

Diligence Required

Hebrews 4:11

Halifax: 16 October 2022

Introduction:

Today we will continue our sermon series in the epistle to the Hebrews.

- The first recipients of this letter were Hebrews or Jews who had become Christians,
 - that is, who had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and had trusted Him as the one who was crucified to save them from their sins.
 - They were following Him as their Lord and Saviour.
- But they were under a great deal of pressure from the majority of their people who had, with their leaders, rejected Jesus as an imposter.
 - By following Jesus, they had suffered the loss of many comforts of this world, their jobs, their businesses, family relationships, respect, friends, had accusations were thrown at them.
 - In some cases, they were just plain weary.
 - Some of them were tempted to turn back from the following the Lord Jesus—at least from following Him as forthrightly as they had...
 - But this letter is an exhortation to them keep on with Jesus.
 - It sets Him forth in all His beauty, glory, and saving power—as the only one who can save us. And it shows us what He did.
 - Our text today is very pointedly such an exhortation.
- We have come to chapter 4, verse 11.
 - I had thought of going from verse 11 to the end of the chapter today, but after I got into it, I decided to cover only verse 11 today.
 - This is what it says:
 - Heb 4:11: **“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”**

It is obvious from the face of it, that here they were being urged to exert themselves to go on with Jesus to the end.

- This, of course, was not just given to these Hebrews, but this letter is given to all of God’s people who come after them as well—it is written for our encouragement, help, and admonition.

Before we begin to consider this verse more closely, I want to read to you the chapter in which this verse is found.

- It is important for us hear God’s word read, so please give attention now as I read Hebrews chapter 4 to you.
 - Yes, this is the very word of God.

Hebrews 4:1-16: Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed

with faith in those who heard it. ³ For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’ ” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain

place of the seventh *day* in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; ⁵ and again in this *place*: “They shall not enter My rest.” ⁶ Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example

of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account. ¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

May God bless His Word to our understanding as we consider it more closely.

Again, the verse I want to look at today is verse 11:

Heb 4:11: Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

I. The goal that is set before you is entering God’s rest by going on with Jesus.

- We have seen what this rest is that we are to strive to enter.
- A. First, we have seen that the rest refers to a great work that God has done for His people.
 - It is called “His rest” because it refers to a work that He has finished or completed so that He has “rested” or stopped working.
 - He is at rest because the work is finished.
 - It is like a man building a nice deck
 - He works very hard until he is finished.
 - Once he is done, he is able to rest. He is able to admire and enjoy the deck that he has built, and his family and friends are invited to enjoy it with him.
 - It is a delightful thing for them to enter into his rest, and it gives him great pleasure to see them enjoy it.
- B. We have seen that there is a pattern in scripture of God doing things for us and then inviting us to enter into His rest—the enjoyment of what He has done.
 1. Initially, the work that God did was the creation of the world.
 - God did not need a world to live in, but He created the world for us... He made it for our dwelling place—it was designed just for us.
 - There was just the right amount of everything we needed, but it was all so full of things to make us glad.

- He gave us tasty foods, refreshing drink, silver and gold, materials we can use to make things, marriage and marriage relations, beautiful vistas.
 - He decked it out with much beauty and He gave it to us.
 - We were called to enter into His rest—to enjoy the world with Him as our gracious God and provider, to live in accordance with His gracious directives in harmony with Him, with the creation itself, and with each other.
 - He told us from the beginning that He had made it for us, and He appointed the seventh day as a holy day—a holy Sabbath that He promised to make a great blessing to us.
 - It was a weekly convocation with God where we would rest from our normal activities and our daily work to remember that God made it and that we have received it from Him and that we are to use it for Him.
 - We were to remember that we are here for Him and that He is our God and benefactor—the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.
- But we rebelled against God—and we lost the blessing. We were justly cut off.
2. However, He came to us in His mercy to redeem a people for Himself.
- He began with a promise of a Son who would be born who would redeem them.
 - After many years, He brought His promise to Abraham and the nation that would come from him.
 - He promised to give him and his offspring a land where they would be His people, redeemed from the world.
 - This would be a place for those who were brought back to God.
 - He would provide for them so that they could be reconciled to Him and could enjoy communion with Him under His blessing.
 - Ultimately, they would bring forth the Son that would redeem them and all the nations.
 - This rest included ceremonies of sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - These ceremonies operated on a ritual level—but they pointed to the true rest that God would provide through the promised Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Even after the people came into the promised land, God still urged them to enter His rest—the work that God would do through Jesus that would restore them to the full enjoyment of God in glory—in heaven.
 - In other words, He made it clear that the rest was still ahead of them.
 - The Lord told them to make use of the weekly Sabbath,
 - now not only to remember the original work of creation that He did for them and would restore to them, but much more, the work of redemption that brought them forgiveness and eternal life under God’s blessing.
3. Then, in the fullness of time, Jesus came, and He completed that work that was required for them and for us to be reconciled to God.
- He was the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world.

- He finished that great work of dying for our sins.
 - It put Him in the grave, but because His work was successful in securing pardon for our sins, God raised Him up and exalted Him.
 - As we saw last week, Jesus finished His work of salvation and entered into His rest just like God entered His rest when He finished creating the world.
 - He entered His rest on the first day of the week, so the Sabbath was changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week.
- We were told in verse 9 that there remains therefore a Sabbath rest (*sabbatismos* in the original) for the people of God.
 - So now on the first day of the week, we keep a holy Sabbath and remember not only that God made the world for us, but also that He redeemed us through, Jesus His Son.
 - We enter into the blessing of His rest—of His finished work.
 - We look at what He has done to redeem us, we rejoice in what He has done, and we trust Him for the blessing that He has promised to those who believe—who rely on Him to bring us to God now in this life that we may serve Him here, and in glory (heaven) at the end!

TRANS> In Hebrews 4:11 we are exhorted to enter into God's rest lest we fall the way Israel did when they did not enter God's rest in Canaan.

- This is what we have been told in Hebrews 3 & 4 all along.
 - The reality is that many who seem to set out for God's rest never do enter it.
 - This was seen very clearly in Israel's example. A whole generation did not go on because of their unbelief.
 - That would be the case with the Hebrew believers here if they turned back from following Jesus—they would not enter God's rest.
 - They would never enter into the blessing of God's gracious work in Christ.
 - They would fall from that blessing the way Israel did in the wilderness.
 - And of course this is true for us today who are identified as Christians.
 - Those who are truly such continue with Jesus to the end.
 - They have no other place to go because they know that He has the words of eternal life.
- Yes, this is the same exhortation, but there is something added here in verse 11.
 - We are told that we must be *diligent* to enter this rest, lest we fall after the same example of disobedience.
 - Disobedience here is that hardness of heart that resists God, that refuses to respond to His call, that refuses to believe, that will not yield to Him or listen to Him.
 - Oh it is a pernicious thing. Resentful people destroy themselves.
 - They are so miserable—resisting God with cold stony hearts that will not hear, that will not respond, that will not trust Him or receive Him, with the result that they never enter into God's rest!
 - They never attain the goal.
- This is telling us that we must be diligent to enter God's rest lest that happen to us.
 - **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**

II. Get used to the fact that diligence is required to enter God's rest—

A. The words *be diligent* speaks of exerting ourselves.

1. You have to apply yourself, you have to stay on top of it.
 - You cannot take a holiday, you cannot retire.
 - You must preserve and remain steadfast in the rejoicing of your hope.
2. Paul tells us to fight the good fight that we may lay hold of eternal life.
 - There is a raging battle for our soul.
 - You have to keep a look out for the enemy.
 - And you have to fight the enemy when it appears.
 - What athlete wins the prize? The one who strains and presses hard.
3. Jesus told us to strive to enter in at the narrow gate—that few would find it.
 - Most people take the broad gate that leads to destruction.
 - The narrow way is hard and difficult and few find it.
 - It requires diligence, sweat, and toil.
 - It requires us to believe on Jesus instead of trusting in what we have done.
4. He told us that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.
 - These are not things that happen automatically—they must be intentional.
 - They require strenuous effort.

B. Many Christians believe that the Christian life should be effortless.

1. There is a sense of entitlement.
 - They feel that they have come to God—others have not—so the Lord ought to be right glad to have them and they ought to be able to sail along with ease.
 - They will work hard—very hard to get a business going, or to find the entertainment they crave, or their drugs or their success in a sport...
 - They will spend hours learning about certain subjects that interest them, and they will have a great memory of all the facts or stats or methods.
 - The man that wants his booze will be very industrious about finding it, but he will be dense about following Jesus.
 - Yes, many who come to Christ feel that they should not need to expend effort in their Christianity.
 - Everything should be automatic and come with ease.
 - This bicycle should not be like other bicycles that you have to pedal. It should be a bicycle where you can just coast—always coast.
 - But I tell you, if that is your Christianity, it is a fake Christianity.
 - You will never get anywhere with it.
 - You will never enter God's rest.
2. It is a false Christianity that does not know what it is to struggle with sin, to labour in prayer, to guard against temptation, to serve when you don't feel like it, to bear the cross for Christ, to speak to a person because the Lord wants you to.
 - It keeps those who embrace it from ever entering God's rest—but they think they are on the right path.

- Satan loves that kind of Christianity.
- He can keep a person content and secure in it until the end... he has done so with multitudes of men and women.

TRANS> So you see that you must be diligent to enter into God's rest.

III. But why do you need to be diligent?

A. You need to be diligent because you are coming out of sin. That takes effort.

1. Sin is natural to us.
 - It is like weeds with very deep roots—some of them are still underground.
 - Jesus came to bring us out of our sin, and He does and He will if we will look to Him.
 - But it does not happen automatically or all at once.
 - Your flesh will want sin instead of Christ. There is a battle.
2. Think about some particular sins and how difficult they are to root out.
 - a. There is pride—it is so hard to break. As a believer you know that you are to glory in God, but you want to glory in yourself.
 - You have to remember that what you have, you have from God.
 - b. There is selfishness. It is deep within you to want things for yourself.
 - You have to learn that you are here for God—Christ will keep bringing you back to that—and you have to actually learn to be for God.
 - To say, “It doesn't matter what happens to me—I am here for Him—to serve Him and honour Him with my prosperity or my poverty, with my success or my failure.”
 - It is a new and difficult thing to master.
 - c. And what about your sinful lusts and desires.
 - There is a devotion and a deep attachment to them—we love them!
 - They will cry out to be fed.
 - It takes great effort to quench them—and if you don't, they will take you over and put you in bondage.
 - You need to look to the Lord to deliver you. They can only come out by prayer and fasting.
 - d. What about bitterness? It must be replaced with forgiveness and love.
 - When you forgive someone, you make a promise not to hold it against them—but that promise is not easy to keep.
 - Perhaps there are those who have deeply hurt you. It is hard to let go of the hurt—to give it to God—to recognise that as a sinner, you deserved much worse, and to accept it as from God to punish you or to break you that you might come to Him. Christ has forgiven you!
 - e. There is anxiety that must be replaced with trust in God.
 - The Bible tells us to be anxious for nothing. Jesus told us not to worry about tomorrow or about what we will eat or wear.
 - We feel like we can't help it. The worry is not something we do, not a sin we commit, but more like a virus that just happens.
 - It is not. It is sin that is to be fought against by looking to Christ.
 - No truces are to be made.

- B. You need to be diligent because your adversary the devil wants to destroy you.
- He wants to pull you away from Christ so that you deny Him or reject Him.
1. He is like a roaring lion, seeking whom He may devour.
 - He devises schemes to attack us and we are to be constantly on our guard.
 - Adam did not guard the garden and you see what happened to him and Eve.
 2. What sort of things does the devil do?
 - a. He brings division in churches so that people will turn against the church as a useless institution—and so against the head of the church.
 - And so that some of the members will get caught up in the division and shipwreck—like we saw with Covid in many churches.
 - b. He sows false doctrine in the church—to try to lead people astray.
 - Are there not many churches that deny that Christ is the only way of salvation—that we must trust in Him as crucified to be saved?
 - Are there not those who believe that Jesus sinned or that He was only a man? The truth is, that is what most of the mainline churches believe.
 - You have to resist such teaching by clinging to God’s word.
 - c. We see with Job that Satan is given permission to make us sick or to take the lives of our children.
 - Then he tells us that God is not good—not to be trusted—and tries to get us to turn against Him.
 - It is a battle and a struggle—you have to see that God has every right to test you by such things, that He does it as a loving Father to deepen your love for Him—but that requires diligence.
- C. You need to be diligent because the world wants to keep you as its friend...
- It says, “Choose me instead of Christ. Love me instead of Christ.”
1. It wants you to think that you cannot live without its applause.
 - That if serving Christ brings disrespect and ridicule, it is better not to serve Him—or at least not in whatever way it brings you into disfavour.
 2. The world wants you to think that you cannot live without its things...
 - That if serving the Lord hampers your career or threatens your security, then it is better to forsake Him.
 - That if success can only be gained by breaking the Sabbath, or by cheating a little, or by hiding what you believe, then it is better do so.
- D. You need to be diligent because weariness will try to overwhelm you.
- Your flesh will tell you that it is too hard to go on with Christ—unreasonable to do so.
1. You will grow tired in the battle. There will be days when you want to give up.
 - You will want to turn to whatever you turn to for comfort instead of God—eating, drinking, drugs, idle entertainments, porn—whatever.
 2. You will get tired of dealing with people so that you refuse to go to them when you ought to go to work things out.
 - You will get tired of examining yourself, tired of prayer, tired of church, tired of fighting, and you will want to rest—but you must be diligent to enter into God’s rest.

TRANS> So you see some of the reasons why diligence is required.

- There are so many enemies and if you are indolent, if you let down your guard, they will prevail.
 - If you stop fighting when the enemy is advancing, you will fall. You will fall like Israel fell in the wilderness.
 - Be diligent—be diligent to enter God’s rest.
- Now let’s look at...

IV. In what ways are you to be diligent?

A. Be diligent to seek God in the means of grace.

1. He has appointed His word to be read and preached, and for us to meditate on it.
 - He has appointed prayer for us to call on His name for help in our time of need.
 - He has appointed praise for us to honour Him and to recount who He is and how good and glorious He is.
 - He has appointed the sacraments for us connect with His saving work.
 - He has appointed fasting and vows to help us in our walk with Him.
2. He uses these means to bring His grace to us so that we will grow and go on with Christ.
 - We must not use this means in a slovenly or half-hearted manner—we are to be diligent in our use of them—like those who are seeking treasure...
 - Because we are seeking treasure—we seeking to enter into God’s rest—to enter into the life that He has provided for us—the blessing of life in harmony with Him and with each other.
 - Trying to go on without the means of grace is like trying to go on physically without eating and drinking—or without breathing!
 - How do you think you will be able to get on?
 - Use them, and use them diligently—it will make a huge difference in the long run.

B. Be diligent to keep yourself in the love of God.

1. So often, you will be tempted to question the goodness of God.
 - Your flesh will resent what He has ask you to do or to refrain from doing—with what He has given you or not given you.
 - And Satan will come with his temptations to say, “Hath God said?” “Why would God do that to you?” “Why would He not let you have that?”
2. Be diligent to continue to love God.
 - It is in the gospel that His love is most clearly revealed.
 - Turn back to thank Him for what He has done, for His salvation in Christ, for His goodness in providing for you, for His wisdom in testing you.

C. Be diligent to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

1. Another way to say that is to be diligent to enter His rest—to go on with Christ.
 - Desire to see His rule established in your life and in the life of others.
 - Do what you can to promote it.
 - Tell others of His saving mercy and urge them to repent and believe.

2. Seeking first His kingdom is set in contrast with the other things you might seek.
 - It is more important than riches, than health, even than life itself.
 - Are you more concerned for family worship or for sports and education?
 - What is important to you? The riches of this world, or the kingdom of God?
- D. Be diligent to walk in the truth. Stick with what your Lord says. Be of the truth.
1. Don't let your feelings or your sinful passions control you.
 - Think on the things that are true—think on what God has said.
 - If you live by your feelings, you will never enter God's rest.
 - The truth will set you free!
 2. And don't lean on your own understanding—your own reason.
 - Lean on God's wisdom as revealed in His word.
 - You will go wrong, as so many have done, if you put your own wisdom above God's truth.
 - You see where that goes by looking at our society—there is so much confusion and folly.
- E. Be diligent to love and serve.
1. The Lord has called us to love one another.
 - You love Christ by loving your brother—in your brother you see Him.
 - That means giving of yourself even when you don't feel like it.
 - It means confessing your faults and making it right when you have sinned.
 - It means going to your brother when he has sinned against you.
 - It means rebuking him when he needs it, encouraging him and comforting him when he needs that.
 - It means sharing with him when he has need—whether of service or wealth.
 - It means being faithful in the promises you have made, diligent in daily work for clients or employers.
 - It means being adorned with good works.
 - It means being diligent to obey those in authority over you—being diligent to honour them and submit to them and to speak well of them.
 - It means protecting and providing for those under our care, and correcting them in love and faithfulness.
 2. Our goal is to enter God's rest, and that includes being diligent to live in harmony with each other.
- F. Be diligent to confess and forsake your sin.
1. Don't avoid it, don't hide and pretend that you have not sinned.
 - Jesus is a Saviour—you can take your sin to Him and He will cleanse you. He will help you.
 2. You will not prosper—you cannot prosper or enter into God's rest if you harbour and cherish your sin.
 - If your relationship with God has dried up, this could be the cause—that you have been living in sin without repentance.

- Don't go on like that.
- Be diligent to enter into God's rest. Get to Christ and stick with Him.

TRANS> So there you see some of the ways that you are to be diligent.

V. But let me stress that you can only enter God's rest with His help.

- The passage goes on to show us two helps that He has given us so that we may enter His rest. We will look at these more in the future.
- A. First, His word that searches us out to expose what needs to change (vv. 12-13).
 - B. Second, His compassionate High Priest, who has gone ahead of us to glory and promises to bring us there if we will but look to Him (vv. 14-16).