

Hebrews 4:10-13

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Believers should be diligent to be obedient so that they enter God's rest (receive the reward of their inheritance). God will judge our faithfulness based on our intent; He is able to discern all, even the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

The Pauline Author goes back to his illustration of God resting from His works after He finished creation on the seventh day. God did not enter this rest on the seventh day until He finished His works. Similarly, the reward of our inheritance has been already granted to us. But we possess it only when we are diligent to finish our lives living in obedience to Him: *For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His* (v 10) after completing them.

God rested on the seventh day, after He finished the job. Similarly, believers need to live faithfully all the way until the end of their lives in order to possess their inheritance. God determines our lifespans, and it is up to each believer to fill it fully by walking in His ways. There is no retirement from walking in faith. The first generation followed God all the way to the boundary of the Promised Land, then refused to cross.

This *rest* being discussed here does not refer to entering Heaven; everyone who has trusted Christ's work on the cross has been made right before God and will spend eternity with God. Believing in Jesus gives us new birth (John 3:3). Just as physical birth is a one-time gift that can neither be earned nor lost, so it is with spiritual birth. Spiritual birth comes from having enough faith to look at Jesus on the cross, hoping to be delivered from the deadly venom of sin (John 3:14-15).

Rather, this *rest* the Pauline Author is referring to is the opportunity to receive the reward of an inheritance. The Israelites of the Old Testament had the opportunity to inherit the Promised Land and possess it as landowners by believing God, crossing over and possessing the land. The land of Israel was granted by God to Abraham and His descendants centuries earlier (Genesis 15:18).

The first generation of Israel coming out of Egypt failed to possess their inheritance. This represents believers who fail to walk in obedience. Perhaps it is due to fear of rejection by the world. The second generation did cross over and possess. This is the generation that was *diligent to enter their rest*—and did so by believing God's promise and acting upon it.

Just like God's people in the Old Testament, New Testament believers have the opportunity to possess an inheritance with Christ if we are "diligent to enter that rest" (Hebrews 3:6). Just as with Israel, this inheritance has already been granted, and is waiting for us in Heaven. The Pauline Author says of the Jewish believers receiving this letter that they already have their possession in heaven:

"For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”
(Hebrews 10:34-35)

Note that this verse from Hebrews 10 says that these believers “have” a “better possession and a lasting one” in Heaven. They already have the inheritance. It has been granted. Just as with the Promised Land, what remains is to possess it.

Just as the Israelites were granted an inheritance, so are New Testament believers. But in each case that inheritance is possessed through faithful obedience. Each believer must cross over and possess, so to speak, by hearing, believing, and acting upon God’s promises.

The first generation Israelites failed to trust God and obey Him, so they did not receive the inheritance of possessing the land. Similarly, if New Testament believers follow *the same example of disobedience* (v 11) and do not have faith in God that is firm till the end (the work is completed), we will not possess our inheritance (Hebrews 3:6).

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall (v 11).

To possess our inheritance requires that we be *diligent* to walk in obedience. If we fail to be diligent, then we *fall* just as the first generation out of Egypt fell. They fell in the wilderness without having crossed over and entered into the land (Hebrews 3:17). In the case of New Testament believers, God will judge whether they were *diligent to enter that rest* in order to determine their reward.

One day at the Judgment Seat of Christ, every believer will give an account of their time on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10).

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword (v 12). It is *piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart* (v 12).

1 Corinthians 3:12–15 explains that a believer who has not been obedient to God will suffer loss at that judgment—not the loss of Heaven, but the loss of a reward. The picture used in that passage is of our deeds on earth being like building materials we send ahead. Good deeds are like gold, silver, and precious stones. These materials get refined in the fire of judgement and remain to build a great building in heaven. Deeds done for self or to be seen by men are like wood, hay, and stubble that get burned as chaff in the fire of God’s judgment and have no lasting benefit.

God knows *the thoughts and intentions of the hearts* of men; the Pauline Author is urging his audience to not fall away from obedience to God. Any thought that we are fooling God is foolish. God’s *word* digs down into our soul even to *the division of soul and spirit*. God knows our heart better than we do. Each person is naked and bare before God; He knows all.

God’s ability to discern all things is a warning; *there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* (v 13). There will be no deceiving God. He will judge the works of each believer and determine whether they were *diligent* to do what He led them to do (v 11).

This is sobering, but it is also a comfort on several fronts. First, it is not the results of our actions God will judge, but our deepest intentions. God can make results happen, but often results are not what we prefer. Results are up to God. What He desires of us is to walk in obedience to Him. We are accountable to follow in faith. We are not accountable for outcomes.

Also, scripture indicates that each New Testament believer will be judged based on their faithfulness in whatever circumstance they have, using the gifts they are given. To those who are given much, much is required (Luke 12:48).

The corollary to this is that to whom little is given little is required. Jesus made this illustration by heaping praise on the widow who gave a very small offering but gave all she had (Mark 12:42-44). God judges faithfulness from the heart and does not judge as men judge, based on appearances (1 Samuel 16:7).

God has given us the choice whether or not to walk in obedience to Him. We can choose the tree of life, following His ways and His knowledge, or we can choose the allure of following our own path and our own knowledge (Genesis 2:3-5). Each believer has been permanently given the gift of eternal life (John 3:14-16). But in order to gain the full reward and experience of eternal life we must follow His commands from the heart.

A further comfort from the reality that God judges the heart is this: we have a high priest who has experienced the same difficulties we go through and stands ready to help in our weaknesses, as the Pauline Author will explain in the next verses.

Biblical Text

10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. 11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.