



Enter the Rest

The Christian faith should be the greatest experience of rest on the face of the earth. If that's not the way you're experiencing it, then you're not experiencing the true Christian faith of the New Testament—but a Christian religion.

God began to show us from the beginning of all beginnings —Genesis—the essence of the New Covenant inscribed in the message of Creation. He worked for six days making sure everything was finished before resting from His works on the seventh day. God created Adam and Eve on the sixth day and placed them in a finished work—the seventh day—for them to enjoy. They both got to live in the seventh day where everything was provided for them until the great fall.

Fast forwarding to Moses, God made a works-based covenant with Israel—the Old Covenant—where they had to perform vigorously for six days in order to be righteous and blessed. It was on the Sabbath rest—the seventh day—that Israel ceased from their works and commemorated one day in honor of God's finished work.

Then we have Israel trying to enter the Promised Land. God had prepared a land they didn't work for, houses they didn't build, and vineyards they didn't plant. The Promised Land was a land flowing with milk and honey—a finished work.

Finally, when we look at the New Testament, we find out that God put these types, shadows, and symbols of the physical rest in the Old Testament to point to the spiritual rest that we get to enjoy as believers in Christ under the New Covenant.

Hebrews 4:10-11

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us labor therefore to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of unbelief.

Under the New Covenant we are invited to labor to enter His rest—not to labor to enter His works. In the Old Testament, God allowed Adam and Eve to be under the curse of “by the work of their sweat” instead of being in the Garden of grace; God accepted Israel's request to enter into the Covenant of works that would proportionate His righteousness according to their works instead of continuing in the Abrahamic covenant of grace; God watched Israel go in circles in the Wilderness of works for 40 years instead of believing in the Promised Land of grace. That's because when we believe works is the way instead of grace, God remains idle in our life. But when we believe grace is the way instead of works, God works in our life.

By this, God was showing the world that the only way they can relate to Him is by grace—and not our performance. Our only labor is to believe this grace.

-What does “labor to enter His rest” look like practically?

The book of Hebrews was written to Jews who followed Jesus but also kept running to the temple to offer animal sacrifices continually to try to get sins forgiven. They knew about grace but also walked by the law to obtain righteousness, blessings, and purge the conscience. Their whole lives revolved around trying to get right with God and stay right with God to stay clean and close to God by works instead of by the blood of Christ.

According to this verse, if we are to enter His rest we must cease from all this works righteousness by believing in righteousness by faith. The way not to enter in it is by continuing in works righteousness. When we enter the rest, there is no need to try to get sins forgiven hourly, daily, monthly, yearly because all our sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven once for all. Additionally, Jesus also fulfilled the Law. We don’t have try to walk in it for salvation, righteousness, or holy living.

The Jews in the Old Testament couldn’t enter the rest because they held on to the unbelief in God’s grace. Until this day, their eyes are blinded to grace. Unfortunately, many believers in Christ follow their footsteps. Whenever they read the New Testament all they perceive is greater works, higher performance, further obedience, and deeper change. Whenever they hear a sermon it’s all about morality and works-based solutions. If our motivation for works is to please God, work off guilt, make yourself more righteous, earn God’s blessings, avoid punishment, or try to change by self effort, then it’s unbelief in God’s grace. This is the spirit of the Old Covenant. Let us not be like them.

Matthew 11:28-30, MSG

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.

Religion is hard and heavy. But Jesus came to lift off this heavy and ill-fitting burden to live free and light. When we come to Him and enter His rest, we will learn the unforced rhythms of grace where good works and living right flows genuinely from the place of rest. This is what it means to enter the rest of being made His righteousness.

When we pair up with Jesus by faith—like a young ox yoked with an older one—He bears the heavy load for us, guides us, and teach us the rhythm we should live in. As we rest, we begin to flow with the Lord as one from within. To rest is to live by the Spirit, instead of by the commandment. How well we rest, will determine how well we walk, live, love, and serve.

By: Joyner Briceño