

REST FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

TEXT: HEBREWS 4:1-12

Introduction:

1. In my last message from our series in the epistle to the Hebrews, I pointed out that the children of Israel did not attain their rest because of unbelief (3:7-19).
2. The word “rest” is found 11 times in Hebrews 3 and 4 (cf. 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3 two times, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11).
3. The word “rest” should not be limited to the rest of the land of Canaan, for David spoke of it hundreds of years after the Israelites entered the Promised Land (3:7; 4:7).
4. “For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day” (4:8).
5. Hebrews 3 and 4 teaches that the rest for God’s people is still yet to come. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (4:9).

I. SOME COME SHORT OF THE REST BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF

1. “Fear” (4:1) can be either good or bad. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”
2. Second Timothy 1:7 says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”
3. First John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”
4. But in the context of Hebrews 4:1, fear is good – “Let us therefore fear...” (Heb. 4:1).
5. Job 28:28 says, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”
6. Psalm 34:11 says, “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”
7. Psalm 111:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”
8. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
9. Proverbs 8:13 says, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”
10. In Romans 3, the apostle Paul vividly describes sinful men:

- “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12).
 - “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips” (3:13).
 - “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (3:14).
 - “Their feet are swift to shed blood” (3:15).
 - “Destruction and misery are in their ways” (3:16).
 - “And the way of peace have they not known” (3:17).
11. Then Paul summarizes this whole passage of Scripture by saying – “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (3:18).
 12. This is the message of Hebrews 4 – there can be no rest for those who do not fear God.
 13. I should once again point out that these warnings in the book of Hebrews are for Christians – “Let us...” (Cf. 4:11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 28; 13:13, 15).
 14. What the wilderness was to the Israelites, the world is to us. The epistle to the Hebrews was written so that we might know that the things of God are far better than anything the world has to offer.
 15. There is salvation in Jesus.
 16. There is forgiveness from sin in Jesus.
 17. There is victory in Jesus.
 18. And there is rest in Jesus.
 19. But some Christians come short of it because of unbelief (4:1; cf. 3:18, 19; 4:11).
 20. God’s Word is unprofitable for certain people because it is not “mixed with faith” (4:2).
 21. This week at VBS we have seen several young people come forward at the invitation. Then we discover that some of them have already professed faith in Christ. They came forward seeking rest (4:5, 6).

II. THOSE WHO BELIEVE DO ENTER INTO REST (4:3)

1. Our Lord said in Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
2. In order to receive this rest, you first have to come to Jesus. You have to believe Him and trust Him.

3. Someone has said, “Little faith brings the soul to heaven, while great faith brings heaven to the soul.”
4. This is the “rest” the Bible speaks of. Jesus said in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”.

III. GOD’S DAY OF REST IS A PICTURE OF OUR REST (4:4).

1. Hebrews 4:4 refers to God resting on the seventh day. The Sabbath day is a day of rest. God says, “Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest” (Exodus 34:21).
2. Today the Lord’s Day is our day of rest.
3. Hebrews 3 refers to Canaan rest (cf. 3:18).
4. These all illustrate our rest in Christ.
5. They also point to our final rest in heaven (cf. 4:9).
6. “Jesus” (4:8) is the Greek word for “Joshua” (means “Saviour”). Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land, but they had not entered into all the blessings God had in store for them.
7. These blessings and promises will be fully received when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom.
8. “Rest” does not mean no more work, for verse 11 says, “Let us labour...”
9. Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
10. In Colossians 4:12, Paul refers to Epaphras, a servant of Christ, who was “always labouring fervently” in prayer.
11. Our Lord said in Matthew 9:38, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”
12. The idea is we do not labor or work for our salvation. Matthew Henry said, “Every true believer hath ceased from his own works of righteousness, and from the burdensome works of the law, as God and Christ have ceased from their works of creation and redemption.”
13. When God rested on the seventh day, it simply means His creative work was completed. It does not mean God stopped working (4:10).
14. Our Lord said in John 5:17, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Every morning I usually read from one of HA Ironside's devotional books: *The Daily Sacrifice* or *The Continual Burnt Offering*.
2. This morning I read this in *The Daily Sacrifice*: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:33). It took many of us a long time to learn that true peace is found alone in Christ Jesus. We sought it nearly everywhere else before we came to Him, but we never found that which could give rest to the conscience or assurance to the heart. But in Him we found both. We have peace with God through the blood of His cross. We enjoy the peace of God as we lay every burden at His feet" (July 28).