

Enter His Rest

We're busy with the important, and very practical, topic of our "walk in Christ." So, we continue with this theme, looking this time at our walk of "rest." What we will find that this walk of "rest" is certainly not speaking of passivity or inactivity. But that will become very evident as we proceed.

Recently I was reading the Book of Joshua and realised that the theme of the book was about **entering** the Promised Land (Ch 1-5), **overcoming** the enemy and their armies (Ch 6-12), and finally **occupying** the Land (Ch 13-24). In reading through I realised that this was also a type and shadow of what was to come through Christ, and the "promised land" of the "rest" in Him we are to enter and occupy. This journey in Christ revolves around the three words: **Enter**, **Overcome**, and **Occupy**. These are action words – actions, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that we are to carry out.

The Israelites had been saved from the life of slavery and dominance of Pharaoh in Egypt by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts and lintels. They were taken through the challenging desert and were headed for the "Promised Land" – a place of rest and plenty. We are saved from sin, and the dominance of Satan, by the blood of the Lamb, Christ. We travel through a "desert" of testing, of hard and dry situations and circumstances, but are headed to the "promised land" of rest and peace in Christ.

Now before anyone even thinks that the Promised Land for us is heaven, let me remind you that there are no Jericho walls, enemies, or giants in heaven. Our "Promised Land" is the life of "rest" in Christ here and now.

Christ has **overcome** sin and the hosts of hell, making a way for us to **enter** and **occupy** the rest He has provided. But, because we, the born again, according to Eph 6:12 and Heb 12:1, are in a battle against principalities and powers (our giants), and face sins that so easily entangle us (our enemy), we are going to have some overcoming to do. Between **entering** and **occupying** His rest, there will be some **overcoming** to do.

Now I want to read a passage from the letter to the Hebrews, where we, the born again, are encouraged to **enter** into, and **occupy**, rest in Christ – His rest.

In the following passage take particular note of how many times it uses the words "**today**" and "**enter His rest**"; in fact, "**today**" is mentioned 5 times and "**rest**" is mentioned 11 times! Repetition says God is trying to emphasize something here, so we need to pay particular heed to what He is saying.

Hebrews 3:6 – 4:11 ... *"but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "**Today** if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways'; as I swore in My wrath, 'they shall not **enter My rest**.' Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another **day after day**, as long as it is still called "**today**," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "**today** if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they*

provoked Me." For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not **enter His rest**, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of **entering His rest**, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed **enter that rest**, just 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. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "and God **rested** on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this passage, "they shall not **enter My rest**." Therefore, since it remains for some to **enter** it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "**today**," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "**today** if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them **rest**, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains 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. Therefore let us be diligent to **enter that rest**, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" ...

Now, before going further, let me give you my thoughts on the context for this passage. In the Letter to the Galatians Paul is writing to believers, both Gentile and probably mainly Jewish folks from the diaspora now living in Galatia (Hebrew folks), who had begun, but not progressed, in Christ. Believers who were attempting to commingle law and grace, rather than following the one true gospel.

Gal 1:6 ... "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel."

Gal 3:1-5 ... "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Gal 2:20-21 ... "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Gal 5:1 ... "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

This 'freedom' we are to embrace is the 'rest' spoken of in the passage from the letter to the Hebrews. You see, I believe the letter to the Hebrews is simply an addendum or appendix to the letter Paul wrote to the Galatian believers, where he explains things more fully to them. If you read Galatians and then read Hebrews it will all make sense.

Now, back to the passage we read from Hebrews.

Paul illustrates the position they were in by likening them to the situation the children of Israel were in, who were brought out of the bondage of Egypt, but had failed to enter into the promised land of Canaan. They stopped short of the good things God had promised them. And the reason they did this was because of “unbelief” leading to “disobedience.” They kept looking back to “Egypt and its ways” did not continue to trust and totally submit themselves to God and His ways. They thought they knew better. They did not know God or His ways.

It was never God’s purpose or intent for them to spend so long wandering around in the wilderness. It should have only taken a short while to get from Egypt to Canaan Land. His purpose for redeeming them from the slavery of Egypt was to bring them into the Promised Land that flowed with milk and honey, a land of fruitfulness and plenty, and a place of triumph and rest.

Deut 6:23 ... *“He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers”.*

To get to the Promised Land they had to travel through the wilderness of Sinai, which was a difficult time of testing. After the Red Sea crossing, they were full of joy and praise for God. But after a short while in the tough desert their new found faith was tested and it did not stand up. Each time the desert conditions were hard (things in the seen or temporal realm) they doubted in their hearts and began to murmur against God. Their focus was on the circumstances and not on God. They despaired and even wanted to turn back to Egypt. No wonder God said ... *“Therefore I was angry with this generation ... they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways.”* So as a result of their unbelief, disobedience and murmuring, for forty years they wandered around until the entire generation died, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb – who knew God personally, and trusted Him implicitly, and walked in His ways continually.

Now, according to Rom 15:4 where Paul says ... *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope,”* **we** need to learn from what happened through their unbelief and disobedience.

We were all born into the slavery of sin and dominated by “the god of this world,” Satan. But our heavenly Father purposed to have a people for Himself, saved out of the world, and through the redemptive work of His Son He has this family. Like Israel, who were redeemed by the blood of a lamb, we are redeemed by the blood of The Lamb. And just like the children of Israel, who were redeemed for a purpose, for something better, the Fathers purpose was to bring us out of slavery to sin and into living in the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 3:19) – attaining to full stature in Christ (Eph 4:13). Only in Him do we find that all the longings of our hearts are satisfied as we fellowship with Him, as we are conformed to Him through the renewing of our minds, and as we walk in obedience to Him and His ways. In Him we find the Bread and Water of Life. In Him alone we put to flight all the enemies and have victory over sin, self and Satan. Only in Him do we have lasting peace and joy. He is our resting place.

What is our “Canaan”?

We need to understand what **our** “Canaan” or “Promised Land” is. “Canaan” is a type and shadow of something we, the born again, are to enter and occupy *here and now*. In the Hebrews chapters 3 and

4 passage the words “**today**” are repeated five times. Canaan is a picture of the life of satisfaction, liberty and rest in Christ, appropriated by trust and obedience, that we are to enter and occupy **here and now**. The Father has brought us out in order that He may bring us in, and nothing else will satisfy His heart, or ours.

In the passage from Hebrews, immediately after quoting Psalm 95, where God swears that the children of Israel shall not enter His rest, which is Canaan Land, Paul goes on to say, in Heb 3:14 ... *“For we have become **partakers of Christ**, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”* Implied then, is that the Promised Land, “Canaan”, for the believer is being made “a partaker of Christ”. Not and imitator of Christ, not even a servant of Christ, but a partaker of Christ. What I partake of, which is like eating food, becomes an integral part of me. When I am born again there is an exchange of nature, I become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) when Christ is birthed in, and takes up residence in, my spirit. 1 Cor 6:17 ... *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit.”* Gal 2:20 ... *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* That happens the moment I am saved, the moment Christ is birthed in me. It is complete I cannot add to it. But, from then on, I am on a journey, to partake of Christ who has taken up residence in me, and be conformed to Him in my soul (mind, will and emotions) and body functions, so that He can operate through me and my faculties. Rom 12:1-2 ... *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

His will is that we enter His rest.

So, this union with Christ is where He lives His life in me and I am joined, inseparably, to Him in every respect. It's not my life being improved, but His life imparted to and through me. First, it's Him living in me, where I am one with Him in spirit, and then His life imparted to my soul (mind, will and emotions). It's a union of spirit and soul. A mind fixed on Christ and conformed to Him and His ways. As I “put on Christ,” as I embrace the “mind of Christ,” my thoughts and actions then become His; He thinks, feels, and acts through me. So, our “Canaan journey” is all about **entering** into and living the Christ life – partaking of Him and living by His life. The more we **overcome** the ways of the flesh and the onslaught of the enemy, the more we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, the more we partake of Christ and yield to Him in total trust and obedience, the closer we get to **occupying** His “rest.”

Also, the Heb 3:14 verse also tells us about the condition on which we are made partakers of Christ. It says we become partakers ... *“if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end”*, or as the Phillips translations says, if ... *“we steadfastly maintain until the end the trust with which we began”*. The same trust and dependency we started with when we came to him for salvation, is to be the trust and dependency we live by continually, right to the end. So, the “**if**” implies that this condition could be fulfilled one day, but not the next. For us, therefore, the important question is “how is it with me right now?” **Today?** Our “Canaan” experience, our abiding union, our occupying His rest through our total trust in Him is to be **contemporary and continuous**. That's why the word “**today**” is emphasized.

As new creatures in Christ we live in this world, of the temporal and seen, but we are not of it. If we are to live overflowing lives of triumph and joy, we will have to choose to detach ourselves from preoccupation with the cares and values of this world and the world system, the ways of the flesh.

Mk 4:18, 19 ... *“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful”.*

Jesus gave us a warning in this parable of what happens to those who are preoccupied with the values and pulls of the world. The pulls of the unrenewed mind, will and emotions – the pulls of the flesh, and the pulls of the circumstances and situations we face. Instead of fully trusting Him and His word. We become unfruitful and displeasing to our Father.

The challenge that faces us is the question: are we too busy doing things that we have little or no time for intimacy with God? One of the Devil’s favourite tricks to keep us from the abiding union is to have us busy all the time. Satan doesn’t mind if we are doing good things either, so long as we are too busy to wait on God. He knows our strength and fruitfulness comes from an abiding union with Christ.

The more we allow the world’s cares to beset us by dictating priorities, the more we will be trapped into the world system. Jesus said *“where your treasure is, there will your heart will be also”* (Lu 12:34). Jesus lived His earthly life detached, not from the people, but from the world. All He wanted was to do the will of His Father. There wasn’t anything of the external realm that could enhance His identity. He did not have to have a bunch of wealth, or anything else, to be a “somebody” important. He lived in total freedom because there wasn’t anything of this world’s possession or ways that He wanted to possess more than he wanted to be possessed by His Father.

That’s why so many times it says **“today”**. It does not matter that I came out of Egypt and entered into Canaan in the past, what matters is what is happening in me **today**. **Today** if I hear His voice, I must not harden my heart. That’s why we must walk in brokenness, openness, honesty, exhorting one another, challenging and encouraging one another in love, so that we are not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. **Today**, He calls us to return to our abiding union; to enter and occupy His rest.

The thing that made God mad about the children of Israel in their wilderness experience was their unbelief; their hardness of heart and lack of trust in Him. They did not know Him. Heb 3:10 ... *“they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways”* ... Their interests were purely selfish and self-centered. John 17:3 says ... *“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”*. Continual walking in eternal or abundant Christ life, the “rest” walk, comes through an intimate union with Christ as we get to know Him more intimately, learn His ways and gain His mind, which allows Him to walk out His will through us. This is a life of absolute trust in Him, no matter what “giants” or “enemies” or “Jericho walls” you may be facing. We face them in His strength and in accordance with His directions. This is what it means to **occupy** His rest.

Active, but at rest

Entering His rest is not about some passive kind of existence. Jesus was not inactive, in fact the opposite is true, He was very active, always doing the will of the Father, but at the same time He was always at rest; at rest in the Father. Also, it’s not about me trying to do something, or not do something, to make myself acceptable before I could be at rest. Heb 4:10 says ... *“For the one who*

*has entered His rest has himself also rested from **his works**, as God did from His".* The key to entering God's rest is not to cease from all activity, it's not about a passive form of existence, but rather, it is to cease, to desist, and to completely end, all labour, thoughts or actions that have their beginning point in ourself – "**his works**." Our point of reference is not to be in ourselves, it's in Christ. We are to rest from, desist from, all activity that has ourself, our unrenewed thoughts, feelings or anxieties, as the point of reference from which we operate. Our unrenewed thoughts, our fears, our worries, our selfish ways will only lead to disaster (Rom8:6 ... "*The mind set on the flesh is death*"), and we'll end up staying in the 'wilderness.' We enter His rest when we learn from Jesus, who is our prime example of living by the life of Another. Just as He lived as Man on earth by the life of His Father, so now, today and every day, must we live by His life. Our Lord, who created the world and mankind, lives in us, the born again, and wants to express Himself through us every day of our lives. Our walk of rest calls for us to stop striving in our strength and ways, and to submit to Christ to live out His life in and through us. Our walk of rest is a walk of absolute trust in Christ, and obedience to Him.

Matt 11:28-30 ... "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*".

Through the intimate union with Christ, yoked and one with Him, we "put on Christ," we "learn Christ," and as we engage the mind of Christ the life that flows out of us will be His life, lived His way. Yoked to Him we will find it easy. Not us trying to produce His life, you can't be "like Christ," that's impossible, but it's about submitting to Christ within so His life can spontaneously flow from within and out through us. Then we will know peace of mind and stability in our emotions (... "*you will find rest for your souls*"). That's not to say the path in the seen and temporal will be easy, the way of the Cross is always challenging to the flesh, but you will have inner peace and strength as you will be walking out the "rest" life, the "rest walk," that Christ has invited and enabled you to participate in, with and through Him.

The pathway to His rest

What do we have to do, what does it take for us to rest from our own works, as God did from His? The answer is, we must listen and trust Him totally and absolutely at all times.

Heb 3:19-4:3 ... "*So we see that they were not able to enter because of **unbelief**. Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by **faith** in those who heard. For **we who have believed enter that rest***".

The pathway to occupying His rest is a daily walk of absolute trust and obedience – not my will, but Thine be done; no matter the "giants" or seemingly impenetrable "Jericho walls" we face. In Josh 5 we read that immediately after the Israelite men crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land God instructed Joshua to circumcise every man. Imagine how vulnerable that made them, with the enemy armies watching! But what it teaches us is that if we are to enter His rest, all flesh, self-dependence, dependence on flesh, and works of flesh must go, and we must place ourselves in absolute trust in our Lord. Fully trusting, we rest in what God has already planned and done within us in the unseen and eternal realm. He has made us His righteous, holy, blameless children through and in Christ. We stand

uncondemned before Him. Our old man died with Christ on the cross. We have been raised with Him as completely new creatures, born of His Spirit, His Seed in us. He has made us perfect in His sight. In Christ he has made us one spirit. We are containers of Christ, and as we submit to him, through us He manifests His life to the world around us. It is His pleasure to live His life His way in us as us. That is the life, the rest, we are to **occupy**. The walk of total trust and obedience and submission to Christ within us is the walk of “rest” we’re to walk, continually.

So how can we follow the exhortation to be diligent to enter God’s rest? It’s not by striving or works that we enter. Simply turn your mind to Christ within. Pray as Paul prayed in Eph 1:17-19 ... *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him ... that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe”*. By turning in trust and bowing in dependence on Christ we can know Him and His ways. We can understand what it means to be His glorious inheritance. In the face of all odds, no matter what is thrown at you, we can live by His life and His power in total peace. We can become “partakers of Christ”. We can **occupy** His rest.

Paul writes to believers and says in Gal 4:19 ... *“my children, with whom I am again in labour **until Christ is formed in you**”*. By resting, by abiding in Christ, in total trust and confidence in Him, and by inclining ourselves to the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, He will bring us to maturity where Christ is formed in us. Our spirit is the place of the divine habitation while we are here on earth. We are to turn to Christ who is our life and to the Holy Spirit whose job it is to reveal Christ in us to us, that we may know Him and express Him in our walk and talk. The more the Holy Spirit takes us within, to know Christ who is life eternal, the more people around us will see Him in us.

No hiding place

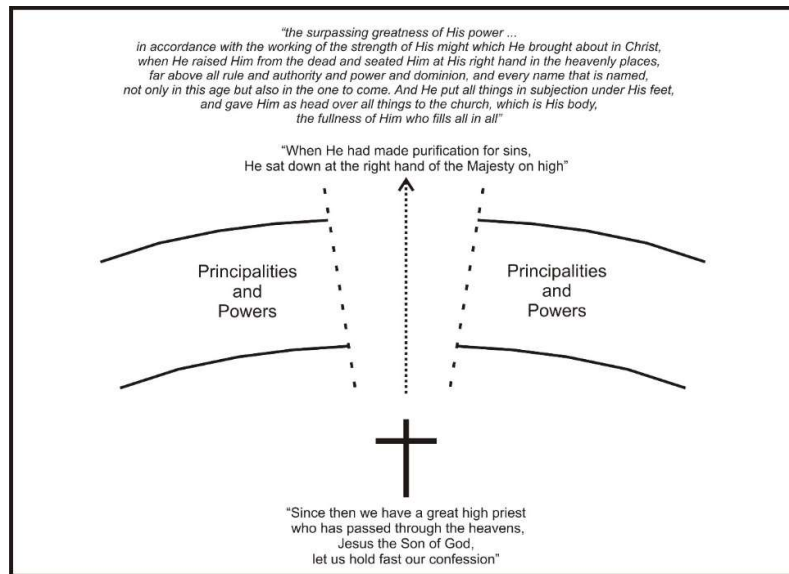
Heb 4:11-13 ... *“Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”*

Most times folks will quote Hebrews 4 verses 12 and 13 in isolation, but they are written in the context of entering God’s rest. We must clearly understand that we cannot enter His rest, walk the walk of rest, occupy His rest, as long as we are living on unrenewed soul or flesh-based appearances, thoughts and feelings, based on the things we see and feel around us, instead of living and trusting on the realities of what God has established through Christ in the unseen and eternal realm - what he has declared in His word.

We can’t hide in the wilderness, for Heb 4:13 declares ... *“there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”* We live before our heavenly Father who sees and knows everything about us. Our inner motives, thoughts and attitudes are laid bare before Him. That’s why brokenness is so important. To live broken, open honest lives before Him allows Him to bring to completion that which He has begun in us. That way Christ is formed in us. The rest we are called to is a rest of heart through surrender and obedience. So, rather than

hiding in the “wilderness” where failure is guaranteed, let us heed the rest of the words in this passage to the Hebrews.

Heb 4:14-16 ... *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”*.



He has passed through the heavens, through the principalities and powers over which He has total dominion and victory. As High Priest He has carried the sacrificial blood of the Lamb from the altar of Calvary through to the holy of holies in heaven and the atonement for our sin has been accepted and is complete before our God. We now stand before Him righteous, holy, blameless and complete. There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ understands and knows our weaknesses, but He assures us that even as He was tempted and overcame the temptations, so He is our strength and upon Him we can depend in tough times. And finally, He invites us to ... *“draw near with confidence to the throne of grace”* and assures us that His grace will be ours and His help will be freely given in our time of need – *“the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe. By His strength we enter, overcome and occupy His rest.*

Now, let me end by saying, remember the words: **Enter, Overcome, and Occupy.** **Enter** His rest by being a partaker of the Christ within through a union of soul and spirit. *“Put on Christ”* so His thoughts, words and actions become yours. **Overcome** the pulls of the flesh, the anxieties, fears, the focus on self and self-works, and the sins that so easily beset you, by going to the throne of grace for help in time of need. Be yoked to Him, experience rest for your souls. Let the surpassing greatness of His power do its work in you. Trust Him implicitly, obey Him unconditionally, and He will walk His will and His ways of rest through you continually. A walk that reveals the Christ in you wherever you are and whatever you’re facing. ... *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”*

Walk the walk of rest through Christ in you, the hope of glory. Amen!