

REST!!!

It is VERY significant that of all the one word descriptions that could be used to describe our relationship with God, the word chosen is REST. Real faith in Christ, brings us into a place of deep and profound rest. The one word that could describe the world is restlessness! All around there is conflict, frustration, division, hatred, turmoil and fighting among people and nations. But God offers us REST!

The word “rest” may have some negative connotations such as laziness, or doing nothing, maybe even being bored! But that is certainly not what it is meant to communicate here!

Rest in Hebrews 4 is simply a way of describing all the blessings and benefits of salvation available through Jesus. This rest is the life Christ died to bring us into. It is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is peace with God, and the peace of God in our hearts. It is the love of God poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It is the rest for our souls that Jesus offers those who come to him. It is the rest of knowing that Christ has paid our debt in full, and that we must no longer labor and strive to gain our acceptance with God. It is the peace of being freed from the misery, the guilt, and the burden of our sins. It is the sense of well-being that comes from knowing that we are in God’s hands and we are under his loving care, and that ALL things will turn out for our good. It is the rest of knowing we will spend a glorious and happy eternity with God.

*In this passage...Rest is defined as “God’s rest”. God calls it “MY rest”. “They shall never enter “my rest”. And in verse 10 “for whoever has entered “God's rest” has also rested from his works as God did from his”. So it is a rest, that comes directly from God. As we draw near to God we find rest for our souls IN HIM. It is not rest from Yoga or meditation or anything like that. It is rest in God.

It is God’s rest, because, God himself is at rest! Verse 4 “God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” After God created the heavens and the earth, he rested. God’s rest on the seventh day of creation, is viewed as continuing on through history and still remains today. Verse 9 “So then, there REMAINS a Sabbath rest for the people of God”. The promise of rest remains for us today, BECAUSE God himself is STILL at rest TODAY. There is no turmoil, or fretting in God. There is no burdensome labor, or stress or striving in God. He is the God of peace. So we are invited to enter his peace, his calm, his rest.

There is an old hymn that proclaims, “There is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God!”. There is a place of comfort sweet near to the heart of God. A place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, near to the heart of God, A place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.”

Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee”. There is a kind of burden that all human beings carry, a sense of restlessness and weariness about life apart from God. There is the weight of our sins, and the misery of our sins. There is pain and disappointments. We keenly feel our own brokenness. We have

a desire for something more. But all that we need to save us, and fix us, and heal us, and satisfy us, is found in God himself.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” A Christianity that is like a heavy weight you carry around is not what Jesus offered! If your understanding of the Christian life is that it is one massive burden, you are mistaken in your understanding of the gospel, and of Jesus.

Verse 9 says, “for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. The Christian life is not basically working for something or towards something, it is entering into something God has already done FOR us. And we enter by resting from our own works and instead we rest in the work of Christ FOR us! We receive all that we need for salvation AS A GIFT. We receive the Holy Spirit AS A GIFT!

We also find inward rest because we have come back to God for whom we were made. We have come into alignment with the purpose for which we were made. This brings inner rest.

This rest gives us a freedom and strength to go live our lives. Isaiah 30:15 says, “For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” Rest and quietness and trust leads to strength! The strongest person in the room isn't the one who is all agitated and worked up, it is the person who has entered God's rest!

We live and we work FROM a place of rest in God. We get things done from a place of peace with God. You can accomplish much more in a state of inner rest and peace, than you can in a state of turmoil, stress, anger and anxiety.

The rest that Joshua was to lead the Israelites into is also a picture of this rest. They were to live in the land of Canaan in peace and abundance and have rest from their enemies.

God said, It is “a land flowing with milk and honey”, “It is a land the Lord your God cares for, the eyes of the Lord are continually on it from the beginning of the year to it’s end”. I will send rain both the autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied” The Lord will drive out all these nations before you and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours. No man will be able to stand against you”. “There in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you”. Deuteronomy 11 and 12:10 “You will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you REST from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety”.

These promises to the Israelites help us understand something of God’s passionate desire to do good to us with all his heart. But this literal promised land of Canaan was only a foreshadowing of the much greater spiritual REST God promises us through Jesus.

I trust that by the help of the Holy Spirit I have helped you to see God's rest as a great thing! If I haven't made this something you really want, and desperately need, then I have failed to communicate what it is!

FIRST point of passage. *This promised place of rest in God is available to you right now! Verse 1 "the promise of entering his rest STILL stands". GOD WANTS YOU TO ENJOY HIS REST TODAY! No matter how much inner turmoil you feel, no matter how troubled your heart might be, no matter how much confusion or condemnation is weighing upon you... You can actually begin to live your life in this land of promise, in this spiritual state of life, today!

God is the God of today! The power and presence and peace of God was not just for the saints of old! It was not just for Moses and Joshua and people with them. The wonders of God was not just for the apostles or the New Testament church. God's rest and ALL that means is available to us today. You are not living at the wrong time in history, or in the wrong place to experience the promises of God!

Barclay's commentary said, "never think that the days of great promise and great achievement lie behind. This is still God's 'today.' There is a blessedness for you as great as the blessedness of the saints;"

Here is the scriptural logic used to make this point. Verse 6, "Those who formerly received the good news (IE the Jews in the wilderness) failed to enter because of disobedience, (BUT) AGAIN he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the

words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

God had offered the promise of rest in the land of Canaan in the time of Joshua (about 1400 BC). But 400 hundred years LATER (“so long afterward”), the Holy Spirit spoke, through David, in Psalm 95, and AGAIN invited them to enter God’s rest. That means the promise of rest was not a once and done sort of thing. It was an ongoing promise!

Verse 8 “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on”. If Joshua leading Israel into the land of Canaan was the full complete final plan of God for his people, then he would not still be offering a place of rest for his people....BUT HE IS! The land of Canaan was a place of blessing but only a foreshadowing at most of the massive rest and blessing found in Jesus. And God still offers that “REST” today. Verse 9 “So then, there REMAINS a Sabbath rest for the people of God”!

It is there for you today! Do not dismiss the possibility that you can live every hour in God’s rest and peace. Maybe the state of your heart has been more turmoil and anxiety, that does not need to continue! The promise remains!

*SECOND: God’s rest is such a grand thing, that we should be afraid of missing it. Verse 1 “Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.” Don’t miss out on it like the people in the wilderness did! The author has a strong desire that not one single person he was writing to would fail to experience and possess this

rest! And we want every single person here, young person, old person, to reach all that God has prepared for you.

And fear of missing all that God has for you, can help you enter all God has for you! Several years ago we went on a trip called The Footsteps of Paul with a Bible Teach named Lon Solomon. Each day we would get on a bus to see the wonderful ancient sights. On the first night of the trip Lon made an announcement urging everyone to be on time to get on the bus. “We love you but we will leave you!”. And he meant it. That announcement put a level of fear in us to get up, and get ready and be on the bus when it was supposed to leave! It was a protective fear! It was a fear that kept us from missing out on seeing Ephesus, or Philippi or some other incredible sight!

Verse 6 says “...those who formerly received the good news failed to enter”..... They did not fear; they did not take God seriously!

God’s people in the wilderness would not place their confidence in God to bring them into the land. They chose to believe their fears, instead of God. They said, “We CANNOT take that land”. That unbelief resulted disobedience. And at some point that offer from God was no longer available to them! God had been saying, Come and enter all that I have for you. But there came a point where God said, I swore in my anger that they shall NOT enter”.

The logic of this passage is that there is a similar danger today of missing out!! We have good news preached to us too just as they did! Be afraid of missing this great salvation! There is a point where the bus leaves! Let this fear be a protection to you to get on the bus. Let this fear be a protection to you to lead you into the full experience of God’s salvation, his rest!

THIRD: *We enter God’s promised rest through believing. “2For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” 3For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said...” About half of translations say something like “the message they heard did not profit them BECAUSE THEY DID NOT MIX IT WITH FAITH”. The ESV communicates the idea that they did not unite by faith with those who did listen and obey. Either way the point clearly is that the pathway of salvation, the KEY TO THIS REST, is responding to what we hear with faith! The pathway to everything we receive from God is mixing what we hear with faith.

Andrew Murray said, “We have in scripture the most precious assurances of rest of the soul to be found under the yoke of Jesus, of a peace of God which passes all understanding, of a peace and a joy in the soul which nothing can take away. But when they are not believed they cannot be enjoyed.”

One commentary said, “But the word which they heard was no good to them, because it did not become woven into the very fiber of their being through faith.” There are many kinds of hearing, indifferent hearing, skeptical hearing, hearing that goes in one ear and out the other, or hearing only to gain information. But that is never the kind of hearing God requires of us. The message we say we believe, must be actually believed, and acted upon.

We are to hear and then stake our lives on it. We are to hear and risk our reputation. We are to hear and risk our future and our

friendships on it. We venture everything on the message of Jesus. We experience this rest now, in the measure that we believe!

The way to enter God's rest, and all that that means, is NOT hearing, not knowing, not reading, but hearing and attaching our faith to what we have heard. Faith is the NECESSARY ingredient! Jesus said, Your faith has made you well! And "Be it done to you according to your faith". I know those statements can be distorted but Jesus said them for a reason. And that reason was to dramatically make the SAME point the author of Hebrews is making! Without faith it is impossible to please God! Without faith it is impossible to get anything from God. Without faith it is impossible to enter God's rest!

If you are not enjoying the rest of God at this season in your life, if your soul is NOT at rest, if quietness and rest and confidence is not your experience, if you are not enjoying your salvation, the missing ingredient is TO ACTUALLY BELIEVE GOD! Not to just say that you trust God, but to really trust God. Come out of the oppression and burden, and the shadow of unbelief and believe God! Believe in the work of Christ to save you. Believe in the promise of the Holy Spirit to fill you! Believe in God's good and loving care over your life! BELIEVE AND ENTER! Believe and enter God's rest!!

One of the most important things you have to do everyday is to believe God! Have confidence in Jesus! Boast in him! Boast in the cross and all that Jesus accomplished for you there. Boast in him who took away all your sins and guilt and condemnation, Boast in him who opened the way for you into God's very presence, and

granted you favor and acceptance and adoption as God's son or daughter. Boast in his presence with you now, by the Holy Spirit. Boast in his power to help you today. Boast in his loving care! Boldly and confidently say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I lack nothing! Even though I walk through a valley of deep darkness, I will not be afraid. For you are with me!! My cup overflows!!

That kind of thinking and speaking is nothing more than mixing the promises of God with faith. You will never live in much consistent joy till you do that!! Have faith in God and you will enter his rest!

FOURTH *Strive to enter rest! **11** Let us therefore strive to enter that rest". This may sound like a contradiction. Strive towards rest!! Andrew Murray said, "Faith by it's very nature is resting in the promise and the Promiser." So this is striving to BE in a state of belief! Verse 3 "For we who have BELIEVED enter that rest"!

There is nothing passive about believing God! It is very dangerous to say, "I guess I do believe, or I think I believe God, or I hope I believe". We actively, latch hold of the promise of God. Faith is tenacious. We trust Jesus, we place full confidence in Jesus, we boast in Jesus, we cling to Jesus. We fix our eyes on Jesus. Believe God aggressively! And the result of that is we enter God's rest!