

There Remains a Sabbath Rest for the People of God

By Jess Stanfield

Bible Text: Hebrews 4:1-11
Preached on: Sunday, July 17, 2005

Zion Presbyterian Church
2131 Vineville Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31204

Website: www.zionpresbyterian.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/zion

We will continue our exposition as we move into chapter four of Hebrews. Out of respect and adoration for the Word of God I would ask that you stand. Hear the Word of God as I read chapter four of the book of Hebrews.

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. 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. 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. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

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, 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."

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. 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. 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. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let

us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.¹

Let us pray.

Father, take this Word and inscribe it upon our hearts. Lord, clean out our spiritual ears to hear your voice. Lord, may we with fear tremble before your Word and seek, oh God, your grace to apply it. Lord, that we would be doers of the Word and not hearers only in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Please be seated.

Well, I wish we could say that we have kind of moved out of those warning passages, but we are still in the broader context of a large warning in the book of Hebrews. This is the largest section in the whole book that is dedicated—or, at least from the author's perspective—given to the fight that he is warning these Hebrew Christians to stand fast in the faith. And that is chapter three all the way to chapter four, a very large section of Scripture that is devoted to warning the people of God to be faithful, to be diligent.

Now you have to ask yourself. I mean, he is spending a large amount of time. He is given over to the fact that there are some in this congregation or some in this area that may be close to falling from the faith. And he is concerned about it. He is pleading. He is imploring. He, as a pastor, as I believe this man who wrote his book is a preacher a shepherd and a pastor of God's sheep, he is imploring these Hebrew Christians who are under persecution, who some have lost their property. Some of them have been thrown into prison, lost all of their earthly possessions and it looks from historically speaking as we look back we know that this persecution that they were involved in was just beginning to heat up, that some of them would in the next couple of years lose their lives if this is that great Neronian persecution, if this is like the book of Hebrews is like that preamble to that great persecution whereby this preacher is writing this book to exhort these Christians to stand fast. Don't give up on the faith. Don't give up on Jesus Christ.

And what he seeks to do is lay before them the glory of the one in whom they have put their faith and their trust in. And as we leave Hebrews chapter three and we enter into Hebrews chapter four, where chapter three was dedicated to those who may be guilty of unbelief, those who may be professing Christians, but not really of a converted heart. And you have this, a very strenuous warning. I mean, a very command about how angry God gets at unbelief. In Hebrews four, even though it is still a warning, seems to be couched in great tenderness, more tenderness, more care as almost he maybe even pleading with those who are really converted, those who have confessed the living God and those who are struggling like we struggle each and every day keeping the faith.

¹ Hebrews 4:1-16.

Notice what it says in Hebrews 4:1. It says, “Therefore.” And we understand what that word is there for. It is connecting everything else that he has already said previously, not discounting it.

Therefore, because of everything else I have said, “Let us fear while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.”

That whole picture in the Greek language is of an athlete who falls short of the goal, of an athlete who is running a... whether it is a sprint or whether it is a 25 mile marathon, right before he gets to the finish line he gives up. He just walks away. And that is the picture that he has drawn for these Hebrew Christians. He said, “Oh, those who have confessed the living God. Be careful. Be careful that you do not come up short, that you do not come up short of that great rest that God has promised since the foundation of the world.”

Now what I seek to do is at least try to present this rest in three different ways. Number one, this morning, we are going to dedicate ourselves to understanding what rest is. Next week, Lord willing, we will look at how we enter into that rest. And then the third week, Lord willing, we will look at the token of that rest that God has given us a token of that great eternal rest and it is the sabbath. It is the Lord’s day. We will look at that.

So this morning what I seek to do is encourage you. I seek to implore you, to encourage you to stand fast in your faith, beloved. Just as these Hebrew Christians needed encouragement, these Hebrew Christians are just like we are today. They confessed Christ. They understood what it means to be forgiven of their sins, to have their conscience cleansed, to have that guilt removed. And now they are struggling in unbelief. They are allowing their circumstances to dictate. Maybe it is not worth it. Maybe, you know, maybe I can’t be a good Christian. And they are tempted to fall away. They are tempted to go back to Judaism. They are tempted to go back to the types and the shadows, those things that now are empty, but a husk. There is nothing to those types or shadows now because the reality is here. That is Jesus Christ.

We live in a day where... I wanted to title it, “We live in a Day of Synthetic Rest,” that this passage of Scripture is though that these beloved Hebrew Christians were laboring in the gospel and they were struggling in their unbelief. They wanted rest. They wanted relief. They wanted out from under this persecution. They wanted a time where they could sit back and say, “You know what? I don’t deserve this life. This is a hard life. Ever since we have confessed this Jesus, ever since we have bowed the knee to the Lord of glory, every since that we have come and professed him as Lord over us it has been one hardship after another. It has been one trial after another and we are tired and we are weary.”

And the Hebrew pastor, the pastor here said, “There is a rest. There is a rest, but that rest is in Jesus Christ.”

And that rest is splayed in this passage of Scripture though it is future, though there is a promise of that eternal rest, beloved. You would be mistaken to read this passage of Scripture and to just equate that word rest for eternal rest, for only heaven, that that word rest only means glory, it only means heaven. Because it is that, but it is way more than that. It is you can enter into that rest now, today. Enter into that rest by faith and believe and trust. And you begin to have... be satisfied in your soul with Jesus, you see.

One of my favorite passages in all the Bible is found in Matthew chapter 11. This is a passage of Scripture that I have memorized and that I have constantly gone back to. It is a passage of Scripture that I even put on my mom's tombstone to... really to remind me of the hardship and the life that she had as she struggled with disease and that robbed her of much of her life.

And this is a passage of Scripture that I think is beneficial for us to meditate on and reflect on today where Jesus looks at the crowds. And you have got to understand the context of Matthew 11:28 verses 30 where Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden," all who have been weighed down by legalism of the Pharisees, all of those who have been weighed down with a self righteousness, all of you who have been weighed down with a self rightness that is attempting to make God your friend by... by your works, by your acts. All of those who seek to be religious without a heart change, come to me. If you are tired and weary and heavy laden come to me all of those, all of you who have tried this.

And week in and week out year in and year out you find yourself depressed. You find yourself weary, tired, wondering if it is even worth going on. He says, "Come to me. I will give you that rest that you seek."

That is why I find great comfort in this passage of Scripture because as I understand the Christian life not to be a life of ease, it is a life of work. It is hard. A life of sanctification is working out our salvation with fear and trembling, trying to be a husband, trying to be... you may be trying to be a husband in your own strength, trying to love your wife, trying to find something within your wife that is lovely and that you can love without understanding, men, that it is God who comes and changes your heart and allows you to love your wife when there is not even anything lovely to love.

The same thing for your ladies.

Instead of putting the burden and the frustration on your husbands to make you happy you find that great happiness in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a changed heart. It is a changed heart.

One thing we need to recognize in this passage of Scripture is that he calls us to fear the Lord, to fear while the promise remains that we would come up short of this rest. And, beloved, I have said it in the past and I will say it again that true faith, if you are born again, if you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you it trembles at the threatening of

God. It rejoices in the promises of God. The true faith in the beloved believes every word written in this book whether you completely can understand it or not doesn't matter. By faith you believe.

And when we come to these passages of Scripture you just don't say, "Oh, that's not me. Oh, I would never come up short of grace. I would never come up short of the race. I would never fall short of that great promise of rest. I mean, you know, I am in church. I am doing all these great things."

No, beloved. A true, true born again Christian looks at every Word of God and he trembles at those warning passages and he examines himself. He understands that the Word is true and that the Word is like that two edged sword. It is sharper than any two edged sword. And it is only the Word of God that can lay our hearts open before him. No one can hide from God. God come sin and investigates all of our hearts because his Word cuts through all the secret places. It filets it open. It opens it up before him and it exposes itself and the Word of God judges our heart and it shows us who we are, what we love, what are our affections. What are our affections?

You know, when you think about heaven do you think about oh just going to place where you are going to escape hell? I mean when you think about heaven is it just this place, this alternative? See, it is better than hell. And it is.

But, you see, that is not why we seek that eternal rest. That is not why we seek that future rest. Do you know why we seek heaven? Not for the sake of heaven, beloved. Who is there? Jesus. That is why our affections should be drawn to him. That is why when we speak of heaven we are not just talking about this ethereal place that, you know, that is... it is almost like a cloud and it is mist and you will vaguely see people.

No. We want to go to heaven because that is where Jesus is. That is where Jesus is working right now. That is where Jesus is laboring at the right hand of God subduing our enemies. That is where Jesus is working out our salvation as well, praying for you that you would stand fast, praying that you would learn what you need to learn in that trial and difficulty that he has put into your life, acknowledging the fact that you are to be sanctified. And he is working on your behalf, sanctifying you, causing you to be more like him.

One thing we need to recognize. Another thing we need to recognize in this passage of Scripture in our text this morning and that is that rest is synonymous with salvation, that rest is at the very heart of salvation. And if we are going to understand our salvation we must understand and have a good grasp on this rest if we are to understand it.

The Bible says a lot about rest. The book of Proverbs is full of verses on rest, full of them. But all of them, at least, point to this. Rest comes from God. Rest comes from God. And do you know what? There is no rest for the wicked. There is no rest for the wicked.

In fact, the Bible describes the wicked as turbulent seas, tossed to and fro. The wicked are like the turbulent seas and they find no rest, Isaiah says.

We are not to be that way. When the trials and tribulations come into our life if we find ourselves in unbelief, we repent and we call out upon God to sturdy up our belief, to build up our faith, to say, “Lord, keep me from falling short of that eternal rest. Allow me, give me the grace to walk through this difficult time faithful. Allow me to walk through faithful. Oh, God, sturdy me up. I am weak. I want to lead the race. I am ready to exit off this highway of holiness. It is too hard. But I call out to you by faith for you to keep your promise.”

Notice what verse one says, “While a promise remains.” God is a promise keeper.

Well, by way of introduction as we just kind of set the stage for rest, let us look at the meaning of rest. And it is important that we understand that we need to... we need to understand what rest is because there are many counterfeits out there. There are not only... not only does a war offer rest, not only does Satan offer a rest, a counterfeit rest, but there are major misconceptions of what rest is even among the Church, even among Evangelicals.

The best way that I can explain this to you is to first look at what rest is not, what rest is not.

Since we have these counterfeits we need to know what they are not. How would we describe these counterfeits? If we are not going to be robbed of our rest and enjoyment in Jesus Christ, we need to understand what rest means.

Well, the first thing we need to recognize is the counterfeit of idleness. Rest is not idleness. Rest is not just being idle. It is not just coming in and flopping down on the couch. It is not just coming in and disengaging our mind to do a disconnect from everything that is going on around you, to kind of... to remove yourself from the circumstances at hand. Beloved, that is not rest. That is not rest. That is not the rest of the living God. We are not to disengage our minds. We are not to remove ourselves from our circumstances. But we are to be engaged in life, engaged in those circumstances, engaged in every facet of our being that God is the King of glory and the Creator of the world.

David said, “I meditate upon thy law day and night, day and night.” That we do not have the right to just come in at any time we feel like and we say, “You know what? I am just not going to be responsible during this 30 minutes or hour or day or week. I am not going to be responsible. I am going to disengage myself from life all together and I am just going to lounge around.”

That is not rest. That is not the rest you seek. David said, “I meditate upon thy law day and night.”

Proverbs 31 verses 27, the godly woman does not eat the bread of idleness. No, she doesn't. She doesn't eat the bread of idleness. She labors. She works. She finds great satisfaction in fulfilling her responsibilities. She rests in the fact that she is being responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ and being faithful.

Beloved, if God is worthy of every second, 24/7, of our meditation—and he is, and he is—if he is worthy, I mean if he has created angels that surround the throne of the living God, who cry out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,” day and night forever, why do we have a problem and why do Christians, confessing Christians have a problem with meditating upon God day and night whenever they are laying on their bed meditating upon the living God. Why is it we think we have the right to disengage our mind at any time and never be responsible even if it is for one minute. What a great sin that is not to think that it is rest for us to engage our minds upon the living God, to dwell upon him, to think upon him to meditate upon his revelation that he has given us.

And how sinful it is for us to think, “Well, that just doesn't sound like rest. That just doesn't sound like rest”?

A second counterfeit to the rest given by the living God, God's rest is that of leisure. This is a very serious misconception and very humanistic to the core. And that is the idea of leisure. Where the first counterfeit has to do with responsibility or this engagement, leisure really has more to do with fantasy.

Let me describe it for you. It is like this. God created us for his own glory. God created us to live before him in faithfulness. When we think about leisure we actually think about a time or leisure like a vacation where we can disconnect ourselves and move away and go experience a good time apart from God.

You say, “Well, that is not true.”

Well, beloved, let me tell you something. There are a lot of Christians when they go on vacation never think about going to church. They put down their Bibles. They put down their prayer and they think it is a time for them to be refreshed in themselves. But that is not refreshment and that is not rest. If you go on your vacation it is a time for you to sturdy up those things that you may have not had time to do while you were not on vacation. That is, you don't go on vacation to get away from God. You go on vacation to be sured up even more in God, more in prayer, more in Bible reading, not less. And you seek to go worship, you seek to find a place because if God has given us a token of that eternal rest and it is called the Lord's Day as he says in the passage of Scripture, “There remains,” in verse nine, “a sabbath rest for the people of God.” If he has given us a token, why should we neglect it? Why would we neglect it if that is rest, I mean if that is really rest?

You see, we have to change our thinking. We have to change our minds. You see, leisure seeks to avoid responsibility. It is really fantasy. It is living in another world, a world that is apart from the living God.

Beloved, there is nothing that is apart from the living God. Where can you go? Where can you go that God is not present and watching over you? Can you go top the highest heavens? Can you go the depths of the earth? Where can you go, to the deepest of the seas, boys and girls? Where can you go that God does not watch you, watch over you and care for you?

That is the purpose, that is the point that we don't seek to find our rest in humanism that seeks to find it apart from God. We seek to find it in God that we know that it is his rest and that he is giving this rest. Living a life of total leisure, living a life void of responsibility of laboring and working before the living God, carrying out a calling is a lie. You are living a lie. If you seek, if you seek, if you are laboring in working so that one day you can live a life of leisure when you retire, you are going... you are planning to live a lie and a life of fantasy. Because even when you retire you are still called to bring glory to God. You are still required to carry out those covenantal responsibilities in your duties as a husband, as a wife, to labor more in the living God, not less, not less.

Understand the illustration that the pastor is giving these people. He is saying, "You are like the Israel that is in the wilderness, that is in the time of testing."

Notice he continues to equate them entering into the Promised Land as us entering into that rest, that eternal rest, that future rest. He says, "Listen, guys. You are like in the wilderness. You are like Israel of old when they were in the wilderness and they did not pass the test."

They groaned. They griped. They wanted to go back to Egypt. When Caleb and Joshua preached the good news to them about believe, the living God will keep his promises. We can take these people. WE can go into the land. We can have them. When they preach trust and faith and repentance and obedience they did not listen. They did not hear. And therefore they failed the test, beloved. Don't you fail the test here and now in your Christian walk, in your Christian experience. Continue to run the race. Continue to stand fast. Continue and determine in your mind.

Look at verse 11. "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest." My friends, you must labor and strive and work hard to enter that rest because you are determined in your mind, "I am not falling short. I am not going to come up short. I am going to keep the faith. I am going to enter into that rest and in order for me to enter into that rest I am going to avoid idleness. I am going to avoid this life of luxury," not that you can't enjoy things, beloved. I hope you understand that is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about enjoying things. I am talking about allowing those things to be such a motive in your life that you live your life in the grasp and in the security of these things for you and you think you have rest because you don't have to work no more eight hours a day.

Oh, my friends, you still have to labor in the covenant. You still have to labor in your sanctification. You still have to labor and work in loving one another. You will never,

ever leave that responsibility. And by doing those things you are securing your place in that eternal rest by being faithful and diligent.

Just like Paul said, Philippians 2:12, he said, "Let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling, with fear and trembling."

I got to ask you this question. How in the world could we even live a life of rest and leisure when we live in a fallen world? How?

You know, many times when we talk to one another we are kind of shocked that things go wrong.

"I can't believe so and so did this. I can't believe they did that. I can't believe my children act this way."

We live in a fallen world. Why are we not surprised when things go right? Why are we not surprised when our children obey? Why are we not surprised when we are in great harmony in our marriage? I mean, really. When you sit down at the table and you are experiencing this great harmonious relationship with another sinner, you go, "Praise God, we are in harmony with one another. By the grace of the living God and Jesus Christ, by the work of the Spirit in your heart and in my heart, my wife, my husband, we need to praise God because we are living in harmony in a fallen world, in a fallen world. He brings peace, rest and harmony in a fallen world. Why are we not surprised?"

Those are the things we need to be thinking about. Don't attempt, beloved, to be exempt from your responsibilities. Don't fall under the temptation to say, "You know what? In my vacation I am attempt to go to the spa of paradise, this great island we have been planning all these years to go and experience. We are going to be there for two weeks, no one there to encourage me, walk by faith. No one there to encourage me, not even planning on bringing my Bible. I just want to escape from reality. I just want to walk around on the sandy beaches. I just want to pick up sea shells. I just want to hear the seagulls and hear the waves crashing upon the seashore. I mean, I just want to go escape."

Beloved, find that rest in Jesus. Take those same things, those same satisfactions that you find in those things and place them on Christ.

I like walking the beach. I think it is great to pick up seashells. I love hearing the waves crash upon the beach, but all that should do is to confirm our faith in the living Creator God who rested on the seventh day from creating all these things.

Remember this, beloved. Remember this. The world was created for you. You are the pinnacle. You are the crown of God's creation. He established it. He prepared it and then he placed man and woman in the garden to till it and to enjoy it. It was made for you. I am telling you to enjoy it. But don't enjoy it in this escapism that causes you to forget about your covenant, which causes you to forget about the living God. But, no, seek to

allow it to stir you up so that you can have the energy to continue the race. You need to continue the race. You need to continue the race.

Well, let's look at what rest is. We have noticed what rest is not. It is not just idleness. It is not just a life of leisure.

Look at Joshua chapter one and verse 13. I want to show you that this rest is a work. This rest is not idleness. It is not just a time of leisure where you can do a disconnect from your responsibilities and disengage yourself.

Look at verse 13 in Joshua chapter one. It says "'Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land,'" equating that rest with the land. But they had to go in and they had to occupy the land.

Look back up at chapter 21 of Joshua. And this is the passage that is referred to, I believe, in the Hebrews chapter four, Joshua 21 and verse 44. It says, "And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."

That means the Lord God promised that he would go in and conquer their enemies. He would go in and fight their battles for them. And he says, "Listen. This land is representative of rest." He goes, "When you go into the land, you will have rest. But you cannot have rest, beloved, until these enemies were conquered."

Rest came in the responsibilities of the covenant keeping God. He gave them a duty. He gave them a task. He gave them a responsibility to work and to labor.

What is rest? Rest is a continuation of God's calling in our lives. That is what rest is. Rest is just a continuation of God's calling in our life. Rest is active. It is something that we must do.

Notice in Hebrews four it says that we must enter into his rest. This work is God's rest. Rest is not something that evolved with man, that he figured out on his own. It is God's rest and he wants us to participate in his rest.

He models it for us in the very beginning of creation whereby God created on six days. And what did he do on the seventh day? He didn't disengage himself. He wasn't just resting because he needed to rest. God doesn't need to rest. No, on the seventh day he rested from his work of creation, but he still maintained his work as the Creator God, as the living God. Yes, he ceased from that work of creation. It was done. It was complete. But he never ceased being God. He never ceased upholding that creation, keeping it all together. He modeled it for us and we must remember. We cannot have rest in and of ourselves. We don't define rest. God does. That is what it means to live in covenant.

Some of you have asked the question: Well, I am still trying to figure out the covenant.

One of the things you really need to come to grips with first and that is to be covenant minded means God defines life and God defines every area of life and that means God defines our rest.

Rest is a work, beloved. We are invited to come and rest in Christ but from our weary labors. We are to put off all of our self righteousness, all of our self worthiness. We are to put all of that behind us and we are to put on Christ and his righteousness. We are to rest from a work of self righteousness when we come to the living God.

When we come to Christ we come putting off self righteousness or self worth and we put on Christ's worth. We enter into that rest by fleeing to Christ. We put off any and everything that seeks to please God in and of ourselves understanding and recognizing the fact that we are sinners and that unless we exercise faith we cannot please God. We cannot please God apart from faith, from trust, from belief.

No, rest is a work, but it is a particular kind of work.

If you want to come in and flop down on the couch the Bible says that is the goodness of God leads men to repentance, that whenever you experience anything good, whenever you have a couch to flop down on, whenever you have a thermostat to turn on the air conditioning and to enjoy that cool atmosphere. Why don't you repent? Why don't you praise God for his goodness? Why don't you meditate upon the fact that you have a refrigerator with the beverages in there that you like to drink when you are taking that rest? Why don't you give God the glory about a family that you hear running around you, that you can experience the love of a wife, love of a husband that is actually, can I get you something?

I mean, why don't we allow these things to lead us to repentance? Because rest is a work. We must engage ourselves in it and recognize it. We are to cease from living by sight which describes our old life. We lived by our own understanding and our own ways. We are to cease that work and put on living by faith, trusting in what God says. I don't understand completely how my heart is deceitful. I think I know my own heart, but the Bible says that no man can know his own heart, but it is the Word of God that describes him. It is the Word of God that displays who he is before his own eyes.

It is like a man that looks in a mirror. And I believe it. And you trust it by faith. Trust it by faith.

We are to put off living by sight and live by faith.

We are to remember Matthew 11 verses 28 and 30 that Jesus offers this rest to those who are burdened with their own self righteousness and their legalistic works, that we must

come to him and to rest in him and his work and his understanding and that rest is tied to that... to our salvation.

Beloved, when you took your church vow, you took a vow to promise to rest in him, to rest in him. You took a vow and you promised that I will rest in the works of Jesus Christ.

You see, beloved, even though God rested from the works of creation and he established a sabbath rest, Jesus performed his works of redemption on earth and now he sits at the right hand. He rests from these earthly works. He is resting from these earthly works and performing the works now seated at the right hand of God laying low his enemies, subduing our enemies, building up his Church, causing the Church to go forth, causing the power of the preacher to be effectual, preaching in the preaching, teaching in the teaching, drawing all nations to himself. But he still is rested from his earthly works of redemption, beloved.

You see, rest is a work. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Not only is rest a work, rest is satisfaction.

Look at Hebrews chapter four and verse four. He says, "As He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: 'AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS.'"

If you go back and read in Genesis it says that God after creating all things in six day what did he do? He recognized it and he was well pleased with it. He was satisfied. Rest is being satisfied. True rest, rest that comes from God is satisfaction. It is not satisfaction in anything in and of ourselves. It is finding great satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

"Come to me all who are weary. I will give you rest."

It is being satisfied and recognizing the fact, you know what? I thought this was rest, but this is what God says is rest, that I should labor, that I should work out my salvation with fear and trembling, that I should view my neighbor greater than myself, that I am to be busy in the work of my own salvation. If this is what God says is rest, then I need to change my mind. I need to be satisfied with what God says about me. I need to be satisfied with those definitions that God places on life and not seek to redefine those things by the way I want them to be.

Paul said this. He said, "I count everything as rubbish compared to Christ. I count it all rubbish."

Rest is being satisfied in Jesus Christ. Rest is being satisfied with the providence in your life, understanding the fact, do you know what? Understanding that he maybe has given you ailments and age is coming up some of you and you walk around and you are experiencing what sin has done and you can't move like you used to. You can't do the things you used to do and you are satisfied because Jesus is looking out after you. You

are satisfied because it comes from the hand of the living God. You are satisfied because God is the great shepherd of the sheep and he is taking care of you.

You young men who are working in your own businesses, God may never allow you to be wealthy. God may never allow you to be wealthy. Will you be satisfied in being a faithful husband, being a faithful supporter of your church, being a faithful father? Will you be satisfied with those things? That is rest.

God may not call you to build a Fortune 500 company, but he will give you rest if you will find satisfaction in those things that he has already given you and you are called to be responsible to those things, to be faithful to those things first. Seek first his kingdom and then all these things will be added unto you.

See, this satisfaction or this being satisfied finds in every area of life. I have got difficult children. Are you satisfied with those children? Do you understand that God gave you those children, that there is not any temperament in that child that escaped God, that there is not anything that that child does that has escaped God, that has slipped by him, that he has allowed to come into your life? Because remember 1 Corinthians 10:13. He says he did not allow anything to come, for you to be tempted in anything that such is common to man whereby he gives you a way out.

He says, "Listen. All temptations are common to man." And all of these things he gives you to sanctify you, to grow you up, to cause you to rest more, trust more, believe more.

You see, beloved, we are entering into that rest and you are not resting. You are not resting like you can next week, next month, next year. You should be resting more today in Christ than you were a year ago. You should be trusting more in Christ today than you were two years ago. Evaluate your life. Look at your heart. Expect the Word of God have its way with you, beloved. Are you trusting in Christ more today, resting in him more today? Are you finding satisfaction in his providence in your life more today than you did when you first became a Christian?

That is rest. Rest is not only a work and rest is not only being satisfied as God was when he rested from his work. Rest is also a celebration.

Look at verse eight in chapter four. It says, "For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that."

Let me explain this verse to you. Joshua said, "Guys, you have got this rest. God has kept his promise. You have this rest."

Now what the inspired writer of the New Testament is doing, he is giving an interpretation to what Joshua said. He says, "Well, if Joshua meant that this was that full of the total goal of that rest he would not," and he is speaking of God. God would have not allowed David in Psalm 95, 1000 years later, to speak of another rest.

Do you see what he is doing? Look at the progression. There is a sabbath rest in Genesis two. And I want you to notice something about that passage. You go back and look it up this afternoon as you rest in the Lord this afternoon. It does not say on the seventh day there was evening and morning. It is open ended. That means there is a rest. There is always a sabbath rest of God. There is never an end to that sabbath rest.

Notice God promises a rest. God says he gives Israel a rest in Joshua's day. David comes along, inspired by the Holy Spirit again 1000 years later and he speaks of another rest and now the Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews says, "No, there is another rest. Today while it is still today, enter into that rest that God promised at Creation, that God promised way back when. Today is the day that you hear his voice. Enter into that rest."

You see? Rest is a celebration. Rest is recognizing that God is a promise keeper, that God keeps his promises.

We read Joshua 21 verses 44 and 45.

Look at Isaiah 14. Look at verse three.

And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say, "How the oppressor has ceased, And how fury has ceased! "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of rulers Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution."²

Look at verse seven. "The whole earth is at rest and is quiet; They break forth into shouts of joy."³

What God is saying in this passage of Scripture is that when he subdues his enemies, when he puts down the dictator, when he puts down those who are the oppressor, when he puts down those who oppose his kingship and rule, there will be great shouts of joy because they have been put down and Christ's rule is a rule of peace. It is a rule of kindness. It is a rule of grace. It is a rule of mercy. Come, kiss the Son lest he be angry with you. That is what he is saying. He says, "Listen, the righteous will shout with joy when the enemies fall by the wayside." And he said, "You will have rest from your enemies."

Beloved, I am way out of time. Rest is not only finding satisfaction in Christ, rest is a celebration in Christ. Christ has defeated sin. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He has taken the sting out of death. 1 Corinthians 15 says, "There is no longer... there is no more reason to fear death because Christ has removed the sting of

² Isaiah 14:3-6.

³ Isaiah 14:7.

death.”

The very thing that the devil used to strike fear in the hearts of people Christ came and defeated the devil with his own works. He defeated death. He was raised on the third day. Christ came, 1 John says, and destroyed the works of the devil, destroyed the great enemy of the people of God, destroyed the great sin or the great snake that deceived our parents in the garden. Christ comes and we celebrate this fact each and every Lord’s Day.

See, we don’t need a rededication service for someone to come walk the aisle and to shake the preacher’s hand. Brother, we have a covenantal rededication every Lord’s Day, every Lord’s Day. Whereby we rejoice in his labors and we rest in his labors and victory.

Christ causes us to find rest and we celebrate this rest every Lord’s Day. I am just going to mention two more things and we will take this up next week. Rest is worship.

In Hebrews four he quotes Psalm 95 and we read Psalm 95 as the call to worship and I am just going to read a couple of lines from Psalm 95. Look at verse six. He says, “Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.”⁴

Rest is worship. Rest is ascribing the worth and the worthiness to God and his faithfulness, his promise keeping, his power and his strength, his holiness, his goodness, all of his attributes.

Beloved, your rest is wrapped up in who God is. It is his rest. If you cannot find rest in the power and the goodness and the works of God, you are dead because faith finds satisfaction, celebration in those things. In that is power and glory when we come to ascribe his worthiness to him.

Fifthly, rest is trust. Faith is synonymous with this trust. Believing what God says to be true no matter what, no matter what my education says, no matter what my mommy and daddy taught me. Faith believes the Word of God above any and everything.

It is trusting in what God says to be true and every man a liar.

The Israelites did not have this rest because they did not have this faith. They did not trust in God. They did not believe what Caleb and Joshua said. They did not believe the preaching of Moses. They wanted to go back to Egypt. Knowing God is going to do what he promised to do in you, to sanctify you, to change you, to cause you to love your wife more, love your children more, to cause you to fulfill your calling, to be more faithful in your calling, causing sin to be conquered in your life. Not only that he is subduing the nations that you believe, beloved, when you pray and you ask God at your dinner table to disciple and to call the world to himself, do you believe it? Do you believe it? Do you rest in the fact that you trust what God says?

⁴ Psalm 95:6-7.

That is why we believe in the victory oriented gospel. It is not because we look around and just see people banging on the church doors, “Hey, let me in. I want to hear this message.”

No. By faith we believe what God says and he says, “I will draw all men unto myself if I be lifted up,” that there will be a day when people flow into this great mountain of Zion. There will be a day when the nations where there will be no reason for you to teach your neighbor. There will be a day when righteousness will cover the earth.

Why? Because that is what the Bible says. And will you believe that? Will you rest in that fact even when they throw dirt on your casket and you still haven’t seen it? On your dying death bed will you say, “I believe what the Bible says about the victory of the gospel of Jesus Christ because that is what Jesus said”? Will you believe it? That is what faith, that is what trust, that is what rest is. It is resting in the fact that you trust God and you don’t sit around and you go, “Well, does God love me? Does he love me not? Does he love me? Does he love me not? Is going to do... is he going to bring my children to faith? Is he not going to bring them to faith? Is he going to bring them to faith? No, oh, I just... am I faithful? Am I not?”

No, I rest in the fact that I am a sinner saved by grace and I just want to live this day, Lord. Build up my faith. Help me to walk before you in grace and mercy and peace. Help me, oh God, in my unbelief. I want to run the race with faithfulness. Help me because I am ready to detour off this path.

You don’t sit around like this. Don’t sit around like that because God says, “Enter into my rest by faith continuing to believe and trust my promises.”

That is what rest is, beloved. Recognize it. Grab on to it. Believe it. Live it. Don’t sit around wringing your hand wondering what you can do to please God. Recognize what God has already said and do it. And ask for the strength and the grace to perform it.

Let’s pray.

Our Father, we... Lord, my meager attempt to preach such a wonderful truth, such a precious truth. Lord, we all need rest. We are all tired and weary and we are just burdened with so many things. Help us to... Lord, give us the grace to cast these cares and anxieties before you. Give us the faith we need, oh God, to live in great satisfaction, in great celebration and in great trust. Lord, help u to find rest in our labors in the covenant. Help us to shun all counterfeits, all of those things that are inviting, but Lord, do not benefit us because it does not magnify and exalt you. But we do pray and ask that you would write this Word upon our hearts in Jesus’ name. Amen.