

Hebrews

Entering Into God's Rest (Part 1)

Hebrews 4:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 4:1-13 (NASB95)

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- A. To Cease from Action or Motion.
- B. To Be Free from Worries and Disturbances.
- C. To be Positionally Established.
- D. To Confidently Put Your Trust in Something.
- E. To Have Something Firm to Lean On.

II. Who Has Access to God's Rest?

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Matthew 7:26-27 (NASB95)

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with our series in the Book of Hebrews and we come to chapter 4. This will be a two-part message where we will consider verses 1 to 13. These first 13 verses are going to reveal to us the subject of entering into God's rest.. Now, I realize that the Book of Hebrews is a book that tests your spiritual courage because it will cause you to seriously consider if your faith is real.

It is like our children. When we feed our children, we do not always give them what they **like**. We sometimes give them what they **need**. So the book of Hebrews will not only give you the things that you may like to hear but it will also give you those things that you need to understand because they are so important to your understanding of the Word of God and to your own Christian life.

Now, as we approach chapter 4, we are right in the middle of a warning that began in chapter 3, verse 7. Now, I told you initially when we began to study the Book of Hebrews that Hebrews is written to believing Christians. However, scattered throughout Hebrews are warnings to unbelievers. Not just any kind of unbelievers but unbelievers who know the truth and have renounced Judaism. They have turned from Judaism but they had not stepped into a real relationship with Christ. They are in great danger because of worldly persecution and social pressure and they are still in love of their own sin. They may still be wondering if this "Jesus thing" is for real. They have not been willing to completely turn their life over to God.

And so periodically throughout the Book of Hebrews, this group is warned not to turn around and go back to Judaism no matter what the pressure but to take that next step. Now, this is a most important subject because there are many people who are in this identical situation, who have maybe begun to turn from their former way of life. They have turned toward Jesus Christ but never made the step of real commitment. They are always in danger of having hardened hearts, turning back, and going back into the former kind of life.

We are in the middle of a warning that is being issued to these uncommitted Jews. It began in chapter 3, verse 7 where we saw Jesus was greater than Moses. And then on the basis of that we saw the warning was that just as those who were disobedient to Moses and hardened their hearts did not escape, how will those who are disobedient to Jesus Christ and harden their hearts against Him escape? And so beginning with verse 7, we saw the seriousness and the tragedy of hanging on too long to make a decision for Jesus Christ.

Now, this gives us a basic introduction to this section. The warning runs from 3:7 through 4:13. So, tonight as we begin chapter 4, we find ourselves right in the middle of this warning to those Jews, and to anybody for that matter, who is sitting on the edge of decision and not making a commitment to Jesus Christ.

The message this morning is primarily for unbelievers who have an intellectual knowledge of the gospel but have not committed themselves to Christ. But it is also for us as believers to be very much aware that we need to be urgent in the presentation of the Gospel and we need to encourage people, like Paul did, to take that step of faith in Jesus Christ in their lives.

Now, we found that in chapter 3, verses 7 to 19, the reason that the first generation of Israelites who were twenty years old or over when they left Egypt never made it to Canaan, except for Joshua and Caleb, was because of their unbelief. Unbelief forfeits rest. The rest referred to here was their failure to enter the land of Canaan. That rest was from the persecution in Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness. It was the rest of finally getting into their own land, not being persecuted, not being pressured, not being killed, and not being made slaves. However, they never entered into that promised rest because of unbelief. That is the basic principle of this whole passage. Nobody experiences God's rest apart from faith. That is the key to entering into rest.

The rest of Canaan pictures a divine spiritual rest that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. It is a picture of **salvation** rest. And that salvation rest, as we shall see in a moment, is still available. But it is only available to those who believe God, who commit themselves in faith to him. God's rest is far greater than Canaan. God has an eternal rest. It is available to you by faith in Jesus Christ. And it takes someone greater than Moses and someone greater than Joshua to make it a reality. And that greater person is Jesus Christ Himself.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 4:1-13 (NASB95)

4 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,"

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; ⁵ and again in this *passage*, "They shall not enter My rest." ⁶ Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

"Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. ⁹ So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 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.

Prayer

In our two-part message, Lord willing, we will answer the following questions.

- 1. What is God's Rest?**
- 2. Who has Access to God's Rest?**
- 3. How Do We Enter Into God's Rest?**
- 4. What is the Nature of God's Rest?**
- 5. What is the Urgency of God's Rest?**

BODY:

I. What is God's Rest?

Now, when we talk about the Rest of God, what are we talking about? There are many different definitions of the word “rest,” in the English language which accurately defines God's rest.

A. To Cease from Action or Motion.

You stop doing what you are doing. The action and the motion is over. It means to stop from labor or exertion. Now, applying that to God's rest, it means no more self-effort. No more trying to please God by your feeble, fleshly works. The moment you enter into God's rest, works cease as a way to **please** God. Our works do not please Him anyway, because you cannot do enough works to be perfect. And so rest, then, involves quitting all legalistic self-activity. It is a rest in free grace from God.

B. To Be Free from Worries and Disturbances.

Some people cannot rest mentally because they are always disturbed by something. Every little thing just pounds away in their brain, and they can never rest because there is always something annoying them. To rest means to be free from whatever hassles you, from whatever disturbs you, from whatever creates worries in your mind. It means, in this sense, to be quiet, to be still, to be peaceful, to be free from guilt and all the things which drive us to neurosis, psychosis, and other mental worries. And so bringing that across to God's rest, we would say that to enter God's rest simply means to be at peace with God. It means to possess the perfect peace that God gives. It means to be free from guilt. It means that there is no need to worry about sin, because sin is forgiven and we are at rest. There is no more anxiety, no more pressure, and no more guilt.

C. To be Positionally Established.

We have a set direction in our life. There is no more shifting around. And we can take this again to God's rest and say that God's rest is the kind of rest where a man is positionally established in Christ. No more running from philosophy to philosophy. No more being blown about by every wind of doctrine. No more floating over to this and floating over to that. He is established. He is rooted. He is grounded, unmovable. That is rest.

D. To Confidently Put Your Trust in Something.

In other words, you rest in something, in the sense of confidence. And to enter God's rest theologically means to enjoy security. No more fear, you have absolute trust and absolute confidence in God's care and charge of your life.

E. To Have Something Firm to Lean On.

To enter into God's rest means that for the rest of your life, you can lean on God. You can lean on Him and be sure that He will always stand firm with His word and promises.

And finally there is a sixth definition of rest that is not defined in the dictionary and that is eternal rest, which is Heaven. So, not only does God take care of you in this life, but He will also take care of us for eternity where man can rest from his works on this earth. That is what God is promising, and that is what He calls rest. But there will be many men who do not enter into that rest, and there is only one reason they do not. And what is that one reason? **Unbelief.**

II. Who Has Access to God's Rest?

Hebrews 4:1 (NASB95)

4 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Here is the word "therefore" once again. What is it referring back to? It is saying that we saw how the Israelites continued to fail to trust God. And because of that unbelief they forfeited their rest in the promised land. The Holy Spirit warns us to not be like them. Examine your life and reverently fear God if you have not fully put your trust in Him. Why? Because when you do not believe God, my friend, you do not enter into His rest, and that is something to be afraid of. The Bible says...

Matthew 10:28 (NASB95)

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

And do you know Who that is referring to? It is God! "**Therefore,**" When you look at the past history of Israel and you see what happened to the people who did not believe God, "**let us**" – do what? "**Fear.**"

Now scripture indicates that a Christian does not need to fear. Jesus said, "**Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**" The only kind of fear a Christian experiences is not a trembling fear but it is a fear that is a respectful awe to the all-powerful God. It is a reverential kind of fear.

2 Timothy 1:7 (CSB)

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

Believers have not been given the spirit of fearfulness, but we **do** need to reverently fear God because He is a righteous judge and He will judge us according to our faith.

Fear. Why? Going back to verse 1: "**If, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.**" You had better be afraid that you might miss God's rest. That is something to be afraid of. It is not a small thing to dillydally

around with the salvation of God. That is something you consider with great fear because God is a God of judgment and He is a consuming fire.

Now notice in verse 1, it says, “**While a promise remains**”. The word means being left behind and remaining. What the Holy Spirit wants those reading the Book of Hebrews to know is that when Israel fell because of unbelief, that did not mean His rest had ended.

Many of the Jews at this time were very fearful that because of what they had done to the Messiah, they had forfeited any possibility of God's rest or salvation. One of the greatest passages in the Bible to prove that God is still working with the Jews is in Acts.

Listen to this. Peter is preaching on the Day of Pentecost and he says...

Acts 3:14 (NASB95)

14 But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

– and he’s really letting the Jews in Jerusalem have it.

Acts 3:15 (NASB95)

15 but put to death the Prince of life, *the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.*

Now, that is a pretty strong indictment. Why would God still offer His rest to anyone who had committed such a terrible crime? Then you go to verse 25 and you read, listen to this, Peter says...

Acts 3:25 (NASB95)

25 It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

So Peter tells them: “Even though you killed the “**Prince of Life**” and you desired a murderer to be released unto you, you are still the sons of the covenant which God made with Abraham. That was an **unconditional** covenant in which God said through you “I will bless the world through your seed, no conditions.” And even when Jesus Christ came out of the grave and supercharged his church, their first direction was right to the Jew. God did not write off Israel.

So the writer of Hebrews can say, rest is still available. That is grace! But he continues, Beware lest “**any one of you may seem to have come short of it.**”. It is available. But beware lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God.

In other words, they were in danger of talking themselves out of their salvation by the fact that it was too late, that their nation had forfeited it, that the Messiah had been killed, and that they certainly by this time had forfeited all rights to rest. And so he says, “Do not get the idea that there is no rest remaining and that somehow you have fallen short of it, or that you have the attitude or the idea that it is too late to enter into that rest. There still remains a rest.” This is God’s “**today**”.

CONCLUSION:

You want to know something, friends? There is still a rest remaining for you this morning. So do not think for one moment that it is too late for you to enter into it.

No matter how sinful your past life has been, the Bible says there is a perfect rest available to you. But this rest is not automatically yours. It is not automatically mine any more than Canaan was unconditional to the Israelites. It is ours by faith in Jesus Christ, **IF we believe.**

Matthew 7:26-27 (NASB95)

26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

You see, there is the man who did not listen and he had a great fall. Jesus says, “Do not miss grace.” There remains a rest. It is still available. Salvation is extended. This is the day of grace.

God’s grace is offered to you this morning. He will forgive your sin, and you can enter into his rest. I do not know if tomorrow will ever come. **But I do know that right now is still God’s "today"!** You can never be too much of a sinner to be saved. The grace of God can cover any sin. His grace is more than you will ever need. There is always more. You see you are never too far gone for God to deal with you. Do not ever think that there is the possibility that you have fallen short. You let God worry about that. If your heart is still tender and if you are still sensitive to what the Spirit of God is saying then now is the time to enter God's rest.

So, when it talks about rest in the Bible, it is talking about a new relationship with God that is available to a man whereby that man can lean on God. That means totally depending on God for support, for help, for power, for everything he needs. It is a new relationship in which a man is confidently secure that he has committed his life to God, and God holds his life in an eternal trust. It is a new relationship that involves being settled and fixed, no more flux, no more floating around. All of a sudden you know whom you have believed, you know why you believe it, and you stand on it. It is a new relationship with God that means we can be free from that which disturbs us. Sin is gone. It is been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore guilt is gone. Therefore we have no reason to worry. We have a reason to be at peace with ourselves and with others since we are at peace with God. It is, then, a new relationship with God that means bringing to an end to works and legalism as a way to please God. That, in total, is what rest is all about.

There will always be some who will not believe God and what He says about rest. It is unbelievable to consider, but it is true, that when God offers a person all of this, he will not believe it. There will even be some who will turn away from the world like the Jews in Hebrews. They will look toward Jesus Christ. They will turn their back to the old patterns, but they will hang onto that edge and will never commit themselves to Christ. And they will find it easier and easier to resist. Then one day their "today" will become "tomorrow" and they will find that they have an evil heart of unbelief and they have departed from the Living God. And so the warning of the Spirit of God is “Harden not your hearts. Do not be like unbelieving Israel and miss God’s perfect rest.”

“Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

What A Day That Will Be.