

God's Sabbath Rest

Hebrews 4:1-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 24, 2022

Please open up to the book of Hebrews, which has been affectionately called “The riddle of the New Testament” or “The mystery of the New Testament” because it contains so many mysterious doctrines. We could talk all morning about all the mysteries in this book, one of them could be the doctrine of Melchizedek, the great priest-king of Salem, or how Jesus comes from the line of Melchizedek. You can read about him in the Psalms and the book of Genesis, but Hebrews is the only one who tells you how he relates to Christ. This book is the only one who tells you how Melchizedek reminds us of Him, because it's a wonderful doctrine in this book. Another one would be the doctrine of Jesus' high priesthood. That's another thing that Hebrews talks about. There are other books of the Bible that mentioned that as well, but not like Hebrews. In fact, if you type in Jesus' high priesthood in your Google search engine or something, you're going to see the book of Hebrews come up, because it's a very important doctrine in here. And you see this with other ones, like the believer's rest and the New Covenant and the hall of faith. Hebrews talks about things like the cloud of witnesses and the heavenly Jerusalem and the new and living way. It gives us titles for Christ, like, “Our Great Apostle” and “Our Sanctifier,” and “The Author of our Salvation,” because it really says things that no other book does. It's a very important part of the Scriptures to us. That's why it's so precious to us and this morning we come to Hebrews chapter four. That's our passage for today. And it tells us about another fascinating subject when it says,

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to 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 son 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.

We will stop the reading there because at this point in that reading, you kind of scratch your head and say, “What was that all about?” It's a difficult passage to read, you can tell that just by going through it like this, but a key word in here is found in verse one, and that is the word *rest*. It's repeated several times in the chapter about a promise of entering rest. What it means is that just as God made a promise of rest to Israel, so He's made a promise to you. And just as God has extended an offer of peace to them, by entering the promised land, you have an offer of that as well, unless you come short of it. That's what it says there in verse one, you have that offer of peace and rest and contentment, where you can say it as well with my soul, but not if you fail to believe like Israel. That's the point of the passage. It's a tough passage to interpret. I'll say that on the front end, but there is a very good reminder in here and we will get to that.

But just to say a few words about this, when you study the Bible as a whole, it becomes very clear that God has a special place in His heart for Israel. I talked about that last week, but I have to say it again because it's such a big deal to the Scriptures. But when you look at the Old Testament, like the author of Hebrews does here, you can't escape the fact that the Lord has a tender place in His mind for the Jews. Not for the Gentiles; He will bring the Gentiles in later. But in the Old Testament, His focus was on Israel. And it was a pretty powerful love He had for them because they failed Him once here at the gates of the promised land, but God didn't give up on Him. And they rejected Him once and His offer of the promised land because they failed to obey. But the Lord didn't let them go because He deeply cared about them.

In fact, I don't know if you know this or not, but the Old Testament, or the part from Exodus onwards covers a timeframe of about 1000 years of history. If you were to put that on a timeline, it covers almost an entire millennium. And it's all about one thing, and one thing only, and that is the Jews and how they disobeyed God. Because it's really the same story. God gave them a command and they disobeyed it. Then God gave them another command, and they disobeyed again. And then God gave them another command, and they disobeyed again. Then He gave them another one. And they did it again over and over and over again for 1000 years. You think your patient with your children? Can you imagine? And yet in the midst of all that, the Lord still forgave them. Even their name demonstrates this, because I've told you before the name "Israel" means "he struggles with God." If you remember that story, the Lord gave that name to their ancestor, Jacob, after he wrestled with an angel all night and fought with him. And he said, "That's a good picture of your life, Jacob. That's a good illustration of the kind of man you have become. So I'll change your name to fit that you struggle with God. You pick a fight with anybody. You're a troublemaker, if ever I saw one." And as you look at the history in the Bible that usually lived up to that name. They fought with anybody. And I mean anybody. Throughout their days, they fought with the Amalekites, Canaanites, Moabites, the people on the promised land. They fought with the Jebusites, Philistines and Amorites the other people in the land. They fought with Babylon, Persia, Rome; later on in their history outside the Bible, they fought the Catholics in the Middle Ages; they fought the Muslims, as well as the Nazis in World War Two. And they overcame all of it. The Jews survived all of that violence because the Lord holds them in the palm of His hand.

In fact, if you want to see this, keep your finger in the book of Hebrews and turn back with me to Ezekiel chapter 16. I just want to turn there with you because it shows you this powerful love that God has for the people of Israel. Because after the Lord had sent them off into slavery, after they had rebelled to the point that He sent them out of the promised land or sent them out of the land. During the exile, Ezekiel 16 says,

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations and say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. [In other words, you weren't born Jewish. You were a Gentile like everybody else when I took you in.] As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, "Live!" Yes, I said to you while you were in your blood, "Live!" I made you numerous like plants in the field.

Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare.

Then I passed by you, and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD. Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet. And I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands, a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth.

And then down in verse 15 it says, "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot." I won't go into the rest of the details of this passage because it gets pretty graphic. But the idea is that God took Israel in when she was nothing. He found her as a nation when she was kicking about in her blood. And He did all these wonderful things for her. And what did she do? She cheated on him. She betrayed him by going after other lovers. Verse 32 says she even did it with strangers, people she hardly even knew at all. Verse 33 says she even bribed other nations to do it. She paid them to commit adultery with her which is horrendous. And yet, if you look in verse 60, here's how Ezekiel concludes this word. He says, "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you." And that means, in spite of all the wicked things Israel did, God would still remember His covenant with him. In spite of all their adulteries, and all their shames and all their harlotries and all their prostitutions for 1000 years. He would still take them in. Can you imagine that? Do you know anybody who would do that? We counsel people who want to leave their marriage after one act of adultery. Can you imagine for a millennium? It makes you wonder why and the only thing I know to say to that is because this: we're talking about God here, we're not talking about a man. We're talking about the love of the Lord and not the love of a normal human being. It's been said that there's no hole so deep that God's love and grace is not deeper still. And this is a reminder that because Israel had gone into a hole, they got themselves stuck in a bind, and God bailed them out. And the principle that we're going to look at this morning is that He will do the same thing for you, but only if you believe. He'll forgive you as well with the same mercy and kindness and grace, but not if you reject Him like Israel did in the wilderness. Make no mistake, God will save Israel, and He will rescue a people for Himself. But he won't save individual Jews if they don't believe in Him. They do have a responsibility and that which brings us back to the book of Hebrews.

So if you want to turn back there with me, and just gave you all that background because it serves our purpose of understanding the passage. And if you look in Hebrews four verse one again, it says this, it says, "Therefore let us fear if [in light of that reminder], while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to come short of it." Now I'll explain this more just in a moment but a key word there is that word *rest* and it's the Greek term, *katapausis*. It comes from the word *kata* or down and *pausis* or sit; it literally means to sit down, or take it easy, because you stop your work. The author brings it up here in order to say that this is what God has given you in Christ. This is what He is offering you if you believe in Him, He will bring you to a place where the work will stop and the wandering in the wilderness will come to an end. And, but you have to believe. In fact, I've told you before the word rest can be used several different ways. Because it can be used to refer to our salvation, or the believers rest. And it can be used to refer to heaven or our eternal rest. And it can be used to refer to the promised land or Israel's national rest, and the context will determine the meaning here. You are going to see it used several

different ways in the chapter. But the idea here is that however you look at it, Israel didn't get to have any of that because they turned their back on God. Verse two says that they had the word of God preached to them, but they didn't listen to it, which means they heard sermon after sermon after sermon like we do. And they heard lesson after lesson after lesson, but it profited them nothing, because they said, "Who cares? It's just another one." Verse six also says they disobeyed it. In other words, not only did they ignore the message of God, but they took it one step further: they actually rebelled against it because they thought they were smarter than God. And as a result, the Lord says, you can't have this. You can't come into the promised land.

This is very applicable because we all have a tendency to do this when we come to church. I told you last time, we all have a tendency to listen to sermons and say, who cares? It's just another one. What's the big deal? I heard it all before. It's just Pastor Jeremy or Kevin or Quinten up there. It's not Steve Lawson. No one can deny the fact that we don't have the gift Steve Lawson has, but we're preaching from the same book, aren't we? We're teaching from the same Scriptures. And that's what you need to be listening to. I'm sure that the Israelites in the wilderness heard some good sermons and some bad ones. I'm sure there are times they had some good teachers and some terrible ones, you know, don't get Hezekiah back up here again, who put us all to sleep. I also told you that we have to be careful with this because we have a tendency to go home and open up the Bible during our quiet times, and do the same thing there because we say, "I don't need to follow this stuff. I don't need to take it seriously. I know more than God does. Because I really need to lust right now. I really need to look at that pornography on my computer instead of listening to the Bible." The problem is that God hates it when you act that way. You can't stand it because it shows that you don't believe it, your heart is too hard. And instead, you need to repent of that attitude. You can't get rest that way. There's no way to get peace with that kind of mindset.

In my studies this week, I found that the United States Center for Disease Control said that half of all those who die before the age of 65 do it because of a stress related issue. And the Harvard Business Review produced a study where they said 60 to 90% of people who go to the hospital go for an anxiety related problem. North America consumes more than \$850 million worth of anti-anxiety medication. 50 million Americans attend support groups to help them deal with anxiety related problems. Several other findings said that half of all Canadians say they struggle with it too because they just can't find rest. And I know there's lots of reasons for that. It's not a one size fits all as to why people are anxious. But you can't deny the fact that one reason people are so stressed out today is because of sin. One reason they're so anxious is because God has told them what to do and they don't do it. And as a result, He's convicting them and bringing them no peace. And I just want to say if that's you this morning, that's what we're going to be talking about, because God has an answer for that. And it's only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. I told you before that the Jews weren't shut out of the promised land because they killed somebody. And they weren't kept out of it because they committed adultery or incest or something horrific, it was simply because they wouldn't listen. And the reminder of this passage is for us not to do that.

So if you're taking notes this morning, we're going to talk about four things you can do to help you enter God's rest in Hebrews chapter 4 verses one through 11. And the first one is very simple, and we're just following the text here, but that is, you need to hear the Word of God preached to you. This is so important that it's actually mentioned several times throughout the book of Hebrews. But the first thing you can do to help you enter God's rest is to hear the Word of God preached to you, which means you need to take the sermons and pay attention to them. If you would read in verse one, it says, "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." You

can see here this passage begins with the word therefore, which points you back to the previous passage is given to take you back up to what the author says in chapter three, verse 17, where it says, "And with whom was He angry for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient. So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." And that's maybe a little hard to follow. But what that means is, who was God angry with for 40 years? It was Israel. And whose fault was it that they were shut out of the promised land? It was the Jews' fault, they were the ones to blame; it wasn't the fault of the Amorites or Jebusites, or Canaanites, it was their own sin that did that to them. And the author says, "Therefore, let us fear, let us take it to heart, let us be concerned, so we don't do the same thing. Because if it happened to them, it could happen to you. If they did it, you could do the same. So therefore, let us fear."

It says, "If while a promise remains of entering His rest, any of you may seem to have come short of it." And we're going to get into some of the details of this in a second, but the phrase seems to come short of it. It refers to the fact that the Jews weren't a long way off from the promised land when that happened to them. And they weren't like 1000 miles away, when they got shut out, they were right on the edge of it. They were right on the border. And the application is that it's possible to be right up next to the church, right next to the Bible, right next to the word of God and the promise is brought to you from the pulpit and you miss it because you're too distracted. That's what they did.

Just to give you some background on this, I looked it up the desert of Sinai actually borders a land of Israel, it's their neighbor to the west. And it's a long, hot, barren, brown stretch of land that serves as a land bridge between two countries. It has Egypt on one side and Israel on the other, it's just right smack dab in the middle. And it has the Mediterranean Sea above it and the Red Sea below it. So it kind of creates like a funnel; you have to go through if you're going from one place to the other, like one long tunnel that locks you in until you can only go east or west; there is just no other way to go. It's also three times the size of Israel. If you look at it on a map, it's 23,000 square miles as opposed to Israel's 8000. So it's the size of a small country at the time, which is why the Jews kept walking and walking and walking in there and traveling and traveling and traveling. Because once you are in it, you feel like there's no way out. This is also the place where Moses went to after he left Egypt. This is where he worked for 40 years as a shepherd, before the Lord called him. So he was very familiar with it. He worked with sheep there before he worked with people. And he knew how serious it was when God banished the Jews there. He knew how big a deal it was when He said, "You can't come into the promised land." But the author's point here is that it didn't have to be that way. The Jews didn't have to be banished there if they would have done this, it says, "Therefore let us fear if while a promise remains of entering His rest," and that means whereas the Jews didn't have a promise to enter God's rest, you do. And whereas this generation did not have an opportunity to get it any more, you still have it. But you have to do what verse two says when it says, "For indeed, we've had good news preached to us. But the word they heard did not profit them. And the word prophet there needs to jump out at you and kind of catch your eye because it refers to something that gives you a return on your investment.

This is where things fell apart for Israel, because they didn't profit from anything God told them. They didn't get anything out of it. The sermons they heard went in one ear and out the other. The Bible they read just past the one side of the head and not the other side. Because verse two says they did not unite it with their faith. That means it didn't unite it with a genuine heart or a sincere heart that wanted to please God. They just went to church just to go to church. And they just went to the tabernacle just to say or do a ritual. You may not have ever thought of this,

or you might have but this generation of Jews really had one of the greatest privileges in human history, because they were the first ones to receive the law of God. They were the first ones to have the word of God in a written form. Other groups had the word of God before them. Men like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob heard the Lord speak to them, but not like this because they had it written down. So Moses did as they were journeying through the wilderness, he gave you the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And the saddest part about Israel's story is that they were breaking it as he was writing it. They were sinning against all those laws as he was putting them down. If you want to just write some of these verses in your Bibles, Exodus 31, verse 18, says that when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the Lord gave Moses the two tablets of the 10 commandments written by the finger of God. That's a beautiful verse because it says that the first copy of the 10 commandments were written by God, it was spelled out by Him as His special favor to His people. But the passage goes on to say that while the Law was given to Moses, at the top of the mountain, Israel, it was at the bottom breaking it by making a golden calf at the same time, instantly, which made Moses so angry that he came down from the mountain and smashed the tablets on the ground. They told us in school that Moses was the most wicked man in history, because he broke all 10 commandments at once. He threw them all on the ground. But the reason he did that was because he was angry with them. He thought, "Well, they broke it anyway. Might as well."

At another time, in Numbers 14, it says that the Jews sinned in another way because the Lord told them to invade the Promised Land and go in there. And this was their response: "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword?" They disobeyed again. God said, "Do it." They said, "No." That passage says the Lord was going to wipe them out over that until Moses begged them not to. Because this was the pattern of Israel. This is what they did over and over and over again, they heard the word of God and they refuse to obey it. And here's what this has to do for us today. Friends, you can't just come to church and listen to sermons and think that'll be enough for God. You can't just show up here and open your Bibles and take a few notes and say a few amens and think the Lord will be satisfied with that, He will not. He wasn't satisfied with that with Israel, He won't be satisfied with that for you. He didn't accept that kind of worship from them, He won't accept it in here. Because you have to obey it; you have to go home and live it out. Because you need to hear a sermon on sexual purity and go home and make some changes and start practicing sexual purity. Put a guard on your computer, put a protection on the screen. Find someone who will hold you accountable, whatever you have to do, you need to obey it. You need to hear a sermon on loving your wife and go home and make some changes and love your wife. Stop treating her like a doormat every time you walk through the door. Stop verbally beating up on her just because you had a bad day at work. Speak to her kindly, speak to her with tenderness. You need to hear a sermon on raising your family and go home, make changes, raise your family. We could go on and on with these things. But the point is you have to put this into practice for this reason, because it shows you're taking it seriously. It's not just a sermon to you. It's not just a show. This is the very Word of God. Let's be honest, this isn't easy to do. This is the hard stuff. This is what separates the men from the boys as we used to say. It's one thing to hear the Word of God. It's another thing to obey it. It's one thing to listen, it's another thing to go out and do something with it because it takes a whole other level of commitment. But that's what God requires.

So in order to help you with that, here are a couple practical things. It might be good for some of you to make it a point to switch off all your distractions when you come in here. We're distracted today, aren't we? Isn't it hard to listen to someone talk for 45 minutes? My sermons are getting longer, so maybe an hour. It's hard. You're used to listening to things for one second on your phone and then flipping the screen. I heard something from history that

said Abraham Lincoln's presidential debates lasted for hours. We couldn't even sit through that anymore. Because we're all so bombarded with things. So when you come in here, before the sermon starts, switch off your phone, switch off your iPad, leave the work at home for a minute, so you can zone in on this. That's one very simple way to start working on this. Another one is you need to show up on time as well. Ouch. I'm going to duck here under the pulpit while I tell you this one. I know it's hard for some people. You have little kids, I get it. It's not easy to show up on time. But you need to get here as close to 9:30 as you can, so you can hear the whole thing because it all builds up to the message. Everything we do on a Sunday morning is not random. From the songs to the prayers to the Scripture reading. It all culminates in hearing the Word of God. If you were to talk to a Catholic person and say, "Why are you going to church?" They say, "I'm going for the mass." If you were to talk to a Protestant and ask them the same question, "Why do you go to church?" They would reply, "I'm going to hear the Word of God." It all builds up to that and you don't want to miss it. You also need to make the time to pray as you do these things and ask the Lord to help you. Because you're not just listening to anyone's word when you come in here, you are listening to God's word, you're coming into His presence, you need to ask Him to help you see it that way, and be more than a spectator. But all this is to say this was a very important part of your worship, you need to hear the good news that is preached to you and unite it with your faith. And listen, friends I feel for you in this department. I'm sympathetic to how hard this is. I haven't always been a preacher. I spent years myself listening to sermons. And some of them were good, and some of them were bad. But it does remind me of the words of Charles Spurgeon, when he said that some men are greater preachers than others, but there is no greater gospel. And some men have more gifts than others, but there's no greater book to preach from. And I would encourage you, anytime you hear something from this book, go home and apply it right away. Right away.

I'll never forget the time I was in seminary, and one of my older professors was sitting in our first-year preaching lab, and listening to a man who was just laying an egg. It was bad. Because it was his first sermon. I mean, the guy had never preached before. But while he was talking, the professor was frantically taking notes, listening intently, being very serious. And someone asked him why. And the professor said, because this is God's word for me today. And it doesn't matter where it comes from. Friends, we all need to have that mindset. We need to hear the Word of God with a humble heart.

And that brings us to another thing you can do to help you enter into God's rest. And that is to trust in the sovereignty of God. This first one is that you need to hear the Word of God preached. It's not a very abstract thing to talk about applying the Word of God. But this next one is pretty theological. The author is going to shift gears here because the second thing to help you enter into God's rest is you need to trust in the sovereignty of God, which means you need to remember that God is in control of all your circumstances. And I think this is one you'll draw comfort from. But if you read in verse one, he says, "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 to those who heard, for we who have believed enter that rest. Just as He also 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." Now I just told you that the book of Hebrews has been called the riddle of the New Testament. And you can get a feel for that as you read this right here, because this does seem very riddle like to us. It's very mysterious passage. Because after talking about the subject of God's rest in the Promised Land, the author shifts gears to talk about God's rest in creation, or the kind of rest He feels after finishing the heavens now the earth. Now to be clear, he's going to bounce back and

forth from the promised land to this type of rest and other types of rest in the passage. And it's not always going to be easy to follow. But let me show you where this one comes in.

He starts off in verse three by saying that “for we who have believed enter that rest,” and that means the rest of the promised land. And then he says, “Although His works were finished from before 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 that's where he switches the metaphor there. That's where he changes to talk about another type of rest. Because the idea is that as he's talking about rest, and peace, and comfort, the author's mind goes to the place of ultimate rest, and peace and comfort. And that's only found in the person of God. Kind of like his mind goes from the horizontal plane to the heavenly one. And just to explain this a little bit when he says that, and God rested on the seventh day from all his works, that's a quotation from the book of Genesis way back in Genesis two, where it says, “Thus the heavens in the earth were completed in all their hosts. By the seventh day God had completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work.” That means that He took a break from it. God took a hiatus from working on the heavens and the earth because they were finished. It doesn't mean that God took a rest because He was tired; He wasn't tired. And that doesn't mean that God took a hiatus on the seventh day because He was weary because God doesn't get weary. He who watches over Israel will neither sleep nor slumber. He rested because the heavens and the earth were finished, and there was nothing left for Him to do with them. This is why even today, you don't see random things popping up in creation, because God created it already. John Calvin referred to this as His Sabbath rest, or His perpetual rest. And that's a good way to look at it because the word Sabbath means resting or cessation from one's labor. And that's what God did. He ceased from His works like the Jews did on the Sabbath. If you think about it, the Sabbath day was a special day for the Jews, a very cherished one, because it was the one day of the week where they would put all their labor aside and sit down for a moment and go, “Ah”; it was a moment where they would put all the tools on the shelf, everything out the door, and say, “This is nice, let me take a breather.” And the Lord did that with creation to the point that ever since the sixth day of creation, God has never had to create the heavens and the earth again. And ever since the first week, He's never had to go back and repeat it, He doesn't need to.

In fact, if you look at your passage here, when He says that the works, His works were finished, from before the foundation of the world, this doesn't come across in English, but in the Greek that's in a tense that's known as the heirens tense, which means it's in the finished tense. It describes an event that happened in the past, but it's totally completed now, to say that not only did God finish the heavens and the earth, but he finished them with a perfect finishing. And he completed them with a perfect completion. So he could be at total rest over that now and total peace. The author brings it up here to say that you can enjoy that too, if you trust in Him. And you can have the same kind of rest if you put your faith in His name, because there's nothing bigger than the heavens and the earth. Nothing larger than that. And the point is that if God can take care of them, He can take care of anything. And that's what He has done.

I also need to mention that there's another thing this passage alludes to in the greater context of Hebrews. And I had several scholars I was looking at, including John MacArthur point this out, not to me personally over the phone, but when I was reading what he said. But they all said that the term Sabbath rest is also a symbol of the true rest that's to come in Christ, and the peace that is found at the cross. Because at the cross, Jesus said, “It is finished.” And at the cross, He said, “It is done,” which means the work of salvation is done, and the payment for your sins is finished. Which is another way of looking at this whole issue of God's complete sovereignty. Because

this is how sovereign God is. He is sovereign over the greatest problem the world has ever had to face, which is the problem of sin because He dealt with it at the cross.

And this is important to remember when it comes to this issue of rest because so many people are anxious today because they forget that. They are restless and upset right now because they don't remember the fact that God is sovereign over all these things, and He has taken care of them at the cross. Because every time something bad happens in the world today, it's so common for Christians to wring their hands and say, "Oh no, what are we going to do?" And every time something tragic take place, it says so often that they bite their nails and they say, "Oh, dear, how am I going to get through this?" Some of you have seen the recent rash of shootings in the US. You've asked me about them. You've been watching the outpouring of violence in places like Alabama, and Indiana, and Texas. And it makes you want to say, How am I supposed to respond to that? As a Christian? Well, let me tell you how to respond to it. You trust in God. What am I supposed to think about all this evil? Well, this is what you're supposed to think. You're supposed to think that God has taken care of it. It will be punished in Hell, or it will be punished at the cross, but it will be punished. Because God is not watching these problems in the world today and saying to Himself, "I can't believe it, what do I do?" He knows what He's going to do. He's going to sit over it as the Sovereign King of heaven.

And that brings us to another thing you can do to help you enter into God's rest, and that is to take advantage of today. We're just going to follow this passage here. But a third thing you can do in order to help you enter into God's rest is to take advantage of today, which means that you only have a moment to accept this and believe in this and trust in Christ and be safe. So you need to jump on that. If you look in verse four, he says, "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 date, 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.'" Now remember, I told you, he's going to change his metaphors here, and go back and forth between talking about God's rest in heaven and Israel's promised land rest. And that's what you see here. Because after talking about God's rest, in verses three through four, he goes back to talking about Israel's rest in verse five, when he says, again, "they shall not enter my rest." That verse is a quotation from Psalm 95, where it talks about Israel's sin in the wilderness. And it shows how they failed to obey God there. And as a result, they were shut out of their rest, shut out of the promised land. So verse six says, "Therefore, since it remains for some to enter in, in other words, since it remains for you to enter in, this is what you need to do, you need to hear the word, the good news that is preached to you. That's the same reminder we just talked about. Except here he mentions the word *today* to show you the urgency of this. Verse seven says, "God again fixes a certain day, today." And to be honest, that word *today* is a controversial one among commentators. There's a lot of things in here that have different interpretations. But some use this word to say that God has fixed a certain day when the world will end. That's why you need to believe, because He's fixed a certain time when judgment day will come and they'll all come crashing in on us. Others have said this word refers to the certain day when Jesus will return and rapture us. Similar idea, different perspective on it. But it refers to the day when the Lord will come back and take His own, so you need to listen to the Word of God. For that reason, too, it could also mean according to the Psalm that he has fixed a day for you to die. And I think that's probably closer to the intention here. God has fixed a certain day when you will breathe your final breath, because you won't live forever. Nobody will. And therefore verse seven says, this is the conclusion to that: today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. In other

words, don't come to church with this attitude that says, I don't have to hear this, it's just another sermon. You need to soften up a little bit and hear the voice of God.

This was Israel's problem in the wilderness. And that is they didn't do that. They kept messing around with God. In fact, I don't know if you remember this story, but the book of Numbers says after the spies came back to them with their report from scoping out the promised land, the people said we can't do it because they're too big for us. The inhabitants are too large. And the Lord said, "Okay, then you can't have it." You people are going to stay out here for 40 years until an entire generation of you dies and remember what they did. A group of them broke off and said, "Okay, we'll go do it now. Okay, we'll go fight." God said it was too late and time has run out. They went out, tried to fight, got beaten back. Because the day to obey was passed. At another time, after the people worship the golden calf, Moses begged the Lord not to punish them. He asked him not to wipe them out from the planet. And God said, "Okay, I won't wipe them out. But whoever has sinned this way, I will blot out of My book." Why? For the same reason, they had their chance, and they blew it. They had their moment to believe. And they didn't listen. That's the idea in this passage. That's what he's trying to drive home to you, because God's mercy is eternal, and His grace is everlasting. And His love has no limits, and it has no boundaries. And you'll never come to a time when you run out of it. But at the same time, you can come to a place when it doesn't help you anymore. And you can come to a hardened heart frame of mind when His love won't do you any good, because you keep rejecting it. And that's what this is referring to here. You don't want to do that with God.

I heard one pastor say it this way, when he said you could look at this like an hourglass, you guys remember those hourglasses? You turn it upside down and the sand all falls to the bottom. I looked for one of those and apparently they are hard to find these days, except on your iPhone, you can find a picture of one, I was going to put a big one up here on stage and turn it upside down, but I couldn't find one. But he said Your life is like that, because when it begins, it looks like a bunch of grain of grains of sand falling down, rushing in on each other, going on endlessly. And each one of those grains of sand represents an opportunity for you to do something for the Lord, every one of those grains of sands represents a chance for you to listen. Which is nice, because at first they seem endless. But the truth is they're not. The time will come eventually when those grains of sand will all be gone. And a time will come soon when there won't be any more opportunities left. So the time to do something for Christ is now. That's the message of this passage. If you're struggling with sexual purity, and you hear a sermon on sexual purity, and you're wondering, when do I apply that? The answer is, now. You do it today, because you don't know if you'll have a second chance. And if you're struggling with loving your wife, and you hear a sermon on loving your wife, and you wonder, when do I apply that? The answer is the same. Raising your family, do it now. Forgiving your enemies, do it now. Loving your lost neighbour, do it now. Because the grains of sand are moving, not slowing down. I grew a beard recently and it has white in it. I thought I got some donut stuff on it or something and it wouldn't come off. The time goes very, very fast.

And it brings us to a final thing you can do to help you enter into God's rest. Just to review these other ones here in the passage. The first one is, you need to hear the Word of God preached to you. Secondly, you need to trust in the sovereignty of God and His control over all things. He kind of takes it in another direction there. And he comes back in the third point to say you need to take advantage of today. Do this right away.

Just out of curiosity, I studied this and found the typical person lives for about 25,550 days. Sounds like a lot. You know what that is when you break it down? It's 3650 weeks, and something like 2 billion seconds. That's all you get, no more. Because the time to do something is now. There's an urgency in this passage.

One more thing to help enter into God's rest is to remember that there is still hope for you. A fourth thing you can do to help enter into God's rest is to remember that there is still hope for you, which means if you failed in this area, and you find yourself developing a hard heart, like he's talking about in chapter four and chapter three, there is time for you to do something about it. If you read on in verse six, he says, "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 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." And we'll stop there, because the main focus of this passage is that word remains. That means there remains an opportunity to enter heaven for you. Again, the door was closed for Israel, they had their chance and they blew it, they had a lot of chances, and they blew them. But you have another one. So it needs to encourage you to act on this. It's really interesting in a passage like this, where he goes into such deep theology and such tough things to interpret the message is very simple. Believe right away, the pastor says in verse eight, that if Joshua had given them rest, he would have not spoken of another day after that. And the idea is that after Moses died, another leader took his place. And after Moses passed away and was buried outside the Promised Land, another one stepped up named Joshua, who brought them into the land. Joshua, in a sense, gave them their promised land of rest. But even then, they still sinned against the Lord. Even then, Israel wasn't happy with it. So the Lord in His grace offered them something better. And that's what he's still offering to you, an eternal rest. Verse nine, if you look in your Bibles, calls this a Sabbath rest. That's what God is offering to you now. The same kind of peace and comfort that the Lord feels now after creating the heavens and the earth. Which is a pretty encouraging promise, because I've told you, God has an absolute rest in heaven, and a total peace in every sense of the word where the troubles of this life don't bother him anymore. And the problems of this world don't affect him. And that's what he's presenting to you. Would you like to have that? Is anybody tired this morning? That's the number one thing people tell me when they come to church on Sunday. I'm like, well, we don't start till 9:30. It's not like we started seven. But we're all tired. We're worn out. God knows that. And He's offering you an endless rest.

Verse 10 calls it His rest, or the rest that belongs to Him alone. Because the idea is that not only does God experience this, he's offering it to you. And not only does He offer it to you, but He's the only one who can do that. You will not get this rest from money. You will not get this rest from drugs. You will not get this rest from alcohol, you won't get it from sex. You won't get it from companionship, you won't get it from watching TV 14 hours a day.

You get it from God. Nothing else in creation can give you this. The animals don't have this, the plants don't have this, the planets and stars and moon and sun. They work all day long. They strive, strive, strive, sweat, sweat, sweat, just like you do. God is different. He has a perfect peace and you can have it too.

The verse says this as well: "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from his." And that word *works* here, it's another word with multiple meanings in the passage. Because it can refer to your anxious works. If you're taking notes, you could even write the word anxious works beside this, where you go around biting your nails all the time and wringing your hands and wondering what do I do now? How am I going to make it through the day? Christ came to give you rest from that. And it could also refer to your daily works. Or just your regular works, where you go around running around Chilliwack like a chicken with your head cut off. I've seen you guys on a Monday. You're dangerous on the road, racing from job to job. He came to

give you rest from that in heaven as well. That kind of work. It's hard going to Walmart. I heard someone say, "I need God's prayer to make it through the day." And another person said, "I need God's prayer to make it through Walmart." This can refer to your self-righteous works. You could write that next to the passage, your legalistic works where you try to earn God's favor and purchase His forgiveness by doing a bunch of things because God has given you freedom from that; the Cross has rendered that useless now, for the one who entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, all his works, every single one of them.

And this concept is so important, it would be good to pause for a moment here and chew on this at the end, because we have talked about some deep things this morning. I mean, I wore my library out studying this passage. And anytime you talk about these big heavy subjects, there can be a tendency to lose the forest through the trees and miss the big picture. So let me stop for a moment because we don't want to do that. Let's talk about the big picture here. If we were to sum up the big picture of this passage, I think we could do it with one word, and that is the word *sincerity*. You need to be sincere when you come to the things of God. That's how you get your rest. That's how you find peace. You don't do it by faking it. You don't do it by pretending you're doing it, by being a real person in front of a real God. Because this rest is available for you, the Sabbath rest is yours to have. But you can only have it if you really mean it. And follow God inwardly and not just outwardly like the Jews did. I mean, to give the Jews some credit here, they followed God, didn't they? They went after Him, they worked really hard in the wilderness. But they didn't do it sincerely. And that was the problem. When you read the Old Testament, read through the book of Numbers, and even Exodus toward the end there, their time in the wilderness looks really hard. And then it looks exhausting. 40 years of this work, work, work, sweat, sweat, sweat, because they would wake up in the morning, pack up their tents and walk all day long, morning, noon, and night. And get up in the next day and do it again. And wake up the next day and do it again. And wake up the next day and do it again. And wake up the next day and do it again. All for nothing, all to no avail. Because it never took them anywhere. Round and round in circles, up and down. They went on the desert of Sinai. I'm afraid some people are doing that when they come to church. I'm afraid some of you may be doing that in the Christian life. Because you wake up, go to church on a Sunday and sit there. And then you wake up, go to church on Sunday and sit there. And then you wake up, go to church on Sunday, and sit there all for no purpose, all to no avail. Because it never takes you anywhere either. Because you're just going through the motions. I don't say that to be harsh. I say it to help you to repent. That's what all of this study is showing you.

In fact, if you look in verse 11, he says, in this last verse here, he says, "Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience." And the word diligence there means to strive or make haste, or make every effort. And it's very unusual because it falls into a passage that's telling you that your work is finished. He's offering you rest, and he's telling you to be diligent. What does that mean? Well, that means that it's so easy to fake it when you come to church. And it's so easy to fall into the trap of hypocrisy like we're talking about. So you need to be diligent not to do that. I mean, let's face it, Friends, when you come to church, the reason this is so easy is because nobody knows who's really listening anyway. Nobody knows who's taking this seriously. You guys don't have a sign over your head that says I paid attention today. You don't have a light flashing across your chest that says, "I really listen. I really mean it." It's so easy to play games I mean, the Jews were such a powerful illustration of this they weren't religious like we are. They were moral people like we are. They were God-fearing people like we are in a sense. They went to church every Sunday, pay their taxes, waved the flag, stood for right and wrong, upheld family values, they probably would have even voted Republican. I met a Jew in Israel one time, an orthodox Jew, who had the dreadlocks, and he came up to me and said, You're American. Are you Democrat? I voted Republican. I thought, "What in the world?" You're a long

way from that. But at the same time, many of these Jews died, and get this, they went to hell. They were just like you and me on outward sense. And at the same time, they perished and they were lost, because it didn't have the one thing that matters, and that was a sincere heart with the Lord. Friends, you have to have that this morning. If you don't hear anything else from this text, you've got to hear that you have to be real with God, because Jesus Christ did come for sinners. And He really did die to pay your price of your sin. He lived a perfect life, free from sin, free from evil, free from depravity. And with that perfect life, he allowed the Father to punish Him and crush Him and crucify Him on the cross so that He could say, "It is finished." And he could say that work is done. But that only applies to people who think they've sinned in the first place. And that only applies to people who think they need it. Are you one of those people today? I pray that you are.

In my studies this week, I came across a story that was told by some rabbis about the time when the Jews were wandering in the wilderness, and they asked Moses, how long until we get there? Like a bunch of children, right? How much longer do we have to do this? And Moses said, "Until an entire generation of you dies." To which they asked him, "What happens then?" And Moses said, "For those who believe in Yahweh, your wondering will be over. For those who don't. Your wondering will just begin." Friends, I tell you that because he's right, if you trust in Yahweh, if you trust in Christ, when you die, your wandering will be over and you will be at rest. But you have to do it yourself.

Let me pray for you this morning that the Lord would bring you to the place of trust in Him. Heavenly Father, there's not a man or a woman or child here this morning. Who doesn't need rest. We are all worn out from this world. We're all worn out from the pace of it. We're all tired from the day to day, hustle and bustle of life and we're even tired from the hustle and bustle and temptation and weariness of sin. We get up in the morning, we fight sin, we go to bed at night, we fight sin, we do it all throughout the day. And, Lord, we are so looking forward to going to a place where sin is no more and the work of fighting it is finished. But we praise You that we can study a passage like this and remember that in a sense, our sin has been taken care of completely. And we can be at rest now putting our faith in Jesus' name. We thank You for Christ, thank you for this efficient death of our Saviour, for the sufficient rest that He provides. And I pray that for any who are here this morning who don't have that that they would come to it for the first time now and be saved. For those who have it, may this be an encouragement to them. They don't need anything else. They don't need another Saviour. They don't need another form of peace. They already have all they need in Him. And I pray they would see that and trust and thank you, Lord for this word we've heard from you. Help us go home and apply it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.