

## **A Study of the Book of Hebrews**

### ***Jesus is Better***

#### **Sermon # 7**

#### **“Entering Into Rest!”**

#### **Hebrews 4:1-11**

*According to Charles Swindoll, “Two of the top prescribed medications in America are Valium and Tagamet. The former is a muscle relaxant to help people deal with stress. The latter stops the flow of hydro-chloric acid to ease a churning stomach plagued with ulcers. If pharmaceuticals are any barometer to where our culture is at emotionally, we’re the most uptight, stressed-out, anxiety-ridden culture on the face of the earth. Why?*

*Because we’ve never learned how to rest. Probably because we’ve never under-stood what it really means to rest. We tend to equate rest with sleeping in on a rainy morning...with basking on the beach, while pouring sunscreen and poring over a best-seller... with an afternoon snooze on the couch to the soothing TV background music of marching bands and half-time activities.*

*But the “rest” that Hebrews describes is quite different. We don’t have to take off work to obtain it. Nor do we need to drive to the beach. Or spend any money. It is available all day, every day. And it’s as close as a prayer!”* [Charles Swindoll. *The Preeminent Person of Christ. A Study of Hebrews 1-10.* (Fullerton, Calif.: Insight for Living, 1989) p. 64]

The people of Israel were so close to entering into God’s rest, they literally stood on the banks of the Jordan looking over into the Promised Land. It was not that they did not understand what God had

promised. They just would not believe God. Instead of being filled with faith, they became filled with fear and they did not enter in!

Just as the land of promise stood before the children of Israel so the promise of God's rest stand before us, but entering in is not automatic.

This morning I want to share with you the ABC's of Rest.

First, The Availability of Rest (v. 1)

*"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, ??let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it."*

What is this rest that is being offered?

The word "rest" translates a compound word (*kata + pausis*) and means "to cease, or to stop something." Applied to God's rest, it means no more self-labor as far as salvation is concerned. It means the end of trying to please God by our own feeble efforts. God's perfect rest is a rest in free grace.

The Canaan rest for Israel became an illustration of the spiritual rest available to Christians. This rest is seen in two aspects.

First, when we come to Christ by faith we find salvation rest. It is what Jesus was talking about when he said in Matt 11:28, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* It is the rest of knowing that your sins are forgiven, that the load of your guilt has been lifted and that you have a home in heaven. It is the consciousness that you now belong to Christ!

Secondly, when we yield to Christ and learn to obey Him and submit ourselves completely to Him we enjoy submission rest (11:29-30). The first is *"peace with God"* (Romans 5:1) the second is the

*"peace of God" (Phil 4:6-8). "It is by believing that we enter into rest and it by obeying God by faith and surrendering to His will that His rest enters us!"* (Warren Wiersbe. *Be Confident*. (Wheaton, Victor Books, 1982) p. 43)

No more shifting from one thing to another and never finding satisfaction in anything.

Not only the Availability of Rest but...

Secondly, The Basis of Rest (vv. 2-7)

There are two obligations that we must understand if we are to obtain this promised rest.

- It Requires Faith

Verse two tells us, *"For indeed the gospel (literally good news) was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."* Although the good news about God's rest was preached to Israel it did not do them any good because they failed to believe it. Just as those who have yet to come to real faith in Christ may be associated with the church in some way but have never really committed themselves to Christ.

But the Apostle Paul defines saving faith in 1 Thess 2:13, *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."*

Verse three continues with, *"For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' "although the works were finished from the foundation*

*of the world. (4) For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";*

What is being referred to in these verse is Gen 2:2 which says, *"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done"*

All the other verses dealing with each day in the creation story end with *"and the morning and the evening were the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, 4<sup>th</sup> day etc."* The fact that there is no morning and evening statement ending the seventh day is suggestive that the seventh day, God's Sabbath, still continues. God's rest began with the completion of the cosmos and continues on and on – and is thus still available to his children today.

*"There is a place of quiet rest  
Near to the heart of God  
A place where sin cannot molest,  
Next to the heart of God."*

- It Requires Action (v. 7)

He gives additional information about the important of the timing of obedience when he says in verse seven, *"again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."*

This verse points to the truth that God has set a limit on His offer of rest. It will not always be available. But as long as the heart is sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying, as long as one can hear

God's call then it is time to be saved. God's rest is still available. Only God knows how long that is for each person. Today, right now, is the only day is the only opportunity that we can be sure of!

A truth that needs to be recognized is that – *“Delay hardens the heart, especially when we are fully aware that we have heard the voice of God in the inner soul. Every shrug of the shoulder that put off action on God's urging for change, every toss of the head that says, 'I know I should, but I don't care,' every attempt at outward conformity without inner commitment produces a hardening of the heart that make repentance harder and harder to do.*

*There is a line, by us unseen,*

*That crosses every path.*

*The hidden boundary between*

*God's patience and His wrath.”*

[Ray Stedman. Hebrews. “The IVP New Testament Commentary Series.” (Downer's Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity Press, 1992) p. 57]

Not only the basis of rest but ...

Third, The Character of Rest (vv. 8-10)

*“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. (9) There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. (10) For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.”*

In verse nine it literally says, *“there remains therefore a Sabbath rest.”* This special word (*sabbatismos*) for God's special rest is found nowhere else in the Bible. It is a word that paints a beautiful picture. It is the picture of a farmer who comes in after a hard day and he takes off his dusty shoes and lies down to rest. It is also the

picture of a traveler who completes his lengthy journey and finally has a chance to rest. God has his own Sabbath rest for his own true people. Hebrews 4:10 anticipates the final day when we cease from all effort and as promised by John in the book of Revelation enter into the presence of Jesus - (14:13) - "*... that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.*" But the rest of God is not cessation from activity but rather peace within the toil. The ability to rest while in the middle of life's continuation is an indication of a maturing child of God. Rest then is being at His place, abiding by His timing, doing what He has planned, and depending on His strength and His resources. The thought here (v. 10) is of completeness.

Not only the nature of rest but...

Fourth, The Demand of Rest (v. 11)

*"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."*

The word translated "be diligent" (*spoudazzo*) means "to make haste" or "to work diligently." Some translations of this verse are "make every effort to enter that rest." But whether it is "Giving effort" or "be diligent" it does not mean we need to try harder and harder and get busier and busier doing more and more so that we can somehow EARN our rest. God's rest comes by simply faith in the finished work of Christ. Learning to function from a position of rest is the secret to avoiding burnout in the ministry. We are to be as the Apostle Paul terms it "*co-laborers with God.*"

John Philips gives us a good illustration of what this means. "*A man is swept out to sea on a homemade raft. Under pressure of wind*

*and wave, it give every indication of instant dissolution. The man on board struggles desperately just to keep the raft afloat. His paddle used repeatedly against the pounding waves, does nothing to bring him any nearer the shore.*

*He looks up from his labors and sees a ship has come alongside. The crew throws him a line and invites him to come on board. He at once abandoned his own efforts to save himself and accept the salvation now offered him. He is saved! He paces the deck of the great ship with solid planking beneath his feet and massive engines driving that vessel on its way. His standing is now secure.*

*He is taken to the captain who says, 'Welcome aboard, friend.' After some conversation, the captain continues, 'And now we would like your help. We are shorthanded. The cook could sure use some help in the galley. Would you be willing to help?' That has to do with his state. His salvation is sure. Nobody is going to pitch him back overboard if he refuses to help. But his gratitude is such that he is only too willing to help get the necessary work done. Helping out on board has nothing to do with his salvation. He can rest in that even though a hundred tasks beckon to him now that he is saved."* [John

Philips. Exploring Hebrews. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bro., 1988) p. 59]