

Text: Hebrews 4:11-13

Title: Don't Rest Until You Enter the Rest!

Homiletical Truth: We Must Diligently Pursue God's Rest Because He Sees Everything in Everyone

Date/Location: November 21, 2010 at FBC

Introduction

The word *therefore* in v. 11 points us back to the main message of the previous section. That message is that there remains a rest for the people of God, and that rest is entered by belief in Jesus. That there is a rest was a *therefore* conclusion of the previous section (4:9).

Given that there is an eternal rest, and that it is entered by belief, the stakes are quite high that we actually trust God and not miss the eternal rest (4:1). So, Hebrews tells us to

1. Make Every Effort to Enter God's Rest, v. 11

A. *Diligent* is a key word. It means to be "especially conscientious in discharging an obligation...to make every effort." It is effectively a first-person command to the author himself and his readers, though it is technically called in grammar a "hortatory subjunctive."

B. We do that so that we will not fall (lest = so that not). The diligence has to do with avoiding "falling according to the same example of disobedience." The example of disobedience occurs earlier in the context of chapter 3 and 4, and refers to the Israelites not entering the promised land. For us, it means "not entering the rest."

C. Is there a contradiction between rest and diligence?

In common English usage, the two words seem to be at odds with one another. Rest is associated with inactivity, a posture of relaxation, lack of mental and physical exertion. Diligence is thought of as mental exertion, at least, if not physical exertion, and certainly does not sound relaxing or restful.

D. Perhaps it would be helpful to consider the kind of rest we are talking about again. Recall that "rest" in chapters 3 and 4 does not have one meaning that encompasses all of its uses. Each use of the term has to be evaluated individually. There are four nuances to the term:

1. The promised land rest, chapter 3.
2. God's rest from creative activity, 4:3-5.
3. Salvation rest that is entered by faith, 4:9
4. An extension of #3 is eternal salvation rest, entered into after the labors of this life are over. We could call it "heaven rest" in 4:10.

2. Recognize that God's Word Discerns Whether We are In God's Rest, v. 12

A. This verse offers a further explanation of verse 11. It explains *why* we need to make every effort to enter into our heavenly rest. The example of disobedience in the Exodus generation, recorded in the Word of God, along with all the rest of God's Word, is superbly powerful to cut away the useless clutter and get to the heart of the matter—that is, where the heart really is. Is it on God's side or the world's side? Is it on the side of belief or unbelief? Obedience or disobedience?

- B. The word of God is so sharp it can make spiritual divisions, unlike the sharpest of sharp double-edged swords. The point of soul and spirit, joints and marrow is not to say that these are totally distinct things (i.e. to teach on the constitution of man whether dichotomous or trichotomous), but to show that God's word deals with the innermost parts of man—soul, spirit, inner being, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the mind of man.
- C. Its piercing vision sees through any mask to what our real thoughts are. God knows those who belong to him (Matt. 7:23, 2 Tim 2:19).
- D. The phrase “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” reminds me of the passage in Luke 2:34-35. “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”
- E. The issue is the heart, not mere externals.
- F. Lest we think of this discernment in wholly negative terms, we have to realize that God's discernment is a merciful discernment. It is a helping discernment. It is a gracious discernment. It is only a condemning discernment if there is no repentant belief. When we apply God's word to our hearts to see what it finds (secret faults?) we are applying a mercy from God. He could have left us to “figure it out on our own” in which case we would be doomed. But He did not do that!

3. Realize that God Sees Everyone and Everything In Light of Coming Judgment, v. 13

- A. In other words, no one can hide from the heart-searching scrutiny of God and His word. So the example of 1 Cor. 2:11a is qualified: “What man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” The understood answer is “no one—only the man himself.” But we know that God knows all that stuff too since He can see it easily. The point is that you might think you can hide from God's judgment, but you cannot.
- B. Verse 13 is about God and His Word's ability to see clearly into every person's mind. God has always had the ability beyond what those new airport scanner machines can do. (By the way, the uproar about those machines is completely justifiable from a Christian perspective.) God can see past the outside and into the heart as if there were no walls, no doors, no covers, no clothes, nothing. Everything inside of our hearts is like an open book to God. We cannot hide unbelief; we cannot cover up disobedience or sin; we cannot sweep hard-heartedness under the rug.
- C. “The eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.” This is a giving of account before God! He knows already what our “account” is, and if we have to do any talking during the encounter, He will know if “our” account is an accurate account compared to what He knows.
- D. The giving of account has to do with our life's works. What about our faith? That determines which judgment we will go to. Those who are true believers will go to the Bema seat judgment of Christ, and unbelievers will appear before the Great White Throne judgment. At each of these judgments, works will be an important issue alongside of one's presence (or lack thereof) in the Lamb's book of life. Consider 2 Cor. 5:10-11 and Rev. 20:11-15.

Conclusion

- A. This coming judgment is an integral part of Christian teaching.
- B. If you want to be diligent about entering God's rest, then be in God's Word, because it tells you where you are. It reveals to you what your thoughts are and where they need to change.

MAP