” Psalm 39.5. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isaiah 64.6. Of the whole world it is said, “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Romans 3.12. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Romans 8.7. Every man finds in himself the proof of this. No man ever yet did a thing that could not be improved, and of which he himself could not see the possibility of improvement. If a man invents a machine, he spends the rest of his life making improvements on it. If he writes a book, it is no sooner finished than he would like to get out a new

edition. Who has not at some time said, "If I had that to do over again"—or "If I had my life to live over again." How then can a mind find rest by his own works? Impossible; because since his work is always incomplete and imperfect, there is something always before him to be done. And so the man toils and struggles in the vain attempt to reach perfection and thus find rest for his soul. Vain attempt indeed it is, for the more he toils and struggles, the more worn out he becomes. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isaiah 57.20. If he persists in seeking rest by his own efforts, he will work himself into the grave, literally tired to death.

Perfect Rest with God.—"As for God, His way is perfect." Psalm 18.30. He does everything right, and does it right the first time. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, not anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Ecclesiastes 3.14. God never has to say, "If I had that to do over again, I should make this improvement." His goodness is unsearchable, and His righteousness endures forever. And He has given Himself to us, that we might be partakers of His perfection. "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" Psalm 31.19. Therefore Christ, who is the fullness of God, and whose name is "God with us," says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, 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 of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11.28-30.

Rest in Confidence.—In God's house is rest, and we are His house "if we hold fast the confidence." Hebrews 3.6. Rest, therefore, comes by faith. This is self-evident from the fact that a man cannot find rest in himself. Rest is found only in meekness and lowliness. A man must acknowledge the truth, namely, that in him dwells no good thing, before he will accept the perfection that God alone gives. "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not." Isaiah 30.15. No; men in these days, just as Israel of old, "being ignorant of God's righteousness; and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10.3. Men who will acknowledge they cannot do their own work as well as they would like to, and that they cannot accomplish as much of it as they would like to, feel themselves perfectly capable of doing God's work. As if any being less than God could do the work of God! As though the creature could do the work of the Creator!

When the Jews asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6.28, 29. A child cannot do a man's work; but, compared with God, the greatest man is less than the puniest babe; therefore it is folly for any man to think of doing God's work. "His work is honorable and glorious." Psalm

111.3. God's work is nothing less than creation. Now all God's works are in Christ; for "in Him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible, and things invisible, ... and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1.16, 17. Therefore whoever receives Christ, receives the perfect works of God. But we receive Christ by believing on Him. John 1.12. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Ephesians 3.17. So it is that the work of God is to believe on Him whom God hath sent. The Jews in the days of Moses, like the Jews in the days of Christ's earthly ministry, would not accept Christ and the rest that He alone can give. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3.19.

An Exhortation to Us.—"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." Hebrews 4.1. You stand by faith. Be not high minded, but fear." Romans 11.20. It is the same exhortation that is given in Hebrews 3.12: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." These exhortations, following as they do immediately after the statement that "they could not enter in because of unbelief," show us that the same rest that was held out to them is offered to us. We are to take heed lest we lose it even as they did. This is shown even more plainly still in the next verse.

The Same Gospel.—"For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hebrews 4.2. There are some professed believers of the Bible, who deny that the Gospel is more than nineteen hundred years old, claiming that it was not preached before the appearance of Christ on earth. Such ones virtually deny any salvation for all those who lived before Christ's first advent; for salvation is by Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4.10-12), and the preaching of Christ is the Gospel (Romans 1.1-3); if, then, there was no Gospel for four thousand years, then of course Christ was not preached in all that time, and so there was no salvation. But the Psalms, to say nothing of the rest of the Bible, are full of Christ. How often do we find references to the Lord's Anointed, namely, Christ, for "Christ" means "anointed." Jesus says that Moses wrote of Him (John 5.45-47), and Paul writes: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed." Galatians 3.8. Ancient Israel "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." 1 Corinthians 10.4. But as they did not drink by faith, the Word—Christ—did not profit them. They murmured, and in their murmuring they tempted Christ. 1 Corinthians 10.9. There is only one Gospel (Galatians 1.8, 9), so that the Gospel, which they had, is identical with that which is now preached to us. See 1 Peter 1.10-12. Most men would think that it would be putting it strongly to say that the Gospel was preached unto them as well as unto us; but the apostle tells us that the Gospel is preached to us, as well as it was to them; so that we have no more excuse than they had. They had the first opportunity; we are simply called to take what they refused. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Entering into Rest.—"For we who have believed do enter into rest." Hebrews 4.3. The proof of this follows in the statement, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest." That was because they did not believe. The positive side of that oath is that those who believe shall enter into rest. The rest *remains*, is left behind for us, for it existed in the days of Israel in the wilderness, and they would not go in; therefore we enter in as soon as we believe. This is seen from the statement already quoted, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6.29. But the work of God is complete and perfect; therefore to have the work of God is to have His rest.

Work Finished and Rest Prepared.—They could not enter into God's rest, because of unbelief, "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." What does that signify?—simply that the rest was prepared from the foundation of the world; for finished work means rest. When work is finished, rest must follow.

Remember that the rest offered is God's rest; there is, indeed, no other. This rest is found in Christ, who calls all the weary to Himself. The rest is found in Christ, because in Him are all the works of God; He is the righteousness of God. Only in Him is there righteousness and strength.

Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The power of the cross is creative power, for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5.17), or, as the margin of the Revision has it, "there is a new creation." So we see the cross from the foundation of the world.

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before, prepared that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2.8-10, margin. We are created in Christ unto good works, but long before we were created the good works were prepared for us; they were finished from the foundation of the world. As soon as man was created, he found everything prepared for him. The Divine power of God had provided for him all things that pertain unto life and godliness. But as before stated, the cross of Christ is creation; therefore on the cross Christ cried out, "It is finished," thus indicating that in His cross, and in that alone, could be found the perfect works that were prepared for man from the foundation of the world.

What a glorious Gospel of great joy! The works of righteousness are all done, and we have but to accept them in Christ, and walk in them. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes." Romans 10.4. He has overcome the world (John 16.33) and the warfare is finished in Him. Isaiah 40.2. Therefore our faith in Christ is the victory that has overcome the world. There is no other way under heaven that men can get the victory over sin, except by grasping and holding fast by faith to the fact that sin and Satan have already been conquered. Oh, why will weary, sin-laden souls seek to get righteousness by their own efforts, when the perfect righteousness of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is all ready to their hand? Cease your vain strivings, and allow God to work in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

**“Come, weary soul, and here find rest,
Accept redemption, and be blest;
The Christ who died, by God is crowned,
To pardon on redemption ground.”**

The Seal of Perfection.—The works were finished from the foundation of the world. Creation and redemption are the same, as we read, in His Son “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins ... for in Him were all things created. Colossians 1.11-16. The cross of Christ redeems us by creating us anew. All this was done—these works finished—from the foundation of the world. What is the proof of this?—“For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, ‘They shall not enter into My rest.’” Hebrews 4.4, 5. “God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” That is proof that the works were finished, and that the rest was ready. The work being finished, rest must follow, and so it did, on the seventh day; and this, as the fifth verse in connection with the fourth shows, was the very same rest which the Jews rejected through unbelief, and which God now offers to us.

“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.” “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;” and as Sabbath means rest, and nothing else, we have God's own word for it that the Sabbath of the seventh day is His rest. Exodus 20.8-11.

After the record of each day of creation we read, “And God saw that it was good.” At the close of each day the work was perfect as far as it had been done; but it was not finished, and therefore God could not rest from it until the close of the sixth day. Then God rested, and the seventh day was thus the seal of completion, of perfection. So when we who have wandered from God, and wearied ourselves with our own work, come to God through the cross of Christ, and are there made new creatures, He gives us His Sabbath as the seal of the perfect righteousness that Christ has wrought for us. So as the Sabbath is the memorial of creation,—of creation perfect and complete,—and the cross of Christ creates anew, it follows that the Sabbath is the memorial and the pledge of redemption through His blood.

Only by Faith.—“By grace are ye saved through faith.” The work of God is to believe (John 6.29), and since the work of God is finished and perfect, it is by faith that we enter into rest. The Sabbath, therefore, is not a substitute for faith, but a sign of faith. Without faith, there can be no Sabbath-keeping, for God says that the faithless ones cannot enter into His rest. Whoever professes to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, and yet does not fully and completely trust Christ for righteousness, is playing at being a Christian, he has at best only a form of godliness without the power. We do not keep the Sabbath in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Rest in God is salvation, and they who do not know rest and peace in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, do not know Sabbath-keeping, even though they nominally rest on the last day of the week. The Lord gives

His word for it that they who truly keep His Sabbath shall delight themselves in the Lord. Isaiah 58.13, 14. The Sabbath, therefore, God's Sabbath, means "joy in the Holy Spirit."

We must leave the further consideration of this subject till next week. This much, however, may be said here: Just as each day of God's work was perfect, and the Sabbath came as the crown of perfection when all was finished, even so there are many people whom God is forming into His own image, who have not as yet come to the light of the Sabbath, or who know it in form only, but not in reality, and yet who are counted perfect in God's sight. The work of grace was begun in them, and He who has begun a good work in them will perfect it unto the day of the Lord Jesus, and ere that perfect day comes they will have seen the truth of the Sabbath, and in it will have learned to rejoice in a power infinitely greater than any they had experienced or even dreamed of in all their previous Christian life. They will by no means consider it a burden laid upon them, since rest cannot possibly be a burden, but they will rejoice in it as a glorious gift, which God allows them to share with Him.

17 – The Rest that Remains

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We have seen that perfect rest follows finished and perfect work. No such work is ever found among men, and therefore real rest is unknown in this world. But “as for God, His way is perfect; and therefore His rest is perfect. The children of Israel did not learn the ways of God and therefore they did not enter into His rest. In Christ Jesus we are created unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2.10), and these works are ours by faith, for “this is the work of God, that we believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6.29. The Jews did not believe, therefore they did not get the works of God, and consequently they could not enter into His rest; for since God’s works are perfect and complete, whoever has the works, has the rest, and he in whom the works of God do not show themselves, does not have the rest.

Hebrews 4.1-12

“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, 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.” Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 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. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

It may be well to state that the words; “If they shall enter into My rest,” are the word for word rendering of the Hebrew idiom for, “They shall not enter into My rest.” We shall therefore, without further comment, use the English form of expression, as it is in the Revised Version, instead of the Hebrew form.

It should also be noted that in verse the Revised Version has “Joshua” instead of “Jesus.” Those who have Bibles with marginal references will find the word “Joshua” also in the margin. The two are identical in the Hebrew, being derived from the verb meaning, to save, to deliver. “Jesus” means Saviour (Matthew 1.21) as of course Joshua does. Joshua, who led the people of Israel into the earthly Canaan, is a type of Jesus, who leads His people into the heavenly Canaan—the heavenly country for which the patriarchs of old looked. Hebrews 11.11. When we recall the subject of the third

chapter, how the Israelites failed to enter into rest because of unbelief, and note that in the immediate connection we are told that the promise is left to us because they failed, we can readily see that the Joshua who succeeded Moses as leader of Israel, is the one referred to in verse 8. So in our study we shall read it, "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day."

Now, since the main thing is to find out exactly what the Scripture says, we will spend a few moments in asking and answering some

Questions on the Text

- Why could not Israel of old enter into God's rest?
 - o "They could not enter in because of unbelief."
- What must we therefore fear?
 - o "Lest any" one "should seem to come short of it."
- What hope is there of our entering into His rest?
 - o "A promise is left us of entering into His rest."
- How do we stand related to it, as compared with the people of old?
 - o "Unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them."
- What benefit did they derive from the Gospel?
 - o "The Word preached did not profit them."
- Why not?
 - o "Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."
- If we, unlike them, have faith, what advantage shall we have?
 - o "We which have believed do enter into rest."
- What assurance is given?
 - o "I have sworn in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest."
- What have we seen to be the only reason why they could not enter in?
 - o "Because of unbelief."
- What evidence is there that they might at any time have entered in if they had believed?
 - o "The works were finished from the foundation of the world."
- What did God in one place say of the seventh day, which showed that the works were all finished?
 - o "He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works."

- What followed God's finished work?
 - o "God did rest."

- When did He rest?
 - o On "the seventh day."

- What then is the seventh day?
 - o The seventh day is the Rest of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20.9. (The word Sabbath is simply the untranslated Hebrew word meaning "rest.")

- Having said in one place of the seventh day, "God did rest the seventh day from all His works," what did He say of it in another place?
 - o "They shall not enter into My rest."

- Nevertheless what must necessarily take place?
 - o "Some must enter therein."

- Therefore since they to whom the rest was first offered entered not into it because of unbelief, what has God done?
 - o "Again He limits a certain day."

- To what time is the offer limited?
 - o "Today."

- Where is this word found?
 - o "In David."

- What is the word that is spoken to us?
 - o "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts?"

- How is the long suffering and forbearance of God shown in this offer?
 - o He repeats it in David, "after so long a time."

- But of what may we be fully assured, since "some must enter therein," and the ones to whom it was first offered rejected it?
 - o "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

- What time is allowed us in which to accept the rest?
 - o "Today."

- What is the condition of one who has entered into His rest?
 - o "He also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His."

- Ceasing from his own works, what works, if any, does he have?
 - o "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus unto good works, which God has before prepared, that we should walk in them."
Ephesians 2.8-10

- What are we then exhorted to do?
 - o "Let us labor therefore to enter into rest."
- But what shall we do in order to work the works of God?
 - o "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6.29
- What in our lesson shows that this is the way we are to labor to enter into rest?
 - o We are exhorted to labor to enter into rest "lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."
- What shows that the kind of labor that consists in receiving God's Word in simple faith does not mean idleness and indifference?
 - o "The Word of God is living and active."

God's Oath.—In verse 3 we have the words, "As I have sworn in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest," as proof that "we which have believed do enter into rest." The only oath of God we find recorded in the Bible is in Genesis 22.16-18, where God swore to Abraham that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and that his Seed should possess the gate of His enemies; and this is the same that constituted Christ Priest after the order of Melchizedek. See Hebrews 6.13-30. That was a promise of rest, consequent on Abraham's faith. The promise of justification by faith is equal to a statement that the faithless shall not be justified, and likewise the statement, made of the unbelieving, "They shall not enter into rest," is only the reverse side of the oath that they who believe shall enter into rest.

Faith, Works, Rest.—"By grace are ye saved through faith; ... not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them." Human works have nothing to do with salvation; for, as we have previously seen, they are always imperfect, and can therefore never be finished, so that rest can follow. But God's works do save us. "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." Psalm 74.12. "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." Psalm 92.4. The works of God do save us; and these works we make ours by faith. John 6.29. The works are perfect and are all done, so that in getting them we get rest; therefore it is that "we which have believed do enter into rest." Whoever believes finds that rest. Our part, therefore, is to acknowledge that our best works are only a damage to us (See Philippians 2.6, 7), and to recognize and worship God as the sole Creator of all things.

When the Rest was Prepared.—Those who did not and would not believe, could not enter into rest. Of them God swore, "They shall not enter into My rest," and this in spite of the fact that "the works were finished from the foundation of the world." It was not

because the rest was not ready, that they could not enter in, for it was ready and waiting from the foundation of the world, when the perfect work of God was finished.

What Works?—What works were finished from the foundation of the world?—Manifestly, the works of creation; for in proof of the statement that the works were finished from the foundation of the world, we have this: “For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” That “certain place” is Genesis 2.1-3, where, after the detailed account of the six day’s work in creating the heavens and the earth, we read: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which God created and made.” The “finished works,” therefore, which afforded the rest, were the new heavens and the new earth, which God pronounced “very good.”

Two things are said of the seventh day. In one place God says of it, “And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” In another place He said of it, “They shall not enter into My rest.” Thus we see that the rest, which God enjoyed on the seventh day, when creation was finished, is the identical rest which He offered to Israel of old, and which He now offers to us. That is the rest into which those who believe do enter in. Let no one think that this is a belittling of God’s rest. No; it is not that God’s rest is a small thing, but that the Sabbath is a much greater and more blessed affair than most, even of those who regard it, know it to be. God’s rest is infinite and eternal; and the seventh day is the Sabbath-rest of the Lord.

Seal and Mark of Perfect, New Creation.—Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11.28. He gives rest because in Him the works of God are perfect. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” In Him “we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins ... for in him were all things created.” Redemption through Christ is nothing else than creation—a new creation. Just before His crucifixion, Christ said to the Father, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” John 17.4. And when He hung on the cross He cried, “It is finished; and He bowed his head, and gave up the Spirit.” John 19.30. Thus He indicated that in the cross are to be found all the perfect, finished works of the new creation. Now the Sabbath was given as the sign of a perfect creation completed; therefore it is the sign of those perfect works restored by the cross of Christ. That is to say: Since the Sabbath is the sign of a perfect creation completed, and the cross of Christ accomplishes a new creation, the Sabbath must be the sign of the cross. Try it and see if it is not.

A Gift, Not a Task Exacted.—Here is where so many people mistake: they think that the Sabbath is a hard requirement that God lays on men, and then they soon get in the way of thinking that God cannot require it of us, since He does not desire his people to be burdened. But salvation is not a thing required of us, but a gift to us; and the Sabbath is the sign of Christ’s saving power: He saves by the power by which He creates. Rest is not a burden - it is a pleasure. Nothing more absolutely delightful can be imagined than rest in the consciousness of work all done and well done, and this is the privilege of the people of God: “All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall

bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of Thy kingdom." Psalm 145.10-12. "One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts." Verse 4. The Sabbath is the pledge and assurance to us, that the power by which the worlds were made has wrought good works for us in Christ, and that these works are all ours if we believe. This is the rest prepared for us from the foundation of the world. This is the rest to which Christ invites us—rest from our own sinful works.

"Some Must Enter In"—What a blessed assurance this is: Some must enter into that rest. God has sworn by Himself, and it must be done. God does not owe anything to sinful men, but He has put himself under obligations to Himself, so that he says: "I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember Thy sins." Isaiah 43.25. So absolutely necessary is it that some must enter into the rest that God has prepared, and which can be entered into only by faith, that even if every man should be false and faithless, God would still remain true to his promise (Romans 3.3, 4), for He could take some of the ground and raise up children to Abraham. Matthew 3.9.

It would be a manifestation of the same power that in the beginning made man of the dust of the ground; it would be only the same creative power now that takes the stony heart and reduces it to dust,—makes it contrite,—and then creates a new man in Christ Jesus. Therefore since God is able, and not only willing, but even under bonds (to Himself) to prepare people for His rest, let "whosoever will" come. "Him that comes to Me," says Jesus who calls, "I will in no wise cast out." John 6.37. The case is urgent, and the Lord is not requiring any certificates of good character, or making any examination of candidates. The worst, weakest, most degraded and despised, is accepted without any questions being asked except this: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

**"Christ receives sinful men,
Even me with all my sin;
Purged from every spot and stain,
Heaven with Him I enter in."**

None Compelled.—As anxiously as God longs to save men, and as urgent as the need is, He forces none, How could He? Think what it is that He offers: it is rest—rest from sin. Now it is an utter impossibility to force anybody to take rest. Mere cessation of activity is not necessarily rest. Bind a man who wishes to do a certain thing so tightly that he cannot by any possibility use a muscle, and he will not rest; he will wear himself out by the resistance of his mind against the enforced idleness. God not only does not and will not force anybody to be saved, but He cannot; for the very word "force" implies resistance, and the man who resists does not rest. Those, therefore, who make and enforce laws to compel people to be religious, show that they have not the faintest conception of what the Christian religion is; men who would compel people to keep the Sabbath, have no more idea of what the Sabbath really is, than they have of the

language used by the inhabitants of Saturn. There is no one so foolish as to suppose that he can compel another to love him by kicking and beating him; yet many think that people can be compelled to serve the Lord, not knowing that God is love, and that His service is love. Absolute freedom is what the Lord gives,—freedom from every sort of oppression. This is what the true keeping of the Sabbath brings.

“The Long suffering of God”—Because some must enter into the rest, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, therefore God extended the time. When Moses was born, the time of the promise which God had sworn to Abraham drew near (Acts 7.19), yet five hundred years later, in the days of David, “after so long a time,” we hear the Spirit saying, “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” And still the Spirit says, Come. Men abuse the long suffering of God, and mockingly say, “Where is the promise of His coming?” but we must remember that “the long suffering of our God is salvation.” He is not willing that any should perish. 2 Peter 3.3, 4, 9, 15.

A Limited Time—“Another Day”—Although God is so long suffering; He has not given men eternity in which to repent and believe. Eternity of rest is what He offers, but He allows men only one day in which to accept the offer; and that day is Today. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6.2. This is the day of which we read in Psalm 118.19, 20: “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.” Compare John 10.9: “I am the Door, by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.” “I will praise Thee; for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The Stone which the builders rejected is become the head Stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.” Psalm 118.21, 25. This is the day of the Lord which Abraham rejoiced to see, and in which He was glad (John 8.56), for the salvation which he enjoyed is the very same that is now offered to us. It is salvation from sin. See Romans 4.1-0. The “accepted time” has been extended, “another day,” and so from day to day God is patiently waiting. Who will heed the blessed invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”?

Ceasing from Our Own Works.—He that has entered into God’s rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His; but not for the same reason. God ceased from His works because they were finished and perfect; we are to cease from our own works because they are all imperfection, and there is no hope of making them good. Taking into consideration all the people of the earth, the Lord says, “Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing.” Isaiah 41.29. “Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.” Isaiah 59.6. The Lord rested in the contemplation of His own glorious works; we likewise find rest in the contemplation of His, not our own, gloriously perfect work. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law, and the

prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Romans 3.20-22.

It is sometimes supposed that it is only the works of a man before his conversion, that are of no avail for righteousness, and that a man's works are all right after he is once converted. But this is a mistake. The best man in the world is but a man, and not God. The righteousness of the best man is not his own, but the righteousness of God by faith. The righteous man has no more strength than the sinner, but his advantage lies in the fact that He knows and acknowledges the Lord as the source of strength. A man must absolutely and forever cease from his own works, if he would rest in God. This is what the Sabbath of the Lord—the seventh day, teaches us. Sabbath keeping in spirit and in truth is the fullness of justification through faith.

Laboring to Enter into Rest.—"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest,"—the rest that still remains. What kind of labor secures that rest?—the labor of faith, for "this is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians, when he remembered their "work of faith and labor of love." 1 Thessalonians 1.3. Faith works by love. Galatians 5.6. Belief is salvation and rest, for "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "If thou shalt confess with Thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10.9. But this does not mean idleness and indifference. It means compliance to the Word of God dwelling in us, that it may have free course, but that means intense activity, "for the Word of God is living and active." Oh, weary, troubled soul, believe the Word of the Lord, and believe now.

**"Art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore oppressed?
Come to Me, saith One, and coming, be at rest."**

18 – A Practical Talk about Sabbath-keeping

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There are two items in regard to the Sabbath that we should first notice before we take up the closing portion of the fourth chapter of Hebrews. The first is the objection that so many, especially poor people who labor for their daily bread, make to the keeping of the Sabbath, namely,—

“I couldn’t live if I kept the Sabbath”

That the seventh day is the Sabbath, and that the Lord has given it to men to keep, is admitted, but against all this is the frightful thought, “I couldn’t make a living and keep the seventh day; I should certainly lose my situation.”

As to losing the situation, that is quite possible, and yet not as absolutely certain as many suppose. God would have His witnesses everywhere, and in every legitimate calling, and therefore He is able to give His faithful children favor with the people, if He sees that their witness can be of use in any place. People who begin to keep the Sabbath often lose their situations, because they expect it, and plan for it. Some on becoming Christians seem to think it is necessary to leave unbelieving employers and get among those who have the same faith, forgetting that a light is needed only where there is darkness. The man, who cannot live the truth when surrounded by darkness and unbelief, cannot live it anywhere. A candle that will not burn except in the stove is good for nothing except to throw into the fire. Of course it is understood that the individual must be where God wishes him to be; but if a person accepts the truth while in service among unbelievers, he should take it as God’s will that he is to stay there until God makes it plain to him that he should leave. “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*. For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ’s slave.” 1 Corinthians 7.20-22.

The Lord gave Joseph and Daniel, and Nehemiah, and “they of Cesar’s household” so much favor with worldly men that they kept important situations while faithfully living the truth of Christ. On the other hand, Abraham had to leave his father’s house, and Moses lost one of the best situations that the world ever had to offer any man, and neither of them were ever sorry for it. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” 2 Chronicles 16.9. He has always been able to take care of His people. “When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” Psalm 105.13-15. The same God lives today.

The Laboring Man's Friend

But, as a matter of fact, the Sabbath is the laboring man's friend. It comes to him, laden with God's richest blessings, and brings him perfect rest from all weariness and oppression. All the hopes and aims of Socialists of the best class, and of the most disinterested philanthropists, fall infinitely short of the blessed realities that the Sabbath of the Lord opens before those who accept it. The plans and efforts of the best of social reformers (outside, of course, of those who use Gospel methods only), have not materially if at all lessened the amount of poverty and suffering, but have resulted simply in arousing and augmenting discontent. The Sabbath of the Lord, on the other hand, makes known to men the power that will enable them patiently and contentedly to endure that which for a season must be borne, and gives them the certainty of the speedy removal of all ills.

The Sabbath keeps ever before our minds the wondrous power manifested in creation, that power by which all who believe are saved from sin, and by which all men, whether they believe or not, are kept alive from day to day and from one moment to another. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17.28. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3.22, 23. The Sabbath, which makes known God as Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer (Ezekiel 20.12), teaches confidence in Him, for whoever becomes acquainted with God trusts Him. Psalm 9.10. Therefore the Sabbath takes from the poor man the heavy load of care and anxiety that he has borne so long, by introducing him to the Almighty Father, "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." Job 12.10. It is only when a man does not know the Sabbath and its Lord, that he says, "I couldn't live if I served Him." The one who knows the Lord will rather say, "I cannot live without Him."

Think a moment of the incongruity of the statement by a professed Christian that he couldn't live if he kept the Sabbath of the Lord; that he wouldn't dare take the risk. But if he dare not trust the Lord for the life that now is, how dare he trust Him for the life to come? If the Lord cannot keep us alive for a few short years, what possible hope is there of eternal life? "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" "Your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6.32, 33.

Sunday, the Sign of Justification by Works

We see that the Sabbath is the great and final test of faith in God, and is therefore the seal of righteousness; for "the just shall live by faith," and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 1.17; 14.23. It is the exact opposite of the Sunday, which is the badge of a system of religion that consists in justification by works. Let it be understood that it is not asserted that all those who observe the Sunday depend on works for justification. Far from it. The writer knows many by personal acquaintance, and is fully persuaded that there are many thousands more, who

keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath, thinking it to be the Sabbath, and who nevertheless are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in His merits alone for their salvation. We say "nevertheless," for their trust in the Lord Jesus is in spite of their observance of Sunday, having by no means any connection with it, except to be hindered by it; for if they could but see the Sabbath as it is in Jesus, they would find a "joy and peace in believing" such as they never had before.

Now for the proof that the Sunday stands only for "another gospel" than that of the Lord Jesus, a gospel which consists in exalting the creature above the Creator. We have already seen that the Sabbath—God's rest—is the assurance that God's work is perfect and complete, and the acceptance of it in Spirit and in truth, is the ceasing of our own works and the resting in the finished work of God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. God worked, and then rested in the enjoyment of His perfect work; we, having wearied ourselves with our imperfect work, obey His call, and, leaving our works, rest in His.

"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." Exodus 20.11. A fact is a thing done, the fact remains forever, since it can never cease to be a fact that it has been done. It is a fact that God rested on the seventh day, and that fact will remain throughout eternity. In order, therefore, for the Sabbath to be "changed," from the seventh day to some other day it would have to cease to be a fact that God rested on the seventh day; but that is impossible; so it is impossible for the Sabbath to be changed,—as impossible as for it to cease to be a fact that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested the seventh day.

It is possible that another than the seventh day *might* have been made the Sabbath day, if God had so ordered it. In that case, however, the week would not have consisted of seven days, as now. Thus: God doubtless could have created all things in five days, and rested the sixth, making a week of six days; or He might have finished the work in four days, and rested the fifth; or He could have completed the work of creation in three days, and rested the fourth; or in two days, resting the third; or, since there is no limit to the power of God, He might have completed the work of creation in one day, and rested the second, making the week consist of but two days, and giving man a Sabbath every second day. God *did not* do any of these things: we only say that He *might* have done so if it had seemed good to Him; but one thing He could not possibly have done, and that is, to have created all things in one day, and at the same time rest on that day from all His works. That is to say, the first day of the week is the one-day of the week, which could not by any possibility be made the Sabbath of the Lord. But the first day of the week has been set apart by man as the Sabbath.

Thus, Dr. Isaac Williams, in "Plain Sermons on the Catechism" (Longmans, Green, & Co.), says:—

The reason why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the Church, has enjoined it.

"The Church," therefore, in attempting to make a sabbath day, which God could not use as the sabbath, shows itself to be that power "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped." 2 Thessalonians 2.4.

Scores of testimonials from doctors of divinity and learned men who themselves observe and teach others to observe Sunday, might be cited to show that the observance of Sunday rests on no Divine authority whatever, but is only an ordinance of men. The religion, therefore, of which it stands as the sign, and, as many of its advocates say, even the foundation, is a religion that rests on human works and human inventions, instead of the works and words of the Lord. To make Sunday the Sabbath, the facts and record of creation, must be ignored, and with these go the basis of the Gospel, since redemption is creation. Therefore we repeat that while the Sabbath of the Lord teaches redemption through trust in *the finished work* of God in Christ, the Sunday teaches redemption through man's own imperfect work.

In so saying, we refer to the institution, and not to any man. As before stated, there are thousands of men and women who are strict observers of Sunday, supposing it to be the Sabbath, who are nevertheless depending on Christ for salvation, so far as they know Him. May God grant that they may soon see Him, as the Alpha, and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the One in whom all things were created, and in whom all things consist, who redeems by no other word than that by which He in the beginning made the worlds. Reader, which will you choose; your own incomplete and imperfect works and unrest, or God's complete and perfect work and His everlasting rest? He calls, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." Now is the time to choose; "today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."