



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Dear Alice,

Thank you for your question. You requested an explanation of Hebrews 4:11 regarding “working to enter into rest.” You asked, “How would one enter this rest of not working, by working to get there?” You used the Amplified Bible as your reference.

“Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell].” (Hebrews 4:11 Amplified)

In Hebrews 4 the Apostle Paul discusses what it means to enter into the rest of God through faith. The “rest” he speaks of is spiritual in nature. Paul warns Christians not to be like the Israelites of old who did not profit from the message preached to them due to lack of faith (Hebrews 4:2). Therefore, they were not allowed to enter into God’s “rest” (verse 3).

What is this “rest?” The Apostle explains that it is like the rest that God entered into when the original work of Creation was finished (verse 4). Although God pronounced His creative work “very good,” man still needed to be tested. That testing of faith had gone on throughout the Jewish Age and continues now during the Gospel Age.

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work [self-justifying work], just as God did from His.” (Hebrews 4:9-10) God could rest confident knowing the final glorious outcome of His ultimate plan for man. Therefore, we ascertain from verses 9 and 10 that this “rest” for us is a spiritual rest of faith. So yes, we must “labor” and “strive diligently” to attain that special rest of complete faith with confidence in God regardless of our circumstances in life. It requires work on our part. We must make a conscious mental effort to eliminate all modes of fear and selfish propensities which would lead us down a road contrary to God’s will, thus preventing us from entering into God’s rest of faith now, as well as the ultimate perfect rest in God in heaven for those who are faithful.

Once we have entered the rest of being "justified by faith," our work takes on a new and more important meaning, for we are now working in harmony with God and His will.

Our commission as a result of this new harmony is two-fold:

1. We now daily and hourly engage in the work of living our lives according to the will of God through Jesus and not our own will. This work of self-denial is what will keep us in God's grace for this life and the next. There is work in rest!
2. We are now also commissioned to be a part of the body of Christ - to engage with those of like faith in the work of not only building each other up in Christ but also in spreading the Gospel to any who would have listening ears. This work also lasts for our lifetime, but what a blessed work it is! There is work in rest.

"Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell]." (Hebrews 4:11 Amplified)

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Sincerely,

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