

## Labor To Enter That Rest Above

Hebrews 4:1-13, April 18, 2010

Misericordias Domini (The goodness of God)

Beloved of the Lord.....As the Bible is all about Christ and our way of salvation through Him, so the entire Old Testament lives and breathes Christ and the Gospel of Christ in countless types, pictures, and symbols. Moses for example is a type of Christ, in that Christ through Moses delivered the Children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. Such is a picture of Christ through the Gospel delivering us from our slavery to sin. Like Moses, Joshua too is a type of Christ. Verse eight of our text says, "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." The name Jesus in Greek is "Yay-soo", which is Hebrew is "Ye-shu-a", namely Joshua. Joshua and Jesus then are essentially the same name. Joshua then is a type of Christ, in that he led the Children of Israel into Canaan, that Promised Land of rest. Jesus in like manner is Captain of our Salvation, our Leader in the way to our heavenly home. "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Not only is Jesus the Good Shepherd of the sheep, and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, but Jesus is also the door of the sheepfold, the door into heaven, that Promised Land above us. Because of Him we need not labor or earn our way into heaven by good works, for we "conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law". But we do indeed labor to enter into that rest by working and fighting against the old man within us. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

I. The Third Commandment. Since today's text largely concerns the seventh day of rest, let us first consider God's third commandment, "Thou shalt sanctify the holy day." This means "we should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." While God's Word ought to be read, studied, and pondered in the heart daily, it is especially important that we regularly assemble ourselves together to hear the Word of God in church. Just as a plant needs water to live, so the faith of our soul needs the regularly fed the Gospel. Here in church God feeds us the Gospel in His Means of Grace primarily through preaching and Communion. While there are at times problems with distance or sickness, in most cases it is very sinful to miss church. With summer and good weather now upon us, as we near the vacation season, let us remember we are never to take a vacation from God's

Word. While we cannot make a law and say it is acceptable to miss only two Sundays a year for the sake of vacation, we also cannot allow ourselves to despise the preaching of God's Word and spend more time away from church than in church. In the sight of God every day is holy, and we should always hold the preaching of His Word sacred "and gladly hear and learn it." Moreover when we are in church listening to a sermon, we must guard against our flesh which doesn't want to hear. If ever there is a time when the devil wants us to sleep, it is while we are in church hearing God's Word. Nor should we complain about the length of a sermon. How sad that in the course of a week we can watch a two hour movie, or spend several hours surfing the internet, but we cannot happily listen to a full sermon where we learn about Jesus our Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep? Does that make sense? When the Israelites murmured and complained in the wilderness God sent poison's serpents among them. They were healed only by looking in faith to the brazen serpent on the pole. In like manner we who daily sin much against God's third commandment must look to Christ if we are to be healed. "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it."

II. The Gospel preached to them did not profit them, for they did not receive it in faith. Truly we should come to church and hear His Word is so that we might continue to believe His Gospel. "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." Why does God tell us to fear? God here is preaching to the old man within us, warning us to guard against carnal security. He doesn't want us to be secure in even one sin but we are to repent of all, for "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." While Christians by faith are happily secure in God's grace, as long as we have the old man within it is possible to fall like the Israelites in the wilderness. "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." This means Moses preached the Gospel to the Children of Israel, but most did not receive it by faith in their heart. Hebrews 3:17 says, "But with whom was God grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not." Now consider there were easily over a million Israelites who left Egypt and they continued to be fruitful and multiply even in the wilderness. Yet out of over a million slaves who were free, faithful Joshua and Caleb alone were allowed to enter the Promised Land. Though God's promise of the

Promised Land was earnestly and sincerely given to all, the others “could not enter in because of unbelief.” Whose fault was that?

Unbelief is always man’s own fault. It is always man who hardens his own heart first and God cannot be blamed for the damnation of even one soul. Thus David wrote in Psalm 95, “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”. This also means TODAY we should hear the Gospel and believe, for TOMORROW we may die. Truly in the Gospel the Holy Ghost is working with all zeal and earnestness to convince the soul only that God’s forgiveness through Christ is FREE, WITHOUT MONEY, WITHOUT PRICE. Thanks be to God the Bible says, “where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.”

### III. Proof that God’s invitation is earnest and sincere.

Thus can there be any doubt, God’s invitation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always earnestly and sincerely given to all. Thus God sends His Gospel Word to the four corners of the world, and the Good Shepherd earnestly invites all men to believe saying, “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Just as the sinful condition of all mankind is universal by way of Adam, so God’s forgiveness of sins through the second Adam is likewise universal – EVEN FREE. God does not impose any conditions upon man, nor does He attach any strings for Christ has done all and “it is finished.” Throughout the Bible then God speaks in such a beautiful way, that all who hunger and thirst after righteousness find in Christ forgiveness is free “without money, and without price”, as Isaiah writes. In His Gospel invitation we must also understand God is absolutely earnest and sincere when He speaks to us of Jesus, for God through Jesus is speaking to us from His heart. “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Jesus does not speak here of our tiredness after a hard day’s work, rather He is speaking to our very soul which is troubled by sin but is to find peace in Jesus. Truly God’s invitation is always efficacious. This means the Holy Ghost Himself is always hard at work, working, in, by, and through the Word to convince the heart of every man God’s forgiveness is free, without money, and without price. Thus the Word always carries in itself the power to work acceptance in the heart of man. Hebrews 4:12 thus proves the power and strength of the Word of God itself saying “the Word of God is quick and powerful and shaper than nay two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.”

IV. God’s rest, and ours, on the seventh day. That God desires all men to be saved is also stated in our text by the six days of creation, after which God rested on the seventh day. Namely since all things were created in six days, heaven itself was created even before man fell into sin. As Christ is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, so heaven through Christ was created even before Adam and Eve chose to rebel against Him. Had they resisted the devil’s temptation, they would’ve been confirmed like the good angels into God’s everlasting bliss, which is heaven. Thus heaven’s existence before the fall well proves God’s earnest will “that all be saved” after the fall. His rest on the seventh day likewise proves we who believe in Him will one day rest eternally in heaven.

The final proof God has promised to all an eternal place of rest is found in Psalm 95. So that no Hebrew of the New Testament should bind their thinking to any physical promised land on earth, David in Psalm 95 hundreds of years AFTER Joshua and the Israelites writes, “Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart....as in the day of temptation in the wilderness....Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” Thus God is speaking of a place of rest above us, a promised land yet to come which we will receive IF ONLY we do not harden our hearts against God’s Gospel Word! “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” “Let us labor then dear children of God to enter that rest.”

But thanks be to God we do not labor to enter heaven by works, this means only we must continue to labor and wrestle against the old man within us. How do we labor? Mainly by repentance of sins, faith in Christ, and the continual hearing and believing of the Gospel. That is one of the greatest reasons we come to church – namely to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ that our soul find rest and peace in Jesus. When we hear the preaching of the Gospel, we hear none other than the voice of our Good Shepherd who said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Not only is Jesus the Good Shepherd of the sheep, and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, but Jesus is also the door of the sheepfold, the door into heaven, that Promised Land above us. Let us therefore labor dear brethren to enter into that place of rest. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” Amen.