

## **Entering into Rest**

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Evening, July 15, 1869

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Hebrews 4:1

The word of God is not only full of promises and blessings, but full also of admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and sometimes very severe and keen reproofs. And as it is the province of faith to embrace the promises with affection, for faith worketh by love; so it is the province of faith to receive the admonitions with obedience, for there is the obedience of faith as well as the life, walk, and triumph of faith. The servant of Christ is a steward of the mysteries of God; and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. He is put in trust for the gospel, that he may speak as one not who pleaseth man, but God who searcheth the hearts. Paul bids Timothy "Preach the word: be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." And he charges Titus even to reprove them sharply, that they might be sound in the faith. If we look at the testimony of the old prophets, from Moses onward to Malachi, we shall see how they mingled admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and reproofs, with promises and blessings; and we see also how highly God resented the neglect of those to whom they spoke, in hardening their heart against these remonstrances and stiffening their neck against these admonitions. In fact, he brought down upon them swift destruction; for you will find it mentioned in 2 Chronicles 36, how "the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending;

because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." If we look at the ministry of our Lord when he was upon earth, we see how he mingled reproof, admonition, and warning, with promises and blessings. We find the Apostle Paul in his ministrations—as, for instance, at Antioch—after he had preached forgiveness of sins, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," goes on, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." And we see all through the Epistles, and especially in that to the Hebrews, a large admixture of admonition, reproof, remonstrance, and warning, with a bold, faithful declaration of gospel doctrines and precious promises. But if a minister is to come forward with admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and sharp rebukes, it must be done in a spirit of love and affection. He must not mingle with it his own spirit. It must not be done in the spirit of Pharisaism, legality, and self-righteousness. That will only provoke and stir up the carnal mind and wound the natural mind, instead of cutting deep into the soul, so as to leave a permanent effect. I in my time have spoken to you sometimes sharply, and perhaps were my time to come ever again I should speak more sharply still. I might handle the sword of the Spirit with a stronger hand and thrust it more keenly into everything ungodly. But I have always found if I have mingled with it a spirit of love and affection, if I have not indulged my own spirit or a spirit of legality, but have spoken it in the spirit of the gospel, it has been received by the people; and though there might be some, even of the dear family of God, who would rise up against it, they found in the end it was an excellent oil that did not break their head, and derived more benefit from admonitions and reproofs than they did from the promises and declarations of

the gospel. I much admire the way in which the apostle speaks to the Hebrews, and especially in the words before us. There is no epistle in which so much admonition and warning is couched; in no epistle have we such threatenings and denunciations against turning one's back upon the truth and departing from the living God. But in the words before us, to soften, as it were, and to mollify the keenness of his words, he brings in himself: "Let us therefore fear;" as though he should say: "I, Paul, do not stand upon a lofty pedestal, having a position upon a pinnacle, as though I were above all doubts and fears; as though I were so secure that nothing could hurt me, and was above all admonition and exhortation. No: I stand," he would say, "upon the same ground with you all: I have the same sinful heart, the same tempting devil, the same snares spread for my feet: a sinner saved by grace, and grace alone, as you are. Therefore, I don't stand apart," he would say, "and launch my denunciations against you; but I mix with you, as standing upon the same level, and say, Let us—you and me together—therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should fall short of it."

In opening up these words, I shall, with God's help and blessing, direct your thoughts to these three prominent features:—

I.—*First*, the *rest* spoken of, which is emphatically "God's rest."

II.—*Secondly*, the *promise* which is left, of entering into it.

III.—*Thirdly*, the seemingly or the really *coming short of it*.

The reference of the Apostle is to an expression in Psalm 95, which he quotes in the preceding chapter: "Wherefore (as

the Holy Ghost saith), to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest." He takes that as his text, on which he builds his exhortation; and he draws from it very instructive lessons, some of which I shall endeavour to lay before you.

I.—The first thing is, that it is emphatically God's rest. "I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest." When God created man in his own image, after his own likeness, God and man were at peace. God looked down from heaven and saw man with the rest of his works, and pronounced him as very good. God then rested, he says, from his works, and he sanctified and hallowed the seventh day as an emblem of the day on which he rested from his works and looked with holy satisfaction upon the work of his hands. In creating man after his own image, and after his own likeness, he gave him an intellect to understand him, conscience to feel the impress of his hand and to listen to his voice, a will to choose that which is good, a memory to retain the lessons of instruction he gave him, and affections to embrace him as his chiefest good. And all these faculties of the human mind, when man was created after the image of God, were in righteousness and true holiness: a clear understanding, a pure conscience, a holy will, a retentive memory, and loving affections. But the fall came in and broke up all this harmony. It entered into man like the venom-drop of the serpent, ran through the whole of his nature, and infected him with sin and confusion from top to toe. It darkened his understanding; made his conscience fitful, uncertain, and loaded with guilt; alienated his will from choosing good to choosing evil; spoilt his

memory, so that it no longer retained what was good, but retained all that was evil, the one written in sand, and the other written upon a rock; and his affections it alienated from heaven to earth, debasing them from the Creator to the creature. Now God could no longer find rest in man. Man had lost the image of God in which he was created. Therefore, God could no longer look down from heaven as before, and rest in his creature; for his creature had sinned against him, departed from him, and become altogether evil and vile. Then should God lose his rest? God had a rest in his own eternal Son, who ever lay in his bosom as the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. No thought or conception of men or angels could ever enter into the infinite love and complacency wherewith God, from all eternity, regarded the Son of his love. He always rested in him as the brightness of his glory, the express image of his Person; and so when man fell away from God, God did not lose his rest, for he always rested in his love, and that love was in his only begotten Son. But he determined in his own eternal mind to choose a people out of the fallen mass, and bring them to enjoy the same rest that he himself enjoyed, so that the elect of God might rest in his Son, as God rested in him, and thus God and man might unite in one object of affection and rest together in love towards one God. Therefore this is God's rest. "This is my rest, for I have desired it." Now, when his only begotten Son came into the world, assumed our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature obeyed, suffered, bled, died, and rose again,—all through those actings and sufferings, his manhood in union with his deity, God looked upon him with infinite complacency. "This is my beloved Son," was sounded from heaven, "in whom I am well pleased." Thus, whatever our blessed Lord did in harmony with covenant arrangements and eternal engagements, was exceedingly like a savour of rest complacent to his Father, so that he could rest with infinite

complacency and unbounded satisfaction, not only in what his Son was in himself, as the eternal Son of God, but in what he did and suffered as the Son of man. Thus, when he, by his sufferings in the garden and upon the cross, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; when even on the cross, in his bitterest agony, the Father hid his face from him, it was not because he loved him less, but because he hated sin more. There was no suspension of the eternal love wherewith God loved him, nor of the eternal complacency wherewith God regarded him. But sin being such an evil thing, and he standing in our place and stead, and being, to use the strong language of the Apostle, "made sin for us," God hid his face from him to the agony of his soul, because he could not look upon sin with anything but disapprobation. He was always his beloved Son as now. And then when he had finished the work which God had given him to do, and he could say, "It is finished," God rested with infinite complacency in that finished work, that shed blood, that suffering death, that our dear Redeemer endured, to rescue his people from the depths of the fall. This is God's rest, for he rests in his love, and this love is manifested in the Person and work of Jesus.

Now God has given, and the apostle brings forward here, two types and representations of this rest of God.

The first we have named was the rest of the Sabbath; and the apostle applies that to the rest that remains for the people of God; for it is in the original, and it is in the margin, the keeping of a Sabbath, and especially for this reason, that he who has entered into his rest hath ceased from his works as God ceased from his. Thus the Sabbath is a type of the rest of creation, because on it God rested from his works. And so there is no rest for a living soul until it ceases from its hand's work and rests in the finished work of the Son of God.

But there was another type, which was the promised land. He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; which rest was the rest promised in the land of Canaan. Now the land of Canaan is, I think, often misunderstood as a type. You will often find it explained as a type of heaven, and Jordan represented as the river of death. Now it may be so accommodated. I don't quarrel with the interpretation. But that is not the leading idea of the figure and type. Just look at the circumstances of entering into Canaan. Had they not to fight with the warlike inhabitants of that land? Was there not many a bloody battle fought before they could subdue them? And after they had subdued them, were not many of these nations left to be thorns in their eyes and goads in their side? Is this a type of heaven? Are there enemies to be fought with in heaven? Is the Canaanite to be found in heaven? You see the type does not hold. But now take Canaan as a type and figure of gospel rest. View it as the place where the children of Israel rested after their toils in the wilderness under the law, and view them coming to that good land where there were brooks and rivers, hills and mountains, and a fruitful soil, with vineyards and olive-yards. Thus it represents the gospel, in which there are brooks and rivers that gush out of mountains and hills, fruits to refresh, and vines sweet to the taste. The ark also no longer wandered as in the wilderness, but found a resting-place, first in Shiloh and then in Jerusalem. All this is typical of gospel rest. So that when the Lord said, "They shall not enter into my rest," he does not mean God's holy place in heaven, but into the gospel of the grace of God, in which God rests as the last dispensation, as the grand revelation of his mercy and truth, as shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ, the manifestation of the love, mercy, and grace of God. So that God can rest in the gospel, as being the full manifestation of his love, mercy, and grace in the Person and work of his dear Son. And to enter into rest, God's rest, is to enter into the

fulness of the gospel; and in a full gospel revealed to the soul by a divine power, to find rest and peace for the soul. We are not to wait till we get to heaven before we find rest. There is a rest which remaineth on earth to the people of God; and he that has entered into his rest hath ceased from his own work and found rest in Christ and all joy and peace in believing. This is God's rest.

II.—Now for the promise left us, of entering into this rest. In fact, all the promises of the gospel culminate and centre here; especially that sweet promise which fell like the rain and distilled like the dew from our dear Redeemer's lips in the days of his flesh: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There he invites the weary and the heavy laden to come to him, and to find rest in him. So when he says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and they that come I will in no wise cast out,"—there is a promise left us of entering into that rest. When he says, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," there is a promise given of entering into that rest by faith in the Son of God. And when in the Old Testament—for he speaks in the same language both in old and new—he says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the world;" there is a promise left to us of entering into his rest. Now these promises are scattered up and down the Word of God, for the express purpose that by believing these promises, laying hold of them, embracing them, and feeling their sweetness and power in the soul, we may enter into God's rest; for by the promises we are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And all the promises are in grace, Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us. It is by believing these promises we enter into rest. But that we may believe them, they must be sealed upon our heart by a divine power, brought into our spirit under the unction of his grace, and



faith given, drawn forth, and strengthened to embrace them, as sure and certain promises which God will certainly fulfil for his own faithfulness' sake.

But to whom is this rest preached? To those who can find no rest anywhere else. God weans his people out of every rest to bring them to the true rest. He sends his law with power into their conscience, to convince them of unbelief and sin. He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, to discover to them that the bed is too short and the covering too narrow. It will send conviction after conviction, pang after pang, fear after fear, and loads of guilt after loads of guilt, until he uproot them and overturn them and bring them out of all false rest. There is such a tendency to fall short of the promised rest. Some rest on doctrine: as Berridge says:—

"Some sleep on doctrine's sound;"

others rest in a name to live when they are dead; some rest in the opinion of men concerning them; others in church membership and ordinances; some in a tolerably consistent life, joined with some knowledge of the doctrines of grace; others in a hope of what they may be hereafter, though they have little hope for the present. It is surprising how prone men are to rest in everything and anything short of God's rest. How they will catch up any faint or feeble evidence; and how, if they can, they will spin a web, like the spider, out of their own bowels, and wrap themselves up in their own righteousness. Nature dreads those cutting strokes that God deals at living consciences. They would sooner be daubed over with untempered mortar; sooner have "Peace, peace," cried to them when there is no peace; sooner be flattered into hell than frightened into heaven. They love false ministers who daub them over with untempered mortar, and

false professors who will speak to them words of flattery, and for the sake of money or approbation will praise them to their face and abuse them behind their back. God makes his people honest. He plants his fear deep in their heart; he makes their conscience alive and tender; he won't let them rest short of his own rest, for he is determined to bring them to rest where he himself rests in the Son of his love; and all other rest is an insult to the truth of God, and a libel upon the gospel of his grace, and to persevere in it will bring down certain destruction. But when a man, under divine teaching and by the sweet drawings of heavenly grace, comes with a broken heart and contrite spirit to the footstool of mercy, sees Jesus revealed to the soul by an Almighty power, beholds his beauty, his loveliness, his suitability, his blood, his righteousness, and embraces him in faith and affection, as the Son, the Christ of God, then there is rest. All these angry clouds of God's displeasure blow away. There is no wrath in God when we approach him through a Mediator. There is no letting down of his anger against sin, when we confess our sins, fall down before him, and look up in faith and affection to the Son of his love. Our eyes and God's eyes then rest upon the same God. He sees infinite beauty in the Son of his love; he has received satisfaction to his justice, purity, and holiness by his obedience, blood-shedding, and death; and when we drop into the same spot where God fixes his eyes of eternal approbation, then our mind is the mind of God, and our will the will of God, and we drop into the same place, viewing the same God, having the same thoughts and the same feelings, and crowning his eternal Son with heavenly glory, as God has crowned him when he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. This is entering into rest. And I would appeal to any living soul before me, if ever you have found a resting place for your poor, tried, exercised, tempted soul; if ever you have had ease from the pangs of guilt, a sweet hope anchoring within the vail, or any

sensation of love warming your breast; any melting down of heart, under a sight and sense of your sins, it has always been from some view of Jesus, which the Spirit of God, who takes of the things of God and reveals them, has given you. And every moment's rest and peace that your soul has ever enjoyed, has been only by believing in the Son of God with all your heart and soul, and feeling sweet union and communion with him. Do not give the lie to your own experience. If God has chased you out of your various false rests, and ever dropped his peace and pardon into your soul, given you a good hope through grace, and led you to embrace his dear Son, do not give the lie to your own experience, and then seek other modes of quieting your conscience and speaking peace to a troubled mind. There is but one way of finding access unto God, one way of obtaining rest and peace, and that is in Christ and his finished work. This is God's rest.

III.—But to pass on to our last point, there is a fear, and a well grounded fear, lest any of those who profess the truth should seem to, or really, come short of it. Now men may come short of the truth in two ways; they may come short of it for a time and in the end may attain it; or they may come short of it altogether and so perish in their sins. And it is often a matter of uncertainty, where the work of grace is not very plain or clear, whether those who have come short of this rest are amongst the number of those in whose hearts the fear of God is, and yet for the present come short; or whether they have only a name to live, the profession of godliness without the power, and therefore, in the end will come short of it altogether. This is the reason why there is such fear. But you say, "I have no fear." Then let me fear for you. "I have no doubts." Let me doubt for you. You that have no fears and have no doubts, may one day come into that spot where you will have nothing but your doubts and fears,

and what is worse, be in a spot where those doubts and fears will never be taken away, but will sink you into perdition. Many who have stood in vain-confidence for years, upon a death bed have found all their confidence like leaning upon a bull-rush, found it deceive themselves and deceive others, and thus have perished in their hypocrisy or in their despair. Therefore, it is good to fear and be exercised upon this point; that we may not be led aside by vain-confidence, propped up with false props, and in the end find we have only been trusting to a name to live, and resting upon that in which there is no salvation. I would take these two characters and endeavour to unfold them.

Now you may be a child of God, have the fear of God in your heart, have faith to believe the word of God and the power you have felt in your soul; nay, more, you may have had views, gleams, glimpses, glances, a measure of evidence or testimony about Jesus, so as in some measure to encourage and strengthen your faith and hope; and yet you may have never entered into rest. You may never have had Jesus revealed to you, a sense of pardon and forgiveness sealed upon your conscience, the love of God shed abroad in your heart, the witness of the Spirit to your spirit that you are a child of God, or the spirit of adoption to cry "Abba, Father." And yet, lacking this, there may be in you—because we don't know these things often at first, and may be many years groping our way towards them;—there may be in you, as I hope there is in some present, the fear of God, a tender conscience, an upright walk, a consistent life, and a desire to know the Lord for yourself; but you cannot enter into rest. You are a restless, miserable being; and you often wake at night, and you are almost tempted to roll upon your couch in a very tempest of doubt and fear as to the reality of the work of God upon your soul. You hear the servants of God set forth Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; you believe,

implicitly believe, the doctrines of the gospel; you feel that none but the doctrines of the gospel can do you any good, and there have been times and seasons when you have felt the sweetness of them; but what with the darkness of your mind, the pressure of guilt upon your conscience, getting into legal bondage, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, the want of access to the throne, and a full satisfaction in your own mind as to the work of grace upon your heart, you come short of entering into rest. Now there is a labouring to enter into rest. We are not taken to heaven in a railway carriage, by an express train, and landed safe, sleeping half the way. It is a battle, a struggle, a conflict, a fight, and a pressing through a narrow gate, a walking in a strait path, an entering through much tribulation into the kingdom of heaven. And those who know nothing about fighting, fears, exercises, trials, temptations, sighs, cries, groans, and wrestlings with the Lord, need we wonder that they fall short of the promised rest? If the Lord mean to lead you into rest, he will exercise your soul first, he will send some trial or affliction or stir up the mind by his Spirit and grace, and sink you lower, perhaps, than ever you sunk before. And then, when all seems gone; when you are concluding almost to be without hope when despondency, almost despair, is making head, and you fall down before the Lord as a poor lost sinner, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" when you cast aside all your own righteousness and look with believing eyes to the Son of God, there will come over your soul some sweet manifestation of the Son of God; some blessed words will drop into your soul with life and feeling, unction and power; faith will be raised up to embrace the Son of God in his suitability, blood, righteousness, beauty, and blessedness; and then there will be an entering into rest, and you will find the approbation of God in your soul, the witness of the Spirit to your heart that now you find rest, because you have rested from your own works as God

rested from his. You look where God looks; fix your eyes where God fixes his eyes; have the mind of God, the heart of God, and the thoughts and counsels of God; and therefore find an entrance into God's rest. And if your conscience tells you under my ministration this evening that you have come short of rest, feel your need of it, are not satisfied with your present state, but want that full manifestation of pardoning love and applied blood to give you an entrance into God's rest, give him no rest until he accomplish your desire. There is the throne of grace open to you, his word to read, a preached gospel to hear; and if the Lord has given you a spirit of grace and of supplications, may he stir up that spirit within you that you may give him no rest till he manifest his love and mercy to your soul, take away all your doubts and fears, dispel your darkness, and speak words of peace and consolation to your breast.

But then, amongst those who profess God's truth, there are those who will come short of it, and perish in their deceiving. There are many things that make men come short of rest, and the grand thing is unbelief. God convinces his people of unbelief by his Spirit, that they may seek faith at his hands; for only those who are convinced of unbelief will really cry for living faith. But in the mind of man, short of regenerating grace, there is a determined spirit of unbelief: as we see in the Jews of old: all God's miracles in the wilderness could never convince them of the power of God. One would have thought, after seeing the destruction of Pharaoh's host, fed with manna in the wilderness, the cloud and pillar going before them daily, they would believe that God could take them to the promised land, and subdue their enemies. No; they could not believe it; and they fell short of rest through the power of unbelief. This is the case with those who perish: "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." They do not believe and cannot believe,

but harden their hearts in unbelief.

Again, grace calls us away from those things which nature loves. Grace says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Grace calls us out of the world, the love and spirit of it; but where there is no regenerating grace, the world cleaves so fast to men's hearts that they will not and cannot give it up; and, therefore, they never enter into God's rest, because they rest in the world and the satisfaction that the world gives. Others are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Satan spreads his snares for their feet: some base lust, some vile scheme, some covetous plan, some secret plan which he has baited with a bait exactly suitable to their fallen nature, he spreads for their feet; they are entangled, overcome, and become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now they find they cannot believe, because they are shut up in unbelief. The indulgence of sin has hardened their heart, and if there are times and seasons when, like Samson, they try to shake themselves, they find they cannot be anything but what they are. They may repent for a time, make resolutions, and promises, and vows; but they go back, like the dog to its vomit, and like the sow to her wallowing in the mire. Sin is too strong for them, hardens their heart, overcomes their better judgment, and drags them into the commission of it, until there remains no hope for them; and so they come short of rest. The others put away the evil day, think it will all be right with them in the end, are careless, and hardened, and obstinate under the preached word, turn their ears from hearing it, close their eyes from seeing it, harden their heart from feeling it, because there is nothing working or moving in their heart to unsettle them, disturb them, distress them, or remove them from their idols and their rests; and thus they come short of rest. They are saying, "O, I shall live many years to come; I shall not be always what I am now; I know

matters are not with me as they ought to be; there is much in me," they will honestly confess, "which should not be. But I hope it will be better one day. I shall not go on always thus, running headlong to perdition, living in sin and practicing it. I mean to reform, turn over a new leaf, and not go on as before." Perhaps the next thing you hear of this person is, that he has dropped down in an apoplectic fit, been found dead in bed some morning, been deprived of his reason and sent to a lunatic asylum, or perished by his own hands. Thus, while he was promising himself a longer life and space for repentance, hoping that matters would not be so bad with him as he feared they might be, God's patience, longsuffering, and forbearance are all worn out; and as he has preferred sin in the commission of it to self-denial, the fear of God, walking in his fear, and living to his praise; as he has sown to the flesh, so of the flesh he will reap corruption. And there are hundreds and thousands of shining professors who are in this spot, who come short of rest: not as those whom I have been describing, who have doubts and fears and are seeking to have them removed; but who are hardening their hearts through the love of sin, and deceiving and polluting themselves by false hopes. So you see there is ground to fear, and those who fear manifest some marks at least of a tender conscience. They are not altogether hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, not shut up altogether in unbelief, not given over to intemperance and obstinacy; but do manifest something like tenderness, contrition, brokenness, and those marks which attend the work of grace upon the soul. Thus, while I would solemnly warn those who are making a bed too short and a covering too narrow, who fall willingly and wofully short of the promised rest, and harden their heart through the deceitfulness of sin, I would not willingly say a word to wound, distress, or discourage any in whose heart the fear of God is, and who feel that they come short at present of God's rest, and yet can find rest in



nothing else but what God rests in. We have to encourage the weak, the sincere, the humble, the penitent; we have to warn the impenitent, the ungodly, the unbelieving, the hypocritical; we have to draw a line of distinction between the living and the dead, and take forth the precious from the vile, so as to be as God's mouth; and while on the one hand we would "cast up the highway, gather out the stones, and lift up a standard" for God's exercised family, we would show no mercy to those who harden their hearts against God's truth; who love sin better than holiness, and the ways of the world and of nature better than the ways of grace and the paths of righteousness.

I shall leave this to your consideration. The Lord bless it and seal it home with power, authority, unction, and savour upon believing hearts, so that, if it be his will, it may be a word of warning to all.

Note.—The readers of this Sermon may feel interested in knowing that Mr. Philpot remarked afterwards, to a friend, that he preached it with some sweet feeling in his own soul, and that he hoped and believed it would be read with the same.