

## **Real Rest For The Christian**

### **Hebrews 4:1-13**

#### **Introduction**

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ. Yet there were some willing to abandon Christ. The writer of Hebrews reminds us at the core of unbelief is an evil heart that neglects God's Word.

The writer expands and enlarges on the theme of rest begun in chapter 3:11.

The word 'rest' is used several different ways in this section.

1. God's Sabbath Rest spoken of in Genesis 2:2 (Hebrews 4:4).
2. Canaan, the rest for Israel after 40 years of wandering (3:11).
3. The Believer's present rest in Christ (4:3; 10).
4. The Overcomer's present rest in victory (4:11).
5. The future eternal rest in heaven (4:9).

Wiersbe: "God's Sabbath rest is a type of our present rest of salvation, following the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is also a picture of the "eternal Sabbath" of glory. Israel's Canaan rest is similar to the life of victory and blessing we gain as we walk by faith and claim our inheritance in Christ" (*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines of the New Testament*; p.684).

#### **The Warning: Do Not Fail To Enter God's Rest (v.1)**

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

The Lord God promised a rest to the children of Israel after their release from Egypt. The children of Israel failed to enter that rest because of persistent rebellion and unrepentant unbelief.

The writer wants the reader to know that there is still a rest available; a rest that must not be ignored or rejected. The writer gives us a powerful warning!

What is that rest? Peace in suffering and trial; victory in what looks like impossible situations. The writer will use metaphors throughout the book of Hebrews; this rest in our spiritual Canaan is called "going on to perfection (or maturity)" in chapter 6:1; "the full assurance of hope" (in 6:11) "inheriting the promises" (6:12).

Some are troubled by the expression "let us fear".

Saint Gregory of Nyssa is credited with saying; "True perfection consists . . .in having but one fear, the loss of God's friendship."

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### **Hebrews 4:1-13**

Remember the Hebrew Christians were going through a time of trial, a time of testing, to determine what was really in their hearts.

Perhaps you are going through a time of trial, a time of testing (10:32-39; 12:3-14; 13:13), and you will meet that trial and testing with faith or unbelief. With courage and confidence or doubt and fear and panic.

The Hebrew Christians were being tested and wondered if they should go back to Judaism (the Old Life).

### **Real Reasons To Rest (vv. 2-11)**

*Hebrews 4:2–10 (NKJV)* *2For indeed the gospel 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.*

The Lord offers freedom, a rest of victory in Christ; but they were in danger of falling short. God had given Him His Word but they would not “mix it with faith” (4:2) and apply it to their lives. Once again we are reminded of the absolute role the Word of God plays in the life of the believer.

Let’s see if we can discern the writer’s train of thought or argument. God promised a rest for His people (Israel; v.1). The people failed to enter the rest (see v.6). The promise still stands, because Joshua (v.8) did not give them this spiritual rest, even though Joshua led them into the physical land (see Joshua 23:1). Otherwise David would never have spoken of this rest hundreds of years later in Psalm 95. Conclusion—“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (v.9). The writer relates the rest to the Sabbath rest (v.4;10). The writer is not speaking or writing or exhorting Christians to keep the Sabbath Day—but rather to experience the Sabbath Rest—the rest of satisfaction in Christ. This is not a rest after a hard’s days or hard week’s work; this is the rest that comes in complete satisfaction in Christ. This is the Sabbath of the Soul; this is the rest Jesus promises in Matthew 11:28-30.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

The rest in Matthew 11:28-30 is the rest of salvation! This is a gift we receive by faith. The rest is a rest we experience as we take the yoke of Jesus and surrender to Him. Now we understand the warning (v.1)—many of God’s children have failed to enter this life of rest and victory.

*What are the reasons to rest?*

The Gospel has been preached—a gospel of deliverance and salvation (both to them and us). The Lord sent the message—there is no excuse to ignore the message or reject the message.

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“. . .but the Word which they heard did not profit them"! Why? Because Israel did not mix the Word with faith. We cannot be hearers only! We must hear and apply that Word to our lives. The children of Israel rejected the promise of God's Word that promised a rest to the soul of the believer!

Our responsibility to believe is far greater than the children of Israel. They had Moses and the Law. They had the miracles and the mighty acts of deliverance. But we have Jesus Christ. The One greater than Moses. No wonder the writer of Hebrews has said (3:12) "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God".

*3For 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.*

What does the writer mean? Believers enter that rest. Unbelievers do not enter that rest.

What has God sworn? The unbeliever will not enter that rest. The unbeliever is without hope. The unbeliever has only trial and suffering and emptiness and loneliness, accident and disease, temptation and death!

There is no peace or deliverance or salvation or new day or second chance for the unbeliever. John 3:18; "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

*4For 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";*

*5and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."*

The very fact that they did not enter into God's rest means the rest exists.

The fact that there was a rest for God after creation proves a rest for that Creation. The Lord created all things. The Lord experienced a profound satisfaction over its completion. We can experience satisfaction and joy. There is a rest and pleasure in this life!

*6Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,*

The writer uses God's promise—of the Promised Land—(Canaan Rest) as proof for a real rest for the people of God. Think what is being said—the fact of God's rest—the promise of God's rest—means that some must enter that rest. God's promise and rest must not simply exist—absent real human beings to take advantage of that promise and that rest. Some must enter the Canaan rest of heaven! It might as well be you!

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Some did not enter—they heard the promise—they heard ‘preaching’—they heard and ignored the message—and chose to disobey!

Their disobedience was evidence of their unbelief—and their unbelief—caused them to walk in disobedience.

*7* 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.”

Hundreds of years later the Lord causes David to write (Psalm 95:7-8); “For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: (8) “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, And in the day of trial in the wilderness, (9) When your fathers tested Me; they proved Me, though they saw My work.”

What is the writer saying? The rest existed in David’s day! Did the children of Israel occupy the land in David’s day? The answer is yes! Was the occupation of that land the rest? No! God’s rest is spiritual and eternal—does such a rest still remain?

*8* For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

The writer argues that if Joshua had in fact brought them to the place of rest—the Holy Spirit would not have spoken of ‘another day’. Psalm 94:7-11; “Yet they say, “The Lord does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob understand.” (8) Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? (9) He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? (10) He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? (11) The Lord knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.”

In Psalm 95 the Lord speaks of another rest—still available. Did Joshua provide rest? The answer is some rest—but not a complete rest. God’s rest is spiritual and eternal—and God provides a confidence and peace in this life—and the life to come. There remains—therefore a rest that belongs to the people of God (v.10).

*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.

What does this mean? Does the verse apply to man who enters the rest found in Christ—can this mean that when a person comes to Christ trials and temptations end? We know that trials and temptations continue in this life—but we also know that we are given the tools and the resources to conquer trial and triumph over temptations!

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What is the writer trying to prove? There is a rest for God's people. There is no greater proof of that rest than the triumph of Jesus over death and His glorious resurrection from the dead. Jesus accomplished the work of salvation and redemption—and entered His rest. Jesus enters His rest. Jesus is in Heaven. Jesus entered His rest. God ceased his words in Creation!

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

Once again we are warned. We can come short of God's rest. How does that happen? We fall back into the old patterns of unbelief and disobedience!

The writer says, "Let us therefore be diligent". In Hebrews—there is plenty of meat—and a just enough 'Let-Us'. The expression "be diligent" translates the Greek word *spoudazzo*—*labor—to endeavor, to give all diligence, be zealous, strive eagerly, exert one's self, and make haste.*

Work hard at resting!

There is no place for lethargy or laziness or apathy or complacency. Except of course—for the multitude of excuses we manufacture to remain ignorant of God's rest and absent God's work!

Remember Israel's experience. They would labor for a while. They would walk for a while. They would believe for a while. They would serve for a while. They would make a little progress and then fall back. Diligence and consistency and faithfulness requires real work.

Luke 13:24; "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able."

Where's the gate? How do I get to the gate? How do I pass through the gate?

Jesus is our rest. Jesus is the narrow gate.

### **The Word: The Secret Of Entering God's Rest (vv.12-13)**

*12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

There are at least seven things said or implied in this verse about the Word of God.

1. The Word of God is Divine in its source. This is why it is called The Word of God.

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2. The Word of God is *Living* in its nature. This is why it is called ‘quick’ or living.
3. The Word of God is *Powerful in its working*.
4. The Word of God is Cutting or Keen in its operation.
5. The Word of God is Minute or dividing in what it separates.
6. The Word of God is Critical in its analysis; thus its ability to discern thoughts and intents.
7. The Word of God is Double in its construction able to cut multiple ways.

The Power of God is found in His Word. It exposes all thoughts and desires and no creature is immune from its power to expose, reveal and transform.

The prophet Isaiah (49:2) knew all about this; “And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me.” Isaiah likens His words to a sharp sword, and polished arrows—fabricated in such a way to hit their targets. The Word of God is a piercing sword (Eph. 6:17); it reminds us that we are made by God, that we are God’s creation; and that God can discern our thoughts and intentions. The Word of God is a mirror—that reflects our life (James 1:22-25); a burning fire of conviction (Jeremiah 23:29) that burns and consumes our conscience. The Word of God is pounding hammer which crushes the hardest heart (Jeremiah 23:29). The Word of God is a reproducing seed that takes hold and produces new life and a new birth. We are born again by hearing and believing the Word of God (Matt. 4:4). The Word of God is nourishing food for the believer; a guiding light and cleansing water and a measuring rod—whereby we receive the approval of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

But you won’t study it or believe it or make it the priority of your life. Because your heart is hard. You can feel the cut, you flinch against the pounding hammer; the burning sensation that exposes the raw rebellion!

*13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

God sees everything. All things are naked and open. The Lord knows if you believe Him. The Lord knows if you have received Him. The Lord knows the true and false profession and confession. “And not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open and exposed, naked and defenseless to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do” (Amplified NT). “If I sin then you mark me, and you will not acquit me from mine iniquity” (Job 10:14).

“For God shall bring every into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc. 12:14).

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The Bible speaks of a future day of reckoning; an unavoidable Day of Judgment. All human beings are subject to God.

The writer invites the reader to leave unbelief behind; leave doubt behind; leave disobedience behind; and walk forward in victory and peace and rest.

Since Jesus will honestly judge everything in your life—why not make Him Savior? Why not confess sin and forsake it? Why not walk with Jesus in consistent abundant life?

### **Conclusion**

Why not chose rest? A rest promised by the Gospel. The answer to fear and failure is faith! The world is at war with God. This wretched world attempts a false peace and fake comfort.

The Creation and Canaan were shadows that pictured the perfect rest; Christ. Today God rests in Christ's finished work and so why would you chose any other labor?

Chose Calvary rest. The rest that Jesus shouted in His final breath; "It is finished" (John 19:30).

John Phillips tells the story of a missionary in Africa who offered a ride in the back of his pickup truck to a national who was walking along the road struggling underneath the weight of a heavy burden. The African gladly accepted the ride—and after a few miles the missionary noticed the African still had the load on his back. The missionary stopped the truck to see why the man was still carrying his load. "I didn't know the truck could carry both me and my load" was the man's reply!

Calvary frees us from the burden of sin; the penalty of sin; the power of sin; and one day the presence of sin. We are free to rest in Christ. Jesus can carry both our sin and our selves!