

Sabbatical Reflections

Rest for the Restless in a Fallen World

Introduction: On Sabbaticals

“sabbatical” - Any extended period of leave from one's customary work, especially for rest, to acquire new skills or training.

- The root word of sabbatical is obviously sabbath, implying that a sabbatical is a time period marked off as distinct and involving rest in some capacity. Rest in a fallen world, however, is hard to come by.

Key Point: True rest in a fallen world can never be found in the _____ of our life. Rather, it is a _____ that is based on the promises of God and which is accepted by faith.

Striving to Enter Rest—Heb. 4:1-12

Heb. 4:1-3—¹Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³For we who have believed enter that rest...

Heb. 4:11-12—¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Context: The writer to the Hebrews is pointing to Christ as a greater deliverer than either Moses or Joshua. This comes with a warning to his audience, however, that they must not be like the unbelieving generation that saw the Exodus but failed to enter into the Promised Land.

Important Observations:

1. The example of the unbelieving generation that experienced the Exodus is highlighted.
 - * They had _____ the power of God! (Exod. 14:21)
 - * They had _____ the Word of God! (Exod. 23:30-33)
 - ⇒ Because of their focus on themselves and their circumstances, they _____ to enter the rest that God had already secured for them.
2. An analogy is drawn between that OT generation and NT believers.
 - * Christians have seen God's power and heard His _____!
 - * In contrast to the unbelieving generation, believers should have _____ in God's promises!
 - ⇒ Instead of a focus on themselves and their circumstances, they should look to _____ who has worked a greater deliverance and who will lead them into ultimate rest.
3. Believers are exhorted to rest in God's promises now as they await their fulfillment in the future.

“strive”—σπουδάζω (*spoudazō*)—To be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, eager/zealous.

 - * The emphasis is on being _____ to God's Word, not on works which are done (4:1, 2, 7, 8). Disobedience, therefore, is a failure to hear and to trust the Word.
 - ⇒ It is the Word of the Lord that will keep their faith _____ and _____!

Key Point: We must _____ the promises of God if we are to _____ in them!

The Sabbath in the Sabbatical

1. God grants rest in the midst of a _____.

Promises: Psa. 34:7—*The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.*

Psa. 28:8-9—⁸*The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.* ⁹*Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.*

Testimony: 2 Cor. 7:5-6—⁵*For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.* ⁶*But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus...*

Key Point: God often ministers His presence to us through _____.

2. God grants rest through the _____ of life.

Promises: Psa. 128:1-4—¹*Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!*

²*You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.*

³*Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.*

⁴*Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.*

Testimony: 2 Cor. 12:9—⁹*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Key Point: God’s grace to us in Christ both _____ and _____ us.

3. God grants rest as we reflect upon the _____ nature of our lives.

Promises: Eccl. 1:2-4, 11—²*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.* ³*What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?* ⁴*A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever...* ¹¹*There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.*

Matt. 16:18b—*I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Testimony: Psa. 90:12—¹²*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

2 Cor. 5:6-7, 10—⁶*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,* ⁷*for we walk by faith, not by sight. ...* ¹⁰*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Key Point: Participating with God in the _____ that He is doing in the world during the few days of our lives means that we will also share in His _____ in the life to come.

Concluding Thought

To what or to whom are we looking for rest?

Mark 2:27-28—²⁷*And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.* ²⁸*So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”*

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Key Point: We must know the promises of God if we are to rest in them!

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Key Point: God often ministers His presence to us through other believers.

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Key Point: God’s grace to us in Christ both humbles and sustains us.

3. God grants rest as we reflect upon the fleeting nature of our lives.

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