

Hebrews

Entering Into God's Rest (Part 2)

Hebrews 4:1-5

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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 is the second of a three part series 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 have to 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 today, who have maybe begun to turn from their former way of life but have 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. 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. You may receive a hardened heart by which it will be impossible to return. Unbelief forfeits rest.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 4:1-5 (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.”

Prayer

Now, with that as an introduction. I want you to see the sermon. In our three-part message, Lord willing, we will answer the following questions. The covered the first two last week.

1. What is God's Rest?

2. Who has Access to God's Rest?

This morning we will cover part of the third question and hopefully finish next Sunday.

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. The Basis of Rest. How do We Enter Into Gods' Rest?

The second point, the basis of rest. Not only the availability, but the basis, verse 2 to 7. You may ask, "So if God's rest is available to me, how do I get it?" There are three principles involved: Personal Faith, Sovereign Decree, and Immediate Action. We will only have time to cover Personal Faith this morning but will touch on Sovereign Decree to help you understand.

A. Personal Faith.

First of all God's rest is available by personal faith. This is from **our** standpoint.

Hebrews 4:2 (NASB)

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 - What? - faith in those who heard.

It does not do a bit of good to hear if you do not believe. That is the whole point. The good news of God's rest does not mean anything to anybody at anytime unless it is mixed with faith. And some people have the mistaken idea that they can become a faithful Christian by entering the church. They consider it as sort of a process of osmosis. Hearing the Gospel, knowing the Gospel, being able to recite the Gospel does not mean anything unless you believe it with your whole heart. That is the point.

Israel heard the good news of salvation rest by faith. Israel had heard it all along. They heard it as far back as Exodus.

Exodus 6:6-8 (NASB95)

⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who

brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *for* a possession; I am the Lord.”

They knew what it was. They knew the good news of believing God. And we know it today. But it did not do them any good because it was not mixed with faith, they did not believe it.

In Numbers chapter 14, it tells us that the children of Israel came to the borders of the Promised Land and sent 12 spies into the land. Ten of them came back with the "**grasshopper complex**", and said, "We cannot fight against those people, it is filled with giants. We are like grasshoppers. We have to get out of here." But God had said, "Do not worry about it. I will handle it." But they did not believe God. Two of them came back. Joshua and Caleb said, "No problem, Lord. Let's go." The people listened to the advice of the cowards and therefore were doomed to wander till their carcasses dropped in the wilderness and they never entered the Promised Land. That is what happens to people who do not believe. They will not experience God's rest.

It is just as simple as that. Rest is available by faith from our standpoint. Now, I want you to just catch a little thought here that is very important. In **verse 2**, it says, "**For indeed we have had good news preached to us,**" and there is a very interesting construction here in the Greek that indicates to us this is a completed work. In other words, they heard the good news totally. They knew it from front to back, and there was no excuse for their unbelief.

Now, you see, this is an important message for the Jew because the Jews prided themselves on the fact that they had the information. They figured all they had to do is have the law, and I am in. I do not have to worry about obeying as long as I possess it. Which is ridiculous.

Romans 2:25 (NASB95)

²⁵ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

The Jew would say, "Well, we are in Abraham's lineage and we are circumcised! That should get us automatically in! But Paul says, "**your circumcision is of value if you - What? - "practice the law"**."

ILLUSTRATION:

It is like a cop pulling you over to the side of the road and he says, "You just went through three red lights and you were speeding."

And you say, "I'm sorry, officer. You cannot give me a ticket because I own a copy of the Missouri Driver's Guide on how to drive. I have got all the information, therefore I am exempt from receiving a ticket.

And the officer will say, **Really?** I am here to tell you that it makes you all the more responsible.

Paul says it does not mean anything if you do not obey the law of God. Some people say, "Well, I have been baptized and I go to church doesn't that mean anything"? Going to church does **not** make you a Christian any more than being in a garage makes you a car.

That has nothing to do with it. The whole issue is not activity. It is faith. And unless the intellectual knowledge that you have is mixed with faith, it profits you nothing. And you need to beware because you may come short of God's rest. But when somebody hears the word of God and believes it and acts upon it, then they are saved.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 (NASB95)

⁹ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Then in verse 13, he says,

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB95)

¹³ For this reason we also constantly thank God...

Why was Paul so grateful?

that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God,*

And listen to this...*which also performs its work in you who **believe**.*

You see? The thing that Paul was happy about was not that they had heard it but that it had begun to work in them because they did what? They believed.

Hebrews 4:3a (NASB95)

³ For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

We, who have believed, have entered into God's rest. We come into salvation experience by faith. The verse does not say, "We are on the path to rest." It says, "We are in it!" It is a positive current condition. We who believe **are** in rest.

Then he says on the negative side, quoting once again from Psalm 95...

Hebrews 4:3b (NASB95)

"As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

You see, when you are dealing with God's attitude toward those who are unbelieving, you are dealing with His "**Wrath**" And that is a position you do not want to be in. This verse simply tells us that we who believe enter into rest. They who do not believe fall prey to the wrath of God and forfeit rest eternally.

And I want to give you just a little thought here. It says, "My rest." This is God's rest. God's own rest. And God's rest is not a rest of weariness or inactivity but a rest of a finished work. God has finished His work. God has done it all, and if you want to enter into the finished work of God, it is available by faith.

Hebrews 4:4 (NASB95)

⁴ For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";

God said, "It is finished, and I have made a wonderful world for man. I have placed him in the Garden of Eden and I have given him a wife, and now everything is set. And I am going to let him enjoy his relationship with me." And Adam was walking and talking with God. He was at rest. He was in God's rest. He leaned on God. He had no anxieties. He had no worries. He had complete freedom and fellowship with God. He was living in God's rest.

God's rest began right after the sixth day of creation. God was infinitely satisfied and He rested, and He said, "Now Adam,, you can enter into my rest. I have made you a perfect and lovely world. It will serve your needs. You are going to enjoy our fellowship from here on out. You are going to enjoy my rest."

But there was only one condition. And what is always the condition for God's rest? One word; what is it? **Believe**. What happened? Did Adam and Eve believe God or did they believe Satan? They believed Satan's lies, didn't they? Satan came down and started questioning the Word of God, and pretty soon Eve thought, "Hmm, I don't know about this. It sure looks good. I would like to be smart like that too and know good and evil." And Satan kept working on her, and she disobeyed. And what happened? Immediately, unbelief forfeited what? Rest.

Genesis 3:16-19 (NASB95)

¹⁶ To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you; In **toil** you will eat of it All the days of your life.

¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

And you know what happened, Adam was restless. No longer did he walk and talk in the cool of the day. He started making clothes and hiding behind trees, didn't he? Sneaking around with Eve, trying to stay out of the sight of God. You see what happened immediately, unbelief brought the forfeiting of rest and it was over with. The earth no longer freely provided for his needs. He was now going to have to toil for his food. And God's great rest that he had provided for His creation, man, was lost. And from that moment on, God did what He could to try to get man back into His rest.

Now, God had to do one other thing to make it available to man, and what was that? He had to find a way to remove sin from man. He sent His son, Jesus Christ, to take care of the sin issue.

John 3:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Because of the death of Christ on the cross, men may enter back into God's rest. And even the people who lived before Jesus were saved on the basis of what God was going to do in Christ, right? We who were saved on this side of the Cross are saved on the basis of what God has done in Christ. But Christ bore sins, past and future. So, through Jesus

Christ, God's rest still continues, and men may still enter into His rest while it is still "today".

So God finished His perfect work, and man blew it. And man became restless because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4:5 (NASB95)

⁵ and again in this *passage*, "They shall not enter My rest."

Here the author of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 95 once again.– "They shall not enter My rest." God says, "Because of unbelief, man cannot enter." God provided a rest on the seventh day, and it has been going on ever since, and the only people who ever enter into it are those who believe.

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.**

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.

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.