

God's Place of Rest

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Hebrews 4:1-11 (NLT)

God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to get there. [2] For this Good News—that God has prepared a place of rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't believe what God told them. [3] For only we who believe can enter his place of rest. As for those who didn't believe, God said, "In my anger I made a vow: 'They will never enter my place of rest,' " even though his place of rest has been ready since he made the world..... [7] So God set another time for entering his place of rest, and that time is today.

I want to talk to you this evening about entering into God's place of rest.

I realize that one of the applications of the scripture I just read to you is the rest we will enter into when we get to heaven and cease from our labors here on earth. However, I want to talk about another application of this scripture that I believe will be helpful to you right now.

It's all right to talk about the sweet by and by but what about the tough day-to-day pressures we face right now?

The writer of Hebrews said that God announced to the Israelites that He had prepared for them a place of rest but it didn't do them any good because they didn't believe what God told them.

I believe God that has something for each of us to do. Christ is the head of the church. We are His body. He lives in each of us and He does His work through each of us. Just as the Father did His work through His Son, Jesus. Jesus is doing His work through us. Jesus told His disciples.....

John 14:10 (NLT)

Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.

Then He said.....

John 14:12 (NLT)

"The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

Then He said....

John 14:19-20 (NLT)

In just a little while the world will not see me again, but you will. For I will live again, and you will, too. [20] When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

About a year ago, the Holy Spirit began to give me a deeper revelation than I had ever had before about how Jesus lives inside of each of us and how His desire is to do His work through each of us.

Paul has made that very clear in his writings in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Ephesians.

Ephes. 1:3-4 (NLT)

How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. [4] **Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us** in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

Ephes. 1:19-20 (NLT)

I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power [20] that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

Ephes. 2:8-10 (NLT)

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. [9] Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. [10] For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, **so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.**

Ephes. 3:19-20 (NLT)

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

[20] Now glory be to God! **By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.**

Paul said.....

“ Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us...”

“ I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him.”

“He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, **so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.**”

“By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.”

God’s incredible plan is to do His work through each of us. And He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. I want Jesus to do His work through me, don’t you? I want to hear Him say, “Well done good and faithful servant.” Don’t you?

However, we must be careful not to mistake our work for His work. There is a real danger in the church of thinking we are doing God’s work when, in fact, we are not doing His work at all. We want to do His work, but in our zeal to do something for Him, we read “How To Do It” books, organize committees, listen to tapes, attend workshops, we brainstorm for the kingdom, we get our best ideas and methods together, we plan events and then we say, “This is what God told us to do.”

We then call a prayer meeting and beg God to bless our new projects. We try to talk God into blessing what we have decided we want to do. We decide what we think should be done and how we think it ought to be done and then we want God to make it work. And when it doesn’t work the way we thought it was going to work, we get filled with anxiety.

We can't sleep. We become stressed out. We experience burn out. And many drop out because we are trying to do God's work without really knowing what His work for us is.

God said, "I have prepared a place of rest for you."

Something is wrong when you are stressed out and burned out doing the work of God.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light."

When you are allowing God to do His work through you it will be perfectly fitted to your abilities. And you won't be stressed out because it won't be you doing it, it will be God doing it through you.

Get this straight. It's not your church or my church. It's His church. It's not your ministry or my ministry. It's His ministry. It's His kingdom.

Jesus said, "I will built My church!" He knows exactly how to build it. We must stop telling God what He needs to do to built His church and let Him tell us what He wants us to do.

We must learn that we are workers together with Him.

Ephes. 2:10 (NKJV)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God's plans for each of our lives were made a long time ago, even before the foundation of the world. We enter into the rest He has promised when we discover what those plans are and fulfill them. We enter into His rest when we stop making our own plans and stop telling God what we want to do and find out what He has already ordained and determined that He wants to do through us and we get with his program. We enter into His rest when we pray, "Not my will but Thine be done in my life."

Our job is not to tell God what our plans are. Our job is to find out what His plans are. We are in a partnership with Him.

Mark 16:19-20 (NKJV)

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. [20] And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

When we are doing God's thing rather than our thing, He will work with us and through us and confirm His word with accompanying signs.

The reason we struggle and struggle and get frustrated and fail is because we often try to do things for Christ that He didn't tell us to do.

As I look back over my life, I discover that when I heard God telling me to do something and I did it, He blessed it. It wasn't a struggle. It was a pleasure. I realize that I was just a vessel that He was working through. He was the One making it happen. He was the One doing the work.

Before I was even born, God had a specific plan for my life.

Every time I tell God what I want to do and how I want to do it I experience frustration.

But when I am in God's will and doing what God tells me to do and moving in His perfect timing it is amazing how easy it is and how successful it is.

Let me give you a couple of examples:

When we wanted to build this new church building. We made plans. We decided where we wanted to build it, etc. But we experienced nothing but frustration. We could not get the necessary permits. The bank wouldn't lend us the money, etc.

But when we got into the flow of God's plan it was amazing how it all fell into place. We got the permits. We sold Church Bonds. They sold in two days. We got this eleven acres. It was amazing. I would stand across the street and look over here and realize I no longer had anything to do with it.

God made me aware that it was not me but it was Christ working through me. He was doing it!

Eighteen years ago, the Lord made me aware that He wanted Elim Church to host an annual Pastor's Convention. It was His idea not mine. I said, "O.K. Lord, we'll do it". For the past seventeen years we have hosted a Pastor's Convention and God has put it together. He has provided the finances. He has used it to bless thousands of missionaries and pastors. It's amazing. Why? Because we are doing God's thing and not our thing!

A few years ago, God spoke to me about an annual Pastor's Convention in Belize. The same thing is happening down there. More and more pastors and leaders are coming each year. The needs are being met. Why? Because we are doing God's thing, not our thing!

I don't get uptight over it. I'm not stressed out over it. I am simply letting the Lord use me to do what He wants to do.

I am talking about God's place of rest.

Hebrews says.... "God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands..."

There is a place of rest for each one God wants to use to do His work. That includes every born-again Christian.

Hebrews also says.... "... only we who believe can enter his place of rest."

Here is the key to entering into the rest that God has promised. Find out what God wants to do through you and then allow Him to do it. When you are doing what God wants to do through you and doing it when He wants to do it, you will experience His power and provision.

I am convinced that that Elim Church is here because God wanted us here. We're not here because Ron Nissen decided this is where we should be. We're here because God decided He wanted a Spirit-filled church right here on the corner of Flagstone and Richey and He tapped me on the shoulder and said I want to us you to do what I want to do.

Wow! We are doing God's thing. And because we are doing God's thing, He is blessing us! Folks, it's amazing what God has done through this church.

I was blown away this morning to get the report that over \$315,000.00 has been given to missions through Elim Church during the last 12 months. \$140,000.00 of that has come from White Dove Church in New Orleans. But \$175,000.00 of that has come from people here at Elim Church. That's fantastic! And that does count my van and Joe Hook's van and all the other things that have been given.

Wow! Why has that been so successful? Because it's God's thing! You give to missions because you know you are doing what God wants you to do.

I could go on and on. I could tell you of many things that I have tried to do that God never told me to do. And always those things brought me frustration and didn't work. I did some things because other churches were doing them, not because I heard from God that He wanted us to do them.

I have discovered that the things that God has blessed during the last twenty-four years are the things that were His plans. The things that have failed are the things that we decided to do simply because it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Let me close this message by asking each of you this question, "Do you know that you are right where God wants you to be doing what He wants you to do?" "Do you sense His divine approval upon what you are doing? Are you enjoying His blessing on what you are doing?"

If you are, I want you to give God all the glory. He is the one doing it through you.

If you don't have that sense of His approval on your life, I want you to ask God to show you exactly what His plans are for you.

Let me just say this, you must do whatever God opens up for you to do. As you are faithful to do what needs to be done, He will show you the next step He wants you to take.

Give invitation!