

**Lesson 14**  
**Laboring To Rest**  
**Hebrews 4:11-13**

Why is it that so many religious and churchy people are not interested in the Bible, Christ, witnessing, prayer and vital Christian fellowship? Why is it that religious people are so active in church work and so passive to Jesus Christ? The answer is simple. They have never really entered into God's salvation rest. They are working for their salvation and have never understood that salvation is caused by God's grace and is appropriated purely through faith. There are multitudes of people who think they are Christians because they are religious. They have been baptized, are church members and are Sunday school teachers. They work furiously for the church, believing in all sincerity that this is the way to please God.

What is their problem? They have never entered into God's rest of salvation.

***“There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His”*** (Heb. 4:9-10).

To rest means one stops working and does nothing. Salvation occurs when one stops trusting his human works to get him to heaven and trusts wholly in Christ's work of salvation to get him to heaven. This is all very simple but multitudes of professing Christians and non-Christians have missed it. God finished His work and rested and men are to stop their work and rest in Christ's work for salvation.

I have talked with many people, especially a woman who said, “I use to work in the church, but it was all church, I did not know there was a finished work of Christ.” People work and work; they scrape their nails to the bone; they raise money for the church through functions; they support church suppers and social events, but they do not have the foggiest idea about the rest of salvation in Christ.

THE EXHORTATION TO ENTER GOD'S REST - Hebrews 4:11

***“Let us therefore be diligent (labor) to enter that rest”*** -- This almost sounds like a contradiction. If we cease from our own works and trust wholly in the work of Christ, why must we labor at it? The word “labor” means “to make haste” or “give diligence.” A person is saved wholly by faith in Christ but he is to be diligent, earnest, sincere and persistent in seeking to enter into God's rest of salvation. The unsaved man is to pursue this salvation until he finds it. Although the Bible teaches that no man seeks after God in his natural state, when he begins to hunger and thirst for salvation, this is God convicting and drawing, and that person is to pursue and seek to enter into the rest of salvation by faith. It is important that a person pursue the gospel and be persistent in the gospel so he will believe the right gospel the right way.

In my last pastorate, I talked with a woman who was sharing with me her conversion experience.

As a teenager she had lived a very hard life and it was filled with much immorality. In her third year of college, she became aware that she was sinful and under God's wrath. She sinned and she knew it for God was convicting her of it. She began to go to church but the churches never told her how to have her guilt of sin forgiven. She went in one church and then to another, but nothing was heard that would relieve the burden of sin on her. Finally, she went to a Covenant Church where she heard there were some radical, far out Christians. That Sunday she heard about the rest of salvation and that there was forgiveness of sins in Christ. She had sought all these months and now she found. She received Christ and entered into God's rest. She had found rest for her sin-troubled soul.

***"...lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience (unbelief)"*** -- The reason the Hebrew-Christians were to labor to enter into salvation was that some of them did not give evidence of being truly saved. Some of these Hebrew-Christians were seriously considering renouncing their faith in Christ and going back into Judaism. They were guilty of turning completely away from Christ and apart from Christ there is no salvation. It was quite possible that they might fall short of God's rest just as many of the Israelites in the wilderness fell short of true saving faith and never entered into the Promised Land. They failed to enter in because of their unbelief. There was then a real danger that some of these professing Hebrew-Christians were not saved.

***"Consider ... Jesus"*** (Heb. 3:1).

***"Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God"*** (Heb. 3:12).

***"Therefore, let us fear lest while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it"*** (Heb. 4:1).

This exhortation can apply to Christians as well as non-Christians. The unsaved man must initially enter into salvation by faith and when he does he enters into God's salvation rest. The Christian who is in God's salvation rest must also continue to exercise faith if he is to experience to some degree God's rest this side of glory. We enter salvation by grace through faith and we continue in salvation by grace through faith. The Christian must be eager, diligent and willing to experience God's rest or he will never go very deep in experiencing God's rest. The only thing that keeps a Christian from experiencing God's rest is UNBELIEF.

THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD - Hebrews 4:12

***"For the word of God ..."*** -- The "for" connects up with verse 11 so we see there is a direct connection between entering into God's rest and the Word of God. There can be no rest of God apart from the Word of God. Salvation rest is not an ecstatic feeling one gets but it is having the Word of God as the object of one's faith. Salvation rest is taking God at His word and believing it by faith and acting on that faith in obedience.

Expositors of the Bible have been divided over the expression "word of God." Some think it refers to Christ, others think it refers to the spoken word of God and still others think it refers to

the written Word of God. I think it refers to the truth of God in any form whether it is in spoken or written. We are told seven specific truths about the Word of God.

**“...is living...”** -- This actually means “alive.” The Bible is “living” because it is God’s Word, totally inspired of God and the Bible words are eternal in nature. **“...the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life”** (John 6:63). The Bible is alive and only those who believe this book are alive. The truth of the Bible, namely the gospel, was what saved you because God’s Word is eternal and not corrupting.

**“...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For ‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER.’”** (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

The Bible is our only defense for Christianity. It is also our only offense. We do not have to defend it but we must turn it loose and let it do its work.

**“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”** (Isa. 55:11).

If you had a lion in a cage, you would not stand around and explain to people how ferocious it was, you would show them by turning it loose on some prey. The Bible is to be turned loose. We can defend it all day but the best defense of Scripture is a positive offense. Turn it loose and let it do its work in the hearts of the hearers.

**“...and active (powerful)...”** -- The word “powerful” is the Greek word from which we get the word “energy.” God’s word is energetic; it is powerful because it is backed by the power of Almighty God. **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”** (Rom. 1:16). God uses the Word and whatever God wants done, He does through the Word. God’s Word accomplishes many things, and sometimes a simple word does miracles.

Did you know that C. H. Spurgeon was saved by one single word from the Bible. As a young lad of 16, under conviction of sin, he wandered into a small meeting house one Sunday morning. It was storming on the outside and he came into the church to get out of the storm. For some reason, the preacher did not come that morning. An old man got up who was a blacksmith and took a text from Isaiah 45: **“Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else.”** (KJV). The old man spoke about 10 minutes and didn’t have any more to say. He ran out of words to say, so all that he could say was “Look!” He pointed to the different ones who were there and told each one to “look” to the Lord. He pointed to Spurgeon and said, “Look!” Spurgeon looked that morning and was saved. One word did it.

**“...sharper than any two-edged sword ...”** -- The Bible is like a two-edged sword; it cuts two ways. The sword here is in the Greek called a *“machaira.”* The *machaira*, although a short

sword, was one of the greatest inventions of the ancient world. It was one of the most fantastic and unusual weapons of the ancient armies. The machaira would be to the Romans what intercontinental ballistic missiles are to America and Russia in modern warfare. The machaira was short, easy to handle, cut both ways and gave great maneuverability to those using this sword. The Romans literally wiped up on their barbarian enemies with this new weapon. The machaira was two-edged and by analogy the Word of God is two-edged. The Word of God either saves or judges. When the gospel is preached men either reject it, being condemned by the Word, or men accept it, which results in salvation. Whenever the gospel is read or proclaimed, it either regenerates or condemns.

It is also important for a Christian to know how to use the Word of God so he might become an effective warrior for Christ.

Rev. R. B. Thieme, pastor of Berachah Church in Houston says,

“First of all the machaira was short, which meant that anyone could handle it. One did not have to be a physical giant, for it was tight and maneuverable. The second thing about the machaira was that it never left the user off balance or vulnerable. You could thrust, parry or slash to the left or right without having to regain your balance. The secret to the machaira was that it not only had a very sharp point but both edges were sharp also, a feature no one had ever thought of before. It was one of the most revolutionary inventions of the ancient world. And what does this mean? It means simply that every jot and every tittle of God’s Word is valuable and important. Every jot and tittle of God’s Word is usable to us as Christians. The Christian who uses God’s Word is never off balance. And there are many Christians who are off balance today. The Christian who uses God’s Word is oriented and stabilized, which is one of the things that characterizes the faith-rest life.”

***“Piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit...”*** -- The Bible not only cuts but it pierces and penetrates. The Bible pierces right through the soul and the spirit. The Bible is so powerful that it is able to penetrate into the immaterial part of man so as to make a man’s soul and spirit alive to God.

How does one pierce through a soul or spirit? How can a sword pierce something that is immaterial? It can’t! You can stab someone with a sword and put a hole in his physical body, but you cannot penetrate a soul or spirit. It is impossible for any sword, or bullet or anything to penetrate the immaterial part of man. The Word of God begins to convict men of sin and make them uncomfortable. It penetrates into the inmost recesses of a person’s spiritual being and when activated by the Holy Spirit and received by a person, the Word brings a person alive spiritually.

***“...of both joints and marrow...”*** -- The Bible also penetrates the physical part of man. It penetrates through man’s superficialities, externals, fronts, hypocrisies. The Bible exposes all of an unsaved man’s insecurities and phoniness and makes him come to grips with the spiritual meaning of life. The Bible penetrates where all of our human reasoning and logic can never penetrate.

Dr. Lockyer, in one of his books, tells the story of an Irishman. Someone gave this Irishman a New Testament. He had never read the Bible before and took it home and began to read it. He would read it after each meal in the evening. One evening he said to his wife, "Wife, if this book is true, then we are sinners and we are lost." The next night after supper he read again and he said, "Wife, if this book is true, then we can be saved." He was getting closer and closer to the truth. He read it and read it until he understood what Christ had done for sinners and with rejoicing in his heart he went to his wife one evening and said, "Wife, this book is true and I am saved!" Only the Word of God can do that!

***"...and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*** -- The word "judge" means "a critic." The Bible stands as a critic over man's thought life and over all his motivations. The Bible analyzes, condemns and rebukes all the evil actions of men. It discerns all and shows sinful men their need of a Savior. The truth of God's Word strips off the false. At times the Bible is ruthless with men; it moves in and convicts; it backs men into the corner; it takes down all fences and facades, worming its way into the very immaterial part of man. The Bible ultimately takes man to the point where he sees that his real problem is unbelief. All of man's excuses, rationalizations, and intellectual arguments against Christianity are rooted in his unbelief. The active, living Word of God will penetrate through all sham and all verbiage to the inner point where a man must make a decision to believe and be saved or to reject and stay lost.

THE SCRUTINIZING EYE OF GOD - Hebrews 4:13

***"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare (naked) to the eyes of Him..."*** -- To enter into God's rest of salvation, it is also important for men to open up and be honest before God. Our attention is drawn to the omniscience of God. God knows everything. God knows all about a person. He knows what he is thinking all the time. He knows where he goes, what he sees and what he does. From God's standpoint, a man's life is laid bare as one naked. A man cannot run anywhere from the all-knowing God. He knows of every lie, of every hypocrisy, of every dishonest act, of every immoral deed. He knows all and will judge all as sinners. The eye of the Lord shall scan the naked soul and its thoughts and intents and shall see clearly that the basic reason for the rejection of Jesus Christ is the wicked heart of unbelief.

How would you like to have everything you have thought this week projected above your head on the ceiling? Or how about your thoughts for this day only? If this was done, you would be embarrassed, and others would be shocked and I would probably quit the ministry. You cannot tell all you are thinking and I cannot tell all you are thinking but God knows all we are thinking.

***"...with whom we have to do."*** -- This actually says, "To whom we must give an account." Every human being born into this world is going to give an account for his actions and attitudes in this world. No man will escape the judgment of God. A man may think he is hiding from God, but God knows all and will judge every man impartially for his thoughts, motivations and actions. Every created person will one day come face to face with the Creator and Lord of the universe. The unsaved will meet God in eternity as a Judge. This final court will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment.

***“And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”***  
(Rev. 20:11-15).

Even Christians will give an account to Christ for their actions at the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ. Christians will be judged and rewarded on the basis of their faithfulness to Christ. We will be judged for our works and not for our sins. ***“For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”*** (2 Cor. 5:10).

Let us remember that God sees all and knows all and we as Christians are going to give an account. God knows when we lie, or gossip, or cheat, or steal. God knows when we are not good husbands and wives. God knows when people are secretly involved in sex or drugs or booze. All men will one day give an account to God for their actions, thoughts and attitudes. There is a day of reckoning coming for all men!

## CONCLUSION

Why is it then that so many professing Christians have never really entered into God’s rest of salvation? They have never opened themselves up to the teaching of the Bible and laid themselves bare before God. They have never seen themselves as unworthy sinners in need of a Savior.

What must they do to be saved and escape God’s certain judgment? They must BELIEVE. They must believe in Christ and His finished work for sin. They must cease from their own works and rest solely in Christ’s work for sin.

I plead with you who are not Christians. Be diligent to enter into God’s salvation rest. Be constantly seeking God’s rest until you find Christ. When you find Christ, stop laboring to be saved and receive Christ as Lord and Savior. At that moment, you will enter into God’s rest.