

JESUS IS BETTER

Hebrews 4 || *Rest for the People of God*¹

North Center || Feb 26, 2023

Pastor Jeremiah Knoop

Q. What comes to your mind when you think about **rest**?

If you remember last week as we looked at **Hebrews chapter 3** together, the main point of that chapter was to “*consider Christ*” (3:1). And as we considered Christ, we asked the question, “*What’s in it for me? What’s the reward for considering Christ?*” And we saw that the answer is “*rest*” (3:11, 18).

This becomes **one of the main themes** in **Hebrews chapter 4**: *this idea of rest* (9x in chpt. 4). The other big theme in chapter 4 is **faith**. And these two words (**faith** & **rest**) are really closely related:

III. If a child has faith that his daddy is going to catch him when he **jumps off the bunk bed**, then he won’t be anxious or worried or troubled about the outcome. His mind is at **rest** because he has **faith** in his daddy.

OUTLINE:	PASSAGE	COMMAND
1. Faith that enters into the REST of God	Hebrews 4:1–10	let us fear...
2. Faith that is revealed by the WORD of God	Hebrews 4:11–13	let us be diligent...
3. Faith that is strengthened by the GRACE of God	Hebrews 4:14–16	let us hold fast... let us come boldly...
1. Faith that enters into the REST of God (1–10) ²		

Chapter 3 leaves off with the children of Israel not experiencing the rest that God had promised because they didn’t put their faith in God.

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

~ *Hebrews 3:19*

- **Moses** wasn’t able to bring them into the promised land (*because of unbelief & disobedience*).³
- And **Joshua** wasn’t able to defeat all their enemies (*because of unbelief and disobedience*).⁴

And so the promise of rest remained unfulfilled...

**Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest,
Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.**

~ *Hebrews 4:1*

Just because the Israelites didn’t experience God’s rest doesn’t mean that God rescinded His promise.⁵ The promise remains (**4:1**)! And deep down, this is what your soul longs for more than anything else in the universe.

The climactic trajectory of this universe has always been rest.

- It was the climactic trajectory of **creation** (**4:4**). The pinnacle of creation was God’s rest.⁶
 - But then sin replaced that rest with enmity & toil & striving & pain & sorrow & death.⁷

¹ Alternate title: “*Our Faith: Reposed, Revealed, Restored*”.

² **Command #1**: “Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it [entering His rest]” (4:1).

³ Heb 3:19; c.f., Num 13:1–14:38.

⁴ Heb 4:8; c.f., Josh 13:13.

⁵ Exod 33:14, “And He said, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’”

⁶ Gen 2:2, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested...from all His work...”

⁷ Gen 3:14–19. Sin destroyed the rest that God intended for His people to experience in Eden. Why did they sin? Because they *didn’t believe* that God’s word was true. They *doubted* God. They put their faith in the voice of a snake instead of their Maker.

Ever since then, the trajectory of rest here on earth has remained unfulfilled...

- It was the unfulfilled trajectory of the Exodus (4:5) | **Moses** couldn't give them rest.
- It was the unfulfilled trajectory of Conquest (4:8) | **Joshua** couldn't give them rest.
- It was the temporary climax of the Davidic Kingdom (4:7) | **David** couldn't give them rest.⁸

Ever since sin entered the world, we have constantly been looking for rest & *constantly coming up short*. As you look at the scope of human history (*from Genesis 3 until now*), the undeniable truth is that nothing on this earth is able to give us the rest our hearts our longing for.

We think we'll find it...

- *In our children*⁹ ... *in our success*¹⁰ ... *in our vacation*¹¹ ... *in our finances*¹² ... *in a relationship*¹³

Or we think we'll find it...

- *In our religion*¹⁴ ... *in our religious exercises*¹⁵ ... *in our moral behavior*¹⁶ ... *in a monastic life*

The bottom line is that this world doesn't have what it takes to give our hearts rest. It *never* has. This is why **Saint Augustine** famously said...

Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.

~ Augustine

And that's where the author of Hebrews is going. He's saying that there has never been a true & lasting rest for this world, but there *is* a rest for those who quit looking to this world and put their *faith* in the One who created them instead.

There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

~ Hebrews 4:9

This is breathtakingly glorious news! In a world that is so crazy busy & scary & competitive & disappointing & unpredictable & exhausting ... the Bible says that there is "*a rest for the people of God*".

Q. How do "*the people of God*" experience this promised rest?

A. Instead of *working* for this rest, we simply *enter* into it by faith.

⁸ 1 Kings 11:31–36.

⁹ Some people feel an inner turmoil because they can't have **CHILDREN**.

They think that their life would be complete if they could just have children.

¹⁰ Some people feel an inner turmoil because they aren't as **SUCCESSFUL** in their **CAREER** as they would like to be. They look at others who are more successful, and it just eats them up inside... because their heart wants *that*.

¹¹ Some people think that if they could just take a long **VACATION**, that would give them the rest they are looking for. But then (*even if the vacation was wonderfully relaxing*) they come home to a life that is just as demanding as it was before they left, and whatever rest they might have experienced on their vacation... it didn't last.

¹² Some people spend so much emotional energy stressing out over their **FINANCES** to the point that it consumes their mind. They think that if they could just get control over their finances, their heart and mind would be at rest. But that's *never* proven to be true. You come across articles all the time of **millionaires going bankrupt** or **rich people committing suicide**. Pastor John Piper once said, "*I was told there that there are more people who jump off the Coronado Bridge to kill themselves than off the Brooklyn Bridge — the Brooklyn Bridge is near poor people, and the Coronado Bridge is near rich people. If you were to do a study of suicide in this country, there would be no correlation between poverty and suicide...*" ~ **John Piper** (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/four-mistakes-i-hope-you-dont-make>).

¹³ If I could just get married to the love of my life, we'd be together forever, and my heart would be happy ever after. 😊

¹⁴ Like Peter H. who looked for rest in **Buddhism** for nearly a decade until it drove him into therapy.

¹⁵ Some of the saddest people I've ever met are those who were the most committed to all the **religious duties** of their religion.

¹⁶ I often struggle with this. If I just **follow all the rules** and **do all the right things**, then my conscience will be at rest.

For he who has **entered** His rest
has himself also **ceased** from his work
as God did from His.

~ *Hebrews 4:10*

**You will *only* find rest
when you stop (*cease*) working for yours
and enter into His...**

when you stop **working** to **create your own** rest
and **enter** into the rest He has **already** created for you.

This is why Jesus says,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
And I will *give you* rest.¹⁷

~ *Matthew 11:28*

The rest that your soul is craving cannot be earned; it can only be entered into.

In Christ, you are **already** forgiven.¹⁸

- You don't have to work for it. You don't have to earn it.
- You don't have to strive to be good enough or faithful enough or religious enough.

In Christ, you are **already** accepted. You are **already** loved. **Treasured. Complete. Enough. Clean. Safe.**
The Bible says that...

You are [**already**] **competent** in Him...

~ *Colossians 2:10*

In Christ, you **already** have all you need.

- He is the supreme treasure of the universe (Col 1:15–18).
- He is love (1 John 4:8) & peace (Eph 2:14) & righteousness (1 Cor 1:30).
- He is your exceedingly great reward (Gen 15:1).
- In His presence there is joy to the ceiling and pleasures that never end (Psalm 16:11).
- He is the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13).

What more do you want?!

There is a rest for the people of God. **The only question is**, do you believe that what He says about Himself and what He says about you is true? If you do, then you will **enter** into a kind of rest that this world can only begin to imagine.

I say, "a kind of rest" because it's different than what we *normally* think of as "rest". I told you that this word shows up **9 times** in chapter 4. The author uses a normal Greek word every time... except for once.¹⁹ In **verse 9**, instead of using a normal word to talk about rest,²⁰ he changes the word to "**sabbath rest**".²¹

There remains therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.

~ *Hebrews 4:9*

¹⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἀναπαύσω (1FSAI) ὑμᾶς, "*cause to rest, give rest, refresh, revive.*"

¹⁸ John 19:30.

¹⁹ κατάπαυσις (katapausis), which means "*ceasing from work or activity.*"

²⁰ E.g., ἀνάπαυσις or κατάπαυσις

²¹ σαββατισμός, which means "*sabbath rest.*" It's the only time this word is used in the entire book.

Q. What do we know about the Sabbath?

A. We know that the sabbath was the day when God’s people rested from their labors – trusting that God would take care of all their needs – even when there was still so much work to be done.

- There were still fields to be tilled, seeds to be planted, crops to be harvest, firewood to be gathered, necessities to be purchased...²² yet God commanded them to rest anyway and to trust that He would take care of them.²³

The author of Hebrews says that there is **a kind of rest** for the people of God (a sabbath) where your heart is at rest in God even when it feels like there is still so much work to be done in your life.

- Relationships that need restored... : Promises I need to keep...
- Sinful habits that need to die... : Shortcomings that need to be overcome...
- Scriptures I need to memorize... : People I need to share the Gospel with...
- So many ways I need to grow as a husband, a father, a pastor, an elder, a friend, a neighbor...

There are **so many things** that remain undone in my life, yet “**there remains a sabbath rest for me**”. As I put my faith in what God has said (*specifically His promises to me in Christ*), then my soul can enter into a place of rest **even when** there is still so much work to be done.

AND THEN, as I engage in the work (*of killing sin & pursuing restoration in relationships & overcoming my struggles & sharing the gospel with my neighbors & becoming a better friend*) ...

I do it work from a place of rest instead of trying to earn a place of rest.

In God’s economy, **nobody earns rest.**

- You **enter** it. By faith. In the finished work of Jesus.

Yes, I am fighting a battle in my life, but I’m fighting a battle that Jesus has already won – which means my heart is neither fearful nor desperate in the fight; rather my heart is at rest – because, regardless of how well I perform, the outcome is already done. I can face the giants in my life with unshakeable confidence, not because of my skill as a warrior, but because God has said that I am more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus who loves me (**Rom 8:37**).

Now, how do these last two sections connect to this idea of having a faith that rests in God?

2. Our faith is revealed (exposed, uncovered, made known) by the WORD of God (12–13)²⁴

Let us therefore **be diligent to enter that rest**,
lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.
For²⁵ the word of God is living and powerful,
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow,
and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
And there is no creature hidden from His sight,
but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him
to whom we must give account.

~ *Hebrews 4:11–13*

²² E.g., Num 15:32–36.

²³ Exod 16:23–26; 20:8–11.

²⁴ **Command #2:** “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...” (4:11).

²⁵ This word “for” (γὰρ) means that this section is connected to what just came before it.

- If you have put your faith in the word of God, then His word is **THE SWORD** that God has given you to fight against unbelief in your own life.²⁶
 - **When the voices in your head tell you** that “*your heart is too dark & too dirty & too deceptive for God to truly love you,*” you cling to your faith and attack those lies with the Word of God: “***There is...no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus***” (Rom 8:1).²⁷
 - **When the voices tell you** that “*God may love you, but oh how disappointed He is in you,*” you cling to your faith and attack those lies with the Word of God.²⁸
 - **When the voices tell you** that “*you aren’t skilled enough or knowledgeable enough or good enough or qualified enough to talk to other people about Jesus,*” those are lies from Satan; and you attack those lies with the Word of God:
 - “***I will be your mouth***” (Exod 4:12). “***My word will never return void***” (Isa 55:11).
 - “***I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength***” (Phil 4:13).
- If you have NOT put your faith in the word of God, then His word becomes **THE SWORD** that fights against you.
 - If you think you can sneak your way into heaven by pretending to have faith in Jesus (*but then totally ignoring how He is calling you to live in obedience to Him*), this Word will pierce through all your religious disguises and expose you for the hypocrite that you are.
 - You may fool everybody else around you, but His Word sees you for who you really are.

The Word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword, which means that it cuts both ways:

- For those who are fighting the fight of faith, the Word of God will be *your salvation*.
- For those who are playing with religion, the Word of God will simply expose your *hypocrisy*.

3. **Our faith is strengthened by the GRACE of God (14–16)**²⁹

Next to the Name of Jesus, this word might be the most beautiful word in the entire Bible: **grace**.

As you seek to “*hold fast*” to your faith in Jesus (4:14), there is grace and mercy and help every time you need it.

Why? Because your Savior knows what it’s like to walk in your shoes.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize³⁰ with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

~ **Hebrews 4:15**

He knows what it’s like to be tempted to put your faith in something other than God.³¹ He experienced temptation in all the ways that you and I are tempted. And He knows what it’s like to feel weak. And He knows how to endure these temptations without sin – which means He is perfectly suited to help me in my own temptations. And these are the only things that you will find as you come boldly before His throne in prayer: **mercy** (*not getting what you deserve*), **grace** (*getting what you don’t deserve*), and **help**.

As a child of God, you won’t find judgment or shame or condemnation. You won’t find that He has walked away. When you come to Him for **grace & mercy & help**, this is exactly what you will find!³²

²⁶ Eph 6:16–17, “Above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and take...the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the **word of God**.”

²⁷ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

²⁸ By faith in Christ, the Bible says that **He lives in me** (Gal 2:20). Therefore, the Father is well pleased with me (Matt 3:17).

²⁹ **Command #3**: “Let us hold fast our confession” (4:14) and “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace...” (4:16).

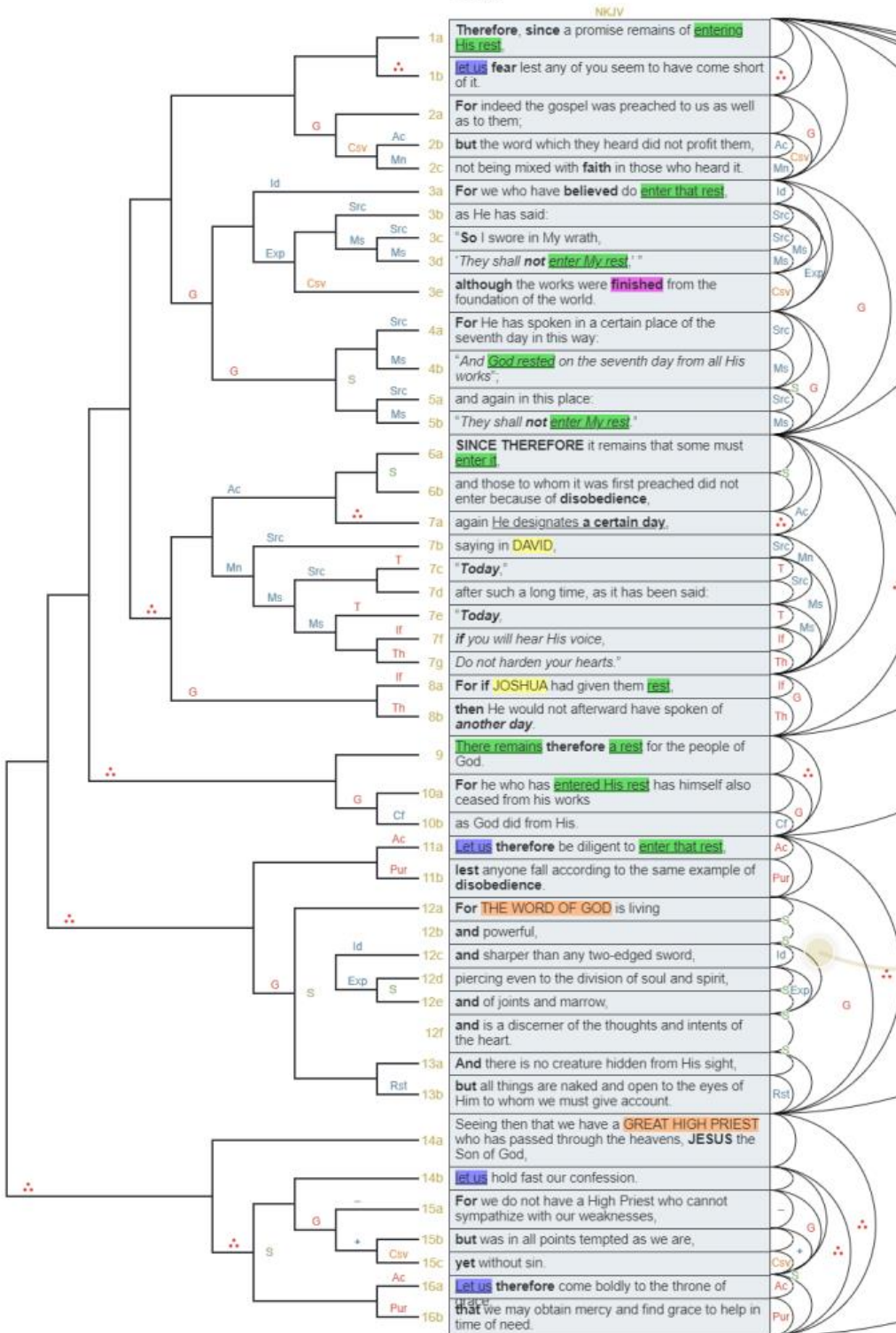
³⁰ συμπάθειω (shows up only twice in the NT: Heb 4:15 & 10:34).

³¹ This was the whole point of the satanic temptations in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11).

³² Mark 9:24; Luke 18:13–14; 23:39–43; John 15:7.

Hebrews 4:1-16

Faith: Resting in God, Revealed by Scripture, Running to Grace.



Command #1 (1b)
Let us fear that we should miss out on God's rest in our unbelief.

Command #2 (11a)
Let us be diligent to enter that rest.

Command #3 (14b)
Let us hold fast our confession.

Command #4 (16a)
Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

ESCALATING INFERENCES (1-13).

Since only those who have believed enter God's rest... (1-5)
And since the promise remains unfulfilled... (6-8)
And since this rest belongs only to the people of God (9-10) **therefore** let us be diligent [to put our faith in Jesus] that we might enter His rest.

GROUND (11-13):

Let us be diligent to enter into the rest of God by putting our faith in Jesus **on the ground that** our hearts are (and will be) totally exposed by the Word of God.

The façade of every pseudo Christian will be laid bare on that day.

SERIES (12-13):

The Word of God...

1. is alive
2. is powerful
3. is sharper than any sword
4. is a discerner of the heart
5. exposes everything

MAIN RELATIONSHIP (1-16)

ESCALATING INFERENCE:

Because our rest in God depends on the faith of our hearts (which is totally exposed by the Word of God), **therefore** we must (1) **hold fast** to the faith we have confessed & (2) **come boldly** into the throne room of grace and mercy where God has **promised to help us in our need**