

Hebrews 4:1-11

Once you find it place your finger there & make your way to Isaiah 55
 “Enter The Rest”

This morning we’re simply going to carry on & continue in the context that we found ourselves in the flow of as our time came to a close last week. The break between Ch 3 & Ch 4 here is really one of those unfortunate breaks because there is no change or sense of switching subject matter between the 2 Ch’s.

& In essence we’re talking about responding positively *to* God’s voice as opposed to resisting & rebelling *against* God’s voice. That when God gives to you & gives to me His word we’re to receive it, that is believe it & act *upon* it, because anything short of that is to harden our hearts *against* it. You see to not respond to God’s Word is to make for a hardened resolve *against* God’s word. It’s like when Jesus said, “*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*” Matt 12:30 There is no neutral territory when it comes to one’s position concerning J.C. You’re either on His side, or you’re against His side but you can’t say, “I’m really not on any side.” Oh you may not be hostile in your heart against the Lord, but if you haven’t made your stand *with* Him, don’t be deceived you’re on the side that stands *against* Him. Well, the same holds true when it comes to our taking in or being open to the Word of God. We either *receive it & are changed by it, or we reject it & are hardened against it but we can’t take a neutral stand regarding it. & I’d like to tell you that the application of that principle applies only to the unbelieving community, it doesn’t.* Right here, right now I have no doubt that the vast majority of us would fall into the category of being believers. Yet we sit here under the waterfall of the word of God & we have a choice. You will either hear God’s word, receive God’s word, take it in, think it through & allow God to have His will done His way in your heart today; or you’ll sit hear listening cordially but not really take it in or allow it to impact you specifically so as to make any real difference in you personally. Translation: you’ll harden your heart against it rather than really open your heart to it.

& Dangerous is the position that hardens itself against the word of God, not really believing it, not really trusting God’s word, God’s ability on your behalf to do what He said He would do. That was the folly of the nation of Israel concerning what we’ve categorized as the “Exodus experience.” Oh they were saved, they were delivered, they crossed through the Red Sea, they saw the entire army of oppression destroyed as the Sea closed in *on* them & caved in *over* them. They saw the reality of God’s miraculous protection & provision as He provided manna day by day, water from the rock, they saw the lightning, heard the thunder, felt the earthquake, heard the very voice of God speak to them from Mt Sinai, they had the pillar of cloud to lead them by day, & the pillar of fire by night. God delivered them in dramatic fashion. Yet for all that when God brought them to the border of the Promised Land, there they were at Kadesh Barnea, the symptoms of unbelief began to surface when they sent spies into the land that He’d *promised* to give them. Why send in the spies? God gave them His word, the land was theirs, they were going to enter in to the fruit of another nation’s labor, God was going to give them rest all around. 12 went in, & only 2 came back w/a good report, 10 came back freaked out & full of fear, “The people of this land are giants, we’re like grasshoppers in their sight, they’ll crush us.” & Panic permeated the people, they didn’t believe God, they forfeited their faith & fell short of the promise of rest. God sentenced them to a 40 death march in the wilderness until that entire generation who didn’t believe Him perished in the wilderness.

They didn't enter in to the rest He'd promised because of unbelief, that's the context we're entering into this morning, the danger of disbelief, of forfeiting our faith. Now listen, we're not talking about the rest of "salvation" here, they passed through the Red Sea & were saved in dramatic, dare I say extraordinary & remarkable fashion. But we are talking about what we might refer to as the rest of "submission." **That is truly taking to heart, relying on, & resting in the word & work of God on our behalf walking in victory through a life led in the Spirit as opposed to struggling, straining, being all the time stressed out in our walk trying to accomplish in the efforts of the flesh what only the work of the Spirit can bring to pass in our lives.**

"Rest" who couldn't use that? Humanity works for the weekend, "you deserve a break today" we take vacations & spend exorbitant amounts of money seeking to simply achieve a little rest. But there is a rest that God offers that will permanently guard your heart & your mind, a peace that He will bring to your soul that will abide in you till the day you depart from this earth. You don't have to go anywhere to get it, or spend any amount of money to achieve it, He extends the invitation & offers it to you freely, it's free of charge. You're in Isaiah 55; look at Vs 1 (through 3).

There is a rest that God wants you to walk in & enjoy all the days of your life, why resist it, why reject it, why not trust in the Lord & believe God for it? Remember these words? "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake." Ps 23:1-3 **Translation: The Lord will "rest" you in salvation, & He will further "rest" you in submission, look at Vs 1, Heb 4.**

Vs1-2

You see there it is. There was a rest that God had for them, that He desired for them to enter into yet because of unbelief they never did. & Vs 1 Begins "Therefore (& we've spoken of that word a lot lately, it brings practical application to the principle at hand for us) since a *promise* remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it." **The writer of the book of Hebrews is really bringing it home for you & me, getting right up in our proverbial face about how this makes for application to our lives bringing us to that same point of making our choice. Do we *believe* God for His *promise* or do we *balk* at the promise of God in *unbelief*? God has made you a promise, now what do you do? Receive it, or reject it?** Paul wrote to the Galatians & when he got to what we have as the 3rd Vs of the 3rd Ch he said, "*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" Gal 3:3 & Can I just say that, that pretty much sums up the entirety of what we're getting at right here? You see, (we've rehearsed it already) Israel was delivered miraculously from Egypt, the place of bondage & hard labor, they watched & witnessed the hand of God moving incredibly on their behalf, God had done the whole thing, from deliverance, to protection, to provision, it was all the LORD. **Yet when they got to the border of the Promised Land, that next place of growth & development, leaning on the Lord, trusting in the Lord, drawing from the Lord, they failed, they forfeited their faith, why? They looked around, they saw the difficulties, they saw the dilemmas, they saw the impossibilities & they said, "We can't do this!"** But here's the deal, what part of it had *they* done so far? None of it, God didn't ask *them* to do it, they had "begun in the Spirit" now they were looking to finish the deal in the efforts of their flesh, they were overwhelmed, outshined, overcome because of their lack of ability to accomplish the task at hand. **But it was never their task to accomplish in the 1st place, God was going to do the whole thing, all they had to do was trust Him for it & act upon it. But like Peter walking on the water, they got their eyes off the Lord, on the storm, & sank.**

Now, there are all kinds of believers who have been delivered from this world, the chains & bondage of sin, they've seen God's provision, God's protection, He's done the whole thing, they had nothing to do w/it. Then they get to this point whereby God says, "Ok, it's time to move on in your walk & relationship w/Me, there's a rest (a further work) I want to bring you into." & They survey the situation, they stop & "spy out" what the walk & life led in the Spirit seems to be, they see how good it is, how sweet the fruit is that's supplied therein, but they see the discipline, the difficulties that seem to await, the dilemmas that they can't see any way around & they say, "There's no way, I can't do this, this is too much for me what was I ever thinking in the 1st place." & They forfeit their faith, & relinquish the rest that God has promised to them & lead their lives in relative misery, oh they're saved, but they're miserable. Always stressed out, always struggling in their walk, they've made peace *with* God but know *nothing* of the peace *of* God. Listen, it's true you can't do it, I can't do it, God never asked us to do it, having begun in the Spirit we're not going to be perfected in the flesh. **He asked us to simply believe in His promise; He is able to bring us into the Land, in to that rest, that walk of victory & life led in the Spirit. Are there difficulties? Sure, trials & tribulations? You bet; is God greater than them all? Absolutely. Listen, don't forfeit your faith, but rather *fear* lest any of you seem to fall short of that rest.**

"Fear?" Yeah, now I'm not talking about a fear of failing God, but a fear of forfeiting my faith hoping that I can just "work things out" in the end. Do you realize there is such thing as what we might refer to as a "healthy" sense of fear? **I hope there are some things in this life that you fear, you should fear walking too close to the edge of a cliff, you should fear your child running into the road w/out looking both ways, there are things that it is healthy for us to fear. & The greatest sense of fear you can have is the fear of God.**

The fear of God is something that is radically, in fact dreadfully lacking in our culture even in the church today. Yet few things are as healthy & spiritually safe for you & me as the fear of God. Now the fear of man brings a snare, but whoever fears God, trusts in the Lord will be safe. The children of Israel feared man; forsook the fear of God & in so doing forsook their faith in God's ability to deliver His promise. **The bible has a lot to say about the fear of God, considerably more than we have time examine today. But good godly fear is healthy for you & me, & I'm not talking about a fear of disappointing God, but rather that fear of allowing Him to slip from His proper place as the priority of my life & the ramifications that'll bring into my life.** There should be such respect, such reverence for who God is in my life that I fear *anything* or *anyone* else usurping His position upon the throne in my heart because that will reap havoc untold in my life. The fear of God will bless you & benefit you more than you could ever imagine in this life. The bible says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*" Prov 9:10 Prov 10:27, "*The fear of the Lord prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.*" **If you fear God you'll think twice about the things that you do & take part in, those who don't fear God often times die young via substance abuse, std's & on & on we could go w/the fingerprints that mark the life of the guy or the gal who has no fear of God.** Prov 14:26-27, "*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.*" You see there it is. I'll give you one more, one that always surfaces in my heart when the subject of the fear of the Lord comes up. Ps 19:9, "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;*" **The fear of the Lord is clean, it'll keep you out of trouble, from tempting fate, it'll teach you wisdom & knowledge. But too often we're way too concerned about what man thinks & not nearly concerned enough about what God thinks, & it serves to snare us.**

& You'll either neglect what man thinks, or you'll neglect what God thinks but there's no balancing the 2, we can be a man pleaser or a God pleaser but we can't be both. Jesus said, "...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt 10:28 You see to fear the Lord is to trust in the Lord, but the fear of man, or of circumstance, or situations that surround me invites unbelief to take root in my heart, trust God, & enter in to His rest.

Vs2

Now when we read of the "gospel" that was preach to them as well as to us it's not a specific reference to the message of J.C. & Him crucified, but rather a general message of deliverance & the gift of new life as by the power of God. That message was proclaimed to them, & it's been proclaimed to us, but the word was of no profit to them. They weren't blessed *by* it, they didn't benefit from it.

Now I don't know about you (I probably do) but I want the word of God to be profitable to me, I want to benefit from it, then what's the key, what unlocks the mystery of having God's Word be of benefit to me? Notice, once you've heard it you have to mix it, you have to mingle it w/faith, they didn't. We read those who heard it didn't mix it w/faith. **Now this word "mix" actually has what I would call "digestive qualities" to it. It speaks of a permeating, an assimilating so that it actually becomes a part of who you are, it speaks of taking something in, in such a way as to have it actually be apart of what you're made of. You eat a piece of bread, your body extract the nutrients so that they're actually absorbed into the very fiber of your being, it's an essential aspect of your make up.** Now, what did Jesus say? He said, "*I am the bread of life.*" John 6:48 He said, "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" John 6:51 & Then He began to speak about what it meant to eat of His flesh, drink of His blood, & the essence was of the taking in of His word down into the inner most part of our being so that it permeates us, infiltrates us, & is assimilated into us becoming the very fiber of who we are. **It "mixes" w/us; the word of God has to be mixed, "stirred in" (if you will) through faith. Believing it, how does believing it look in real life? By acting upon it, doing what God has said trusting Him to be that source of provision, protection, & victory. Unbelief will equal disobedience in your life, if you believe you *will* act upon it. Belief translates into action.** (example?) Notice

Vs 3

Who didn't enter, who didn't act? "They" (that is the unbelieving) didn't, but we who *have* believed, enter, or act upon God's Word. Belief translates into obedience, unbelief translates into disobedience. & You might just notice that simply hearing the word, or having the opportunity to respond to the word wasn't enough. **They all heard it, they all had the opportunity to act upon it, just like we sit here today & we all hear God's word, we all have the opportunity to respond to God's word to enter into His rest, that's God's invitation to you & to me. But the only way it'll profit you, benefit & bless you is if you're willing to respond to it & receive it, that is enter into it by faith.** As you well know as we progress through this book we'll come to find that w/out faith it's impossible to please God, for He who comes to Him must believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Now w/regard to this rest there's a couple things we need to realize. #1 Who's rest is it? Did you see it there in Vs 3, it's not my rest, its God's rest, He calls it "My" rest. It's God's personal rest that He invites you to enter into. His personal peace that He's calling you to. Think about it; is God in Heaven at rest? Is He worried about anything? Uptight about how something is going to pan out? He's not worried at all; He's at rest, at perfect peace.

& The invitation goes out for you to take part in that, understand that rest isn't found in a certain place, the top 10 vacation places on the planet, no rest is found in a person, the person of J.C. & As I mentioned there's the rest of salvation, but there's also the rest of submission, we see both in view in this passage before us today. Remember when Jesus said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" Matt 11:28-30 He speaks of rest twice there, the 1st is the rest of salvation, coming to Him. The 2nd is the rest of submission, placing His yoke upon us & learning of Him, finding rest for our souls. It's equivalent to making peace *with* God & then coming into the peace *of* God to guard our heart & mind in Christ Jesus. So many will make peace *with* God, but fall short of entering in to the peace of God, the rest *of* God.

God is at rest, His work (creative works) have been finished from the foundation of the world, He's not working at creation. It's finished. Now, when we speak of God's rest don't think of passive inactivity, He's still active in the world. Don't think of the rest of God translating into your life in the form of a remote, a bag of chips & a glass of soda on the couch. **I find that people who experience the rest of God work more from that place of rest than they ever did from that place of frantic paranoia hoping to somehow do something that will cause God to see them as acceptable. We've been created in Christ Jesus for good works; God has prepared them beforehand that we should walk in them. So we're not talking about passive inactivity, but rather that sense of working in order to find my righteousness, before God, I'm at rest.** Because the work of the new creation in Christ Jesus is finished as well, & that's where this is headed, we'll see it more clearly in just a minute. But I don't strive, or strain to try & do enough to somehow cause God to be satisfied w/who I am; I *rest* in what Christ has already done on my behalf. Check it out.

Vs4-9

So we've seen the Sabbath rest (the rest of salvation) but here we're seeing the rest of Canaan come into view (the rest that Joshua led them into) the rest of submission. Unbelief will rob you of the blessing of total abandonment, absolute surrender & submission to Christ. You'll always be wondering if your works are good enough, if you've done enough for God, if He's pleased w/you. Have you ever been around or had a close relationship w/a very demanding person, a perfectionist? Every "I" has to be dotted, ever "t" has to be crossed, & nothing is ever good enough. I must admit that this is a struggle for me, I have a tendency to be one of those guys, & I'd like to think that at times it helps facilitate quality ministry, but the fact of the matter is that it can be very overwhelming & difficult for people practically. **My wife is good at reminding me when I'm slipping into that mode, especially around the house, because I start nitpicking details, it's just ugly. Why? Because that kind of disposition carries along w/it a nagging sense for people that they're always falling short, they're never at rest w/you, they're never at peace w/you, they're never really embraced by you, there's no real rest in that relationship. & Some people (perhaps some of you here today) see God just that way. He's a demanding perfectionist who's never really pleased w/you because you're constantly falling short, you don't have all your "t's" crossed, you don't have all your "I's" dotted, & you lack that place of rest in your relationship w/Him that He wants you to enter into.**

Few things we should note along the way here as we pick up the pace that we might begin to come to our conclusion today. #1 There is that rest that you're invited to enter into.

Vs 6 enlightens us to the fact that they didn't enter it, but it remains nonetheless & there are those who will, & the implication is that it needs to be you. #2 You'll want to note when the appropriate time is for you to enter that rest, did you see it there in Vs 7? We saw it last week, it's underscored again today. When's the right time? "Today" right here, right now, in this very moment, there's no room for procrastination, no room for hesitation here, take care of business, repent of whatever sin is prompting your disobedience, ask God to increase your faith & believe Him for His word, right now, don't wait. If you'll hear His voice, respond & receive His word today. & #3 You need to see that it's not a matter of your works, it's a matter of your heart. It doesn't say, "If you'll hear His voice, get busy, get to work, put a little effort into it." No, it says, "If you'll hear His voice do not harden your *heart*." God wants you to open your heart to Him, to quit resisting Him & kicking against the goads, get on your face before Him in your heart, in humility & say, "God here I am, help me, have Your way in me, do what You need to do God bring me in to Your rest, I want to find rest for my soul, I want to rest *in* You, & rely *on* You, and cease working for Your acceptance."

You see he's making a point here that the rest God is calling you into (believer) goes well beyond the land of Canaan practically. If Joshua had fulfilled the fullness of the rest God was speaking of then David wouldn't have said there was a rest to be entered into "Today" some 400 yrs after the children of Israel entered the Promised Land being led by Joshua. There is a rest that remains for you to enter today, a rest of surrender, submission to the word & ways of God for your life. Not worried about what you need to do, but resting in what Christ has *done* for you.

Vs10

You see there it is. God finished the work of creation, be at rest. But listen, don't think the application here is limited to the rest of creation. Hey there's another "creation" in view here as well. The bible says, "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a (what?) new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Cor 5:17 & That my friends is a finished work as well, what did Jesus say as He hung upon the cross, His body broken, His blood being spilled for you & for me? Before He hung His head & commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father He said, "*It is finished*" John 19:30 The work is done, I don't work *for* rest, we work *from* rest, resting in His righteousness, the finished work of the cross, not to gain God's favor, but from the overflow of love having received God's favor in Christ.

Vs11

We'll pick up on this point (God willing) next time, but the point here is underscored one final time, make it your aim to enter that rest. Don't fall short of it, don't forfeit your faith through fear, trust in the Lord w/all your heart, He's true to His word & the invitation goes out. Enter the rest, the rest of the Lord. Unbelief will rip you off from the blessing of surrender, trust the Lord, be at rest *in* the Lord.

Not only will unbelief rob you of the blessing of submission, if you've not given your life to Christ it'll rob you of the blessing of salvation. Satan came to steal, kill & to destroy, but Christ came that you might have life, & that you might have it more abundantly. Maybe you think that you've made your mistakes, but deep down you're a good person, you'll "work it out" when you see the Lord, He'll understand. Listen, you can't "work" it out, the work is done, complete in Christ, you have to enter in by faith to the finished work. Why insult the Spirit of grace, God wants us to rest in Him. Enter the rest...In Jesus name.

Prayer Points:

God what a precious promise of rest You've extended to us. We're in awe *of* it, & thankful *for* it, may we not only enter in, but abide therein. Thank You that it's not about us & our strength, our work, or what we do. That You're not a demanding perfectionist that refuses to accept us, but that we have acceptance in Christ, may we rest in it & simply rejoice over it. Lord we realize you don't call us to passive inactivity, may we serve You more abundantly, more joyfully than ever, realizing that it's not an attempt to gain Your acceptance, but the simple response of having Your acceptance in Christ.

If you're here today believer & you've not come to this place, you've found yourself frustrated in your walk w/God, feeling as though God is always disappointed in you because you feel like you're always falling short. You're not resting in what Christ has done, you're trying to do more & more, let me encourage you to enter into His *rest* today.

If you've never received the Lord don't let unbelief rip you off from the rest Jesus offers you in coming to Him. You don't have to work it out, salvation isn't hinged on the work you *do* but the work He's done. One day Jesus was ministering to some people & they asked Him, "What must we do to work the works of God?" The idea being what do I have to do to be pleasing, find favor & acceptance before God. & Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." Believe on J.C. repent of your sin & enter His rest.