

## Hebrews Lesson 5 Articles

The writer's argument runs like this: God has promised a rest to His people (v. 1), but Israel failed to enter that rest (4:6). His promise still stands, because Joshua (v. 8) did not give them this spiritual rest, even though he did lead them into national rest (see Josh. 23:1). Otherwise, David would never have spoken about this rest centuries later in Ps. 95. Conclusion: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (v. 9, NKJV). He relates this rest to God's Sabbath rest (vv. 4, 10); that is, it is a rest of satisfaction, not a rest after exhaustion. God was not tired after creating the worlds; the "rest" of Gen. 2:2 speaks of completion and satisfaction. It is a "Sabbath of the soul." This is the "rest of faith" that Jesus promises in Matt. 11:28–30. The "rest" of Matt. 11:28 is salvation, and it is a gift that we receive by faith. The rest of 11:30 is what we find day by day as we take His yoke and surrender. "Let us therefore fear" (v. 1) is God's warning, for many of His children have failed to enter into this life of rest and victory.<sup>1</sup>

As a boy I always preferred the short sprints in the school athletics. The pain was soon over. The Christian life, however, is a marathon race, and, just as the vast majority in the wilderness never reached the goal, so these Hebrew Christians under pressure were in danger of falling short (4:1). Whether interpreted as the final rest of heaven or the peace of godly assurance, the message is clear enough, and this letter is punctuated by warnings to challenge complacency (e.g. in 2:1). The final exhortation of this passage sums it up: 'Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience' (4:11). In a semi-paradox, we are called to 'make every effort' to enter 'rest'.

The best way to keep stable in the Christian life, now as then, is to be balanced. We must learn to trust God's promises and not imagine we can earn our salvation by sheer determination. On the other hand, we must be deaf to those siren voices telling us to sit back and leave it all to God. Nobody 'can be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease'.<sup>2</sup>

The basic idea of rest is that of ceasing from work or from any kind of action. You stop doing what you are doing. Action, labor, or exertion is over. Applied to God's rest, it means no more self-effort as far as salvation is concerned. It means the end of trying to please God by our feeble, fleshly works. God's perfect rest is a rest in free grace.

Rest also means freedom from whatever worries or disturbs you. Some people cannot rest mentally and emotionally because they are so easily annoyed. Every little nuisance upsets them and they always feel hassled. Rest does not mean freedom from all nuisances and hassles; it means freedom from being so easily bothered by them. It means to be inwardly quiet, composed, peaceful. To enter God's rest means to be at peace with God, to possess the perfect peace He gives. It means to be free from guilt and even unnecessary feelings of guilt. It means freedom from worry about sin, because sin is forgiven. God's rest is the end of legalistic works and the experience of peace in the total forgiveness of God.<sup>3</sup>

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NKJV *The New King James Version*

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (685). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup> Hacking, P. H. (2006). *Opening up Hebrews*. Opening Up Commentary (26–27). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Hebrews*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (96–97). Chicago: Moody Press.