

## Hebrews Chapter 4A

Have you found that rest is an elusive commodity in your life, something that is generally just out of your reach, a reality that you long for but rarely enjoy?

The Mass Marketers of modern media try to capitalize on our desire for rest in their advertising campaigns.

- Miller brewing company invited all of us to enjoy some “Miller Time?”
- Calgon targets Moms who are in need of rest with their slogan: “*Calgon take me away.*”

The visitor bureau told us that “It’s better in the Bahamas?” (Rest is better??)

- They show us pictures of the Atlantis Resort in the Bahamas. (*people at rest*)
- Couples enjoying a massage on the beach.
- Jacuzzi for two overlooking a glorious sunset on the Atlantic.
- These advertisements promote the world’s view of rest.
- I must admit they sound inviting, but there is a desire within me for something greater: a rest that lasts longer than one week, peace that is lasting.
- After pondering all of the troubles facing his life the Psalmist writes:

Psalm 55:6 "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; 7 yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah

- That actually may be the Bible version of “*Calgon take me away.*”

I believe that the Psalmist accurately expresses the longing for rest that frequently passes through our own minds.

- We have a strong desire to experience the peace and joy that come with real rest, but in this fallen world perfect rest is only a passing dream.
- Apart from the intervention of God true rest and lasting peace are impossible.
- Not so with God. His labors are finished, His rest is perfect and He offers His rest to all who believe.

In the beginning, after God created the heavens and the earth He established a pattern through which man’s need for rest could be addressed.

Genesis 1:31 **And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**

Gen 2:1 **Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.**

**2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**

- God’s pattern for work and rest became part of the Law that he gave to Israel.

Exodus 23: 12 "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.

- God instituted a Sabbath rest for Israel. A day without work, cooking, shopping.
- Over and above the Sabbath rest that God instituted among His people, He also provided them with a land where they could experience His provision of rest.

Joshua 1:13 "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.'

- During the Journey God confirmed his plan to provide rest to Moses.

Exodus 33:14 And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

We see from God's dealings with His people that His provision of rest was BOTH physical and Spiritual. It was a rest for their weary bodies and it was a rest for their weary souls.

- Physically – there was a specific day in which they were to do no work and they were journeying toward a literal land where God promised to give them rest. A place where could live in peace in fellowship with their creator.
  - Of course this physical rest finds its ultimate fulfillment in Heaven.
  - The Promised Land was simply a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem where the Lamb is the light of the city and God will dwell with his people.

Spiritually – The rest of God was closely connected with his presence (Ex 33:14) The spiritual side of this rest looked forward to the day when the people themselves would experience peace with God through the Messiah. Jesus declared this:

Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

- To the weary soul who like the Psalmist is longing for rest Jesus declares that HE is the source and the substance of true and lasting rest.
- Coming to him by faith, Casting our burdens on him through repentance of sin and faith in his gift of righteousness allows us to enter into his rest.

I wonder, DO you believe that this morning? Do you live in that rest of faith today?

- Or do you labor at religious exercises in the hope that you might gain God's approval?
  - Were you brought up in a sacramental system where you earned your way into heaven through the sacraments? Penance, Eucharist, Baptism,
  - Are you worried because your performance wasn't perfect? (no rest!)

In chapter 3 the writer of Hebrews informs us that the Exodus generation failed to obtain God's provision of rest (*NOT because of performance BUT*) because of unbelief.

- Their failure to enter God's rest is the foundation for the author's warning to the Hebrew people of his own day.

Hebrews 3: 12 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

- With this solemn warning in mind we press on seeking to understand the rest that God offers through Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE: for Hebrews 4:

1. Offer of Rest.      God's provision of rest is available today.
2. Author of Rest.    The rest being offered is God's own rest
3. Urgency of Rest    God's offer of rest is a limited time offer.

Offer of Rest:    God's provision of rest is available today

We have seen in Hebrews Ch. 3 and now in Ch. 4, the rest that God offers is the same rest that was held out to the people of Israel by God's servant Moses.

- It is the same rest that was declared by David (Ps 95) And again here by the writer of Hebrews.

Hebrews 4: 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. 2 For good news came to us just as to them,*

- The O.T images of a Promised Land and Sabbath Rest were all pictures, types and shadows of that same rest that would come later through the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 4:8 *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,*

- IF the fullness of rest would have been obtained through the possession of the Land under Joshua the promise of rest would have been fulfilled.
- BUT the land that God promised was only a shadow of a greater land a holy city, a New Jerusalem, that city with streets of gold, walls of Jasper.
- In this heavenly city all of our labors will be completed, all trials finished and we will finally experience the fullness of God's glorious rest.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that we should learn from Israel's failures and live with a certain measure of fear.

- PHOBEO – the word from which we obtain our word “phobia.” The word speaks of that which terrifies, causing one to run away.
- WHAT is it that we should fear? The wrath of God for unbelief.

To be lost, to face eternal separation from God should arouse great fear in us.

- The Biblical revelation of eternal damnation, Outer Darkness, Weeping and gnashing of teeth should sufficiently motivate us to faith and perseverance.

The Good News of God’s rest has come to us just as it did to them.

As long as the promise of God’s rest remains there is an opportunity to be saved and enter into that rest. There is still time, God continues to hold the door open.

- Both the Old and the New Testaments declare that the Just shall live by faith.
- Both hold out the forgiveness of sin through substitutionary sacrifice.
- Both clearly display the imputing of personal sin to an innocent substitute.
- Both require the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. Both declare that man is justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

SO we see that God’s provision of rest still remains available today.

Next we see that the rest that is offered to us is actually God’s Rest.

POINT #2 The Author’s Rest: God calls us to enter into HIS rest

- In Verse 1 it is called “His rest” in verse 5 God calls it “My rest.” In verse 10 it is called “God’s Rest.”

John Mac, *“God’s own rest from His work of creation and the rest that he gives us in Christ, are not the rest brought on by weariness or the rest of inactivity but are the rest of finished work.”*

Hebrews 4: 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, 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. 4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."

- Adam and Eve enjoyed (*at least for a short time*) the Sabbath Rest of God.
- They walked with God and talked with God as naturally as they conversed with one another.
- They rested in God. He provided all of their needs. They had no worries, no pain, no frustration, no shame and no heartaches.
- They had no need of forgiveness because they walked in the purity of innocence.
- They did not need encouragement because the glory of God was openly available to them.

But the tempter, the deceiver, the wicked one beguiled our predecessors so that the man and his wife openly rebelled against their gracious creator.

- From that day forward the curse of God has been upon the whole of creation. Man forfeited the rest of God and entered into a life of chaos.
- From that time until now, sin has separated man from God.
- Darkness, deception and death have been man's portion.

The purpose of the Bible and the ongoing work of God throughout human history have had one theme: and that is to bring man back to the rest of God.

- IN order to accomplish that goal God had to remove the barrier, the obstacle that separated man from the rest of God. That was SIN.
- The good news is this in Christ there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Hebrews 4: 9 **So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.**

- Our Sabbath rest LIKE God's Sabbath rest denotes the end of our labors, the completion of our works.
- When we were dead in sin, God did what we could never do, by sending his Son to die on a cross in our place He removed once and for all the wrath of God and graciously imparted to all who believe the gift of righteousness.
- The hard labor of salvation was fully accomplished by Christ and NOW we who believe enter into the rest of God that comes by faith in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8 **by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

- In Christ all of our religious efforts to GAIN God's approval come to an end and we cease from the fruitless labors that were motivated by pride and self-righteousness.
- IN Christ, we have entered into the Sabbath rest of God through faith and this rest has TWO components. Now and later.

I remember when my kids asked for a candy that was called "Now and Later"

- The rest that comes through faith in Jesus Christ has two stages: now and later, there is an Inauguration and there is a Consummation / already and Not Yet.
- We who believe have already entered into the rest of God and when he returns we will enter into the fullness the consummation of that same rest.

NOW – In this present age, the rest of God is a spiritual reality through the work of Christ alone we have peace with God and access to the Father.

Joh 14:27 **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**

- BUT there is a greater manifestation of this rest that is yet to come. It is the rest of God, the rest that comes when all of our trials are ended and all of our enemies put under his feet.

Revelation 14:13 **And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"**

- On that Great Day we shall enter into the eternal rest of God.
- Through the proclamation of God's Word we declare to anyone who will hear the urgent message of God's rest.

Point #3 Urgency of Rest: There is an urgency to God's call.

At the opening of this book of Hebrews the Holy Spirit wanted us to know that God is a god who speaks:

Hebrews 1:1 **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.**

- In Chapter 3 - 4 The author draws attention to the voice of God repeatedly:

**"Today if you hear his voice."** Vs 7, vs 15, 4:7 The word "Today" gives an urgency to the spoken Word of God.

- After expressing the urgency of God's call, HE gives multiple references to Israel's failure to listen and believe. This adds greater urgency to God's Call.
- They failed to believe and they all died in the wilderness! We need to believe!

Finally in Verse 11 The H.S. exhorts us to STRIVE to enter God's rest.

Hebrews 4:11 **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**

- There is a labor of diligence that is necessary to enter into the rest of God. It is a labor of listening, a striving to believe and to yield to the revealed Word of God.
- And yet for the heart that is redeemed it is a labor of love.
  - When Sharon pours her heart out to me, when she expresses her needs, I listen carefully, I have a strong desire to please her. WHY? Love.
  - Our labor in Christ is a labor of love.

BUT for the individual who stands on the outer edge of Christianity, the one who has heard God's call to rest but hasn't truly yielded.

- The one who loves the pleasures of this present world, The one who thinks they could enter God's eternal rest because they are a good person.
- There is an URGENCY to the call of God.

WHY all this urgency? Because the offer of God's rest is a limited time offer.

We see that again in the example of Israel:

The Exodus Generation, who walked in unbelief, found out the hard way that there was a limit to God's abundant patience.

- God was patient when they complained because the waters were bitter at Marah and he graciously supplied their needs.
- He sent meat in the form of quail when they turned their noses up at the Manna that he faithfully provided every morning.
- It was a miracle that He did not destroy them when they worshipped the golden calf.
- Ten times they were tested in the wilderness and they failed every test. BUT God was faithful to his Word and he brought them up to the border of the Promised Land.

God's Promised Rest was within their grasp, BUT they refused to believe.

- Listen to their words:

Numbers 14: 3 **Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"** 4 **And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."**

- Joshua and Caleb responded:

Numbers 14:7 **"The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.**

9 **Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."**

- Ten unbelieving men turned the entire nation against Joshua and Caleb.
- There at Kadesh Barnea the unbelief of the people was so powerful that they actually picked up rocks to stone Joshua and Caleb to death.
- And they might have done so but they were interrupted by the appearing of the glory of the Lord. All the people saw the glory and were stopped in their tracks.

And the Word of God came to the people of Israel saying:

Numbers 14: 28 **'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: 29 your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, 30 not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.**

- God's offer of rest was withdrawn from the unbelieving generation of Israel.



- All of those over the age of 20 with the exception of Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness.
  - God's offer of rest was a limited time offer.

Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ God's free offer of perfect peace and lasting rest has been clearly declared in all of our hearing.

- Even today there is an urgency in the call of God a seriousness that requires your response.
- Will you believe the Word that God has spoken?

Psalm 116: 5 **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.**

6 **The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.**

7 **Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.**

8 **For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;** 9 **I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.**

God has dealt bountifully with us! He gave his one and only Son so that those who believe would NOT perish but have everlasting life.

This morning I hold God's offer of rest out to you... Won't you come?