

## Hebrews Part 3 - When the Soul Finds Rest

### Hebrew 3

**ILLUSTRATION:** Not long ago, Julie and I were at Publix buying groceries. We saw two ladies praying together, out loud, in the cereal aisle. They wrapped up just as we passed by, and I said, "Well that's how it should be, we should feel free to call on the Lord anytime we need Him". One of the ladies lit up and said, "Oh do you worship on the Sabbath"?

Now - that was a loaded question - you see 7th day Adventists believe that you ought to worship on Saturday rather than Sunday because that is what the Mosaic Law taught. Even though the early church changed the day of worship to Sunday because that is when Jesus was raised from the dead. So how do you answer that question - do you keep the Sabbath?

I looked her in the eye and said, "Yes!!! I keep the Sabbath 7 days a week, 365 days a year, because I am in Christ - who has accomplished my salvation and sat down to rest at the right hand of the Father".

***Today I want to explain to you from Hebrews, what I meant.***

- According to **Dr. Jim Folk** - Anxiety has become the number one mental health issue in North America. It's estimated that one third of the North American adult population experiences significant anxiety issues.
- Another report found that more than half of college students sought help for their anxiety issues. That's not even to mention those who self medicate or never seek help.
- Of the top 7 most prescribed Psycho-tropic Drugs - 6 of the 7 are specifically to treat Anxiety and only one is for depression.

Perhaps it is one of the most often used quotes throughout church history - from **Augustine** who wrote in his book, "the Confessions" a prayer, "*Oh Lord - thou hast made us for thyself, and our **hearts are restless** until they find their rest in thee*".

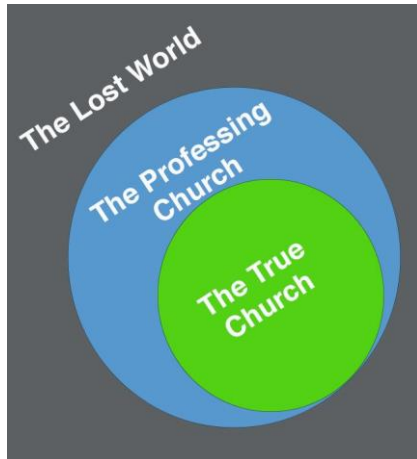
The restlessness of the heart is mark of this generation.

Our hearts grow restless, wandering, searching, seeking - that for which they were made.

Most of the time we seek that SOUL REST in an idol - whether it is work, hobbies, a relationship... sometimes we self medicate with drugs or alcohol...but the fact remains that our hearts are restless.

**The writer to the Hebrews is very much concerned about the restlessness of the soul.** In Chapters 3-4 he begins to address this concern.

**Before we get into the text let me show you something you need to understand:**



Practically, every book in the New Testament addresses the theme of being in the Church and Lost. Imagine two circles -

- The Larger circle represents the whole of the Professing church, the visible church.
- The Smaller circle represents those who are truly saved - a part of the genuine church.

**Paul said of Israel - Romans 9:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> ...not all who are descended from Israel belong to

Israel.

We might say today - not all who are members of this church belong to the TRUE church.

This section of Hebrews is addressing the blue circle. Those who profess faith but who are NOT genuinely saved.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that a person hasn't truly been saved is what the writer to the Hebrews is addressing today - a RESTLESS SOUL.

Think of It - in the garden of Eden there was NO Anxiety... Adam and Eve were never nervous, never uneasy, never troubled... until they sinned... at which time they were cast out of the garden and anxiety became the norm.

Restlessness is ultimately anchored and rooted in guilt - you can't address anxiety until you address sin, guilt.

You will find that people who have no place for religion in their life - they may be indifferent, they may be hostile, but if you talk to their counselors you will discover everyone has a very real experience of guilt... and guilt is the birthplace of anxiety.

God wants to deal with your anxiety by dealing with your guilt.

**CONTEXT:** If you remember in the OT the Israel and his sons sojourned into Egypt seeking relief from a famine that had struck the middle east. Joseph, who they had sold into slavery, had risen in the ranks to being a sort of prime minister over Egypt and he was in a place not only to feed his brothers but to give them land and safety.

But then a Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph. As the Israelites multiplied in safety of Egypt the leaders began to be concerned that they might militarize and overtake the Egyptians so they made them slaves... which was common in that day - but the text makes it clear that their experience was uncommon. The Egyptians place insane burdens on these Israeli slaves.

Ultimately, the slaves called out to God - in what might be considered the original sinners prayer. They beg God for deliverance. God raises up a deliverer named Moses who under the mighty power of God delivers the people from Egyptian bondage.

Moses sets out to lead them from Egypt back to the land promises to Abraham, Issac and Jacob... a land that flows with milk and honey... ***and there you will enter into my rest.***

So imagine 100's of 1000's of people being led by God to the Promised Land.

**But out of all of those people - how many made it???? 3 Joshua and Caleb who were faithful... and Moses many years later at the Mt. of Transfiguration.**

So if you were drawing the same circles we drew earlier - the blue circle (professing Israel would have been large enough to represent 100's of 1000's but the green circle representing true, believing Israel would be very small.

**TEXT: Hebrews 3:7-11 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' <sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.' "

In the wilderness - they proved that they were MORE children of Egypt than children of Israel. God in wrath swore they would NEVER enter.

Hebrews is saying - can the professing church learn something from that?

Is there a correlation? Something analogous to our experience?

### Hebrews (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he provoked for forty years?

Can you imagine - Moses was provoked by a thousands of people for 40 years! These are people who said they loved and believed the Word of God, but they became a thorn in the side of the Man of God. I can't relate...

17b. Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

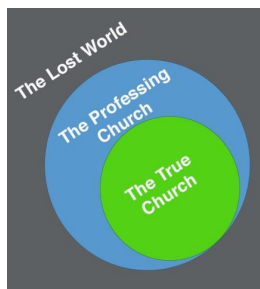
Another translation says, "Their corpses fell dead" - which begs the question, how else would their corpses fall. But nevertheless, they exhausted the patience of the most long suffering being in all the Universe.

Think of it - no one, anywhere, is more patient than God. But God's patience ran its course with these people.

<sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

NOTE CAREFULLY the CONNECTION - they heard the word of God, but they didn't obey the word of God and ***the reason they didn't obey the Word of God was because they didn't believe the God of the Word.***

People who don't believe don't obey. The NT calls us to be believe and be doers of the word.



NOW - what is the primary difference between the ***professing*** church and the ***true*** church? True faith that leads to obedience.

### Hebrews 4 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> For good news (Gospel) ***came to us just as to them.***

Friend - do you see that the Gospel is not a NT innovation. It was preached by Moses. The Jews were called to trust the fact that God would send a Savior. They looked forward to Jesus as we look back to Jesus.

2b. but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not **united by faith** with those who listened.

So they heard the Gospel, they were somehow on a spiritual journey - but they did not exhibit saving faith and they did not enjoy God's rest.

**Three times in the following verses the writer to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 95.** Psalm 95 is a prophetic song David wrote about the wilderness wanderings of Israel. In verse 7 of Psalm 95 - God through David says something very interesting.

TODAY if you hear my voice do not harden your heart as they did in the wilderness.

**Now - where was David and the Jews physically located when Psalm 95 was written?** In the promised land! So the writer to the Hebrews is suggesting that there was a greater reality, a greater rest, a greater promised land... that although the people of David's day lived in physical Israel is some of the most prosperous days they would ever know - there was still a greater spiritual promised land, a greater rest, a greater peace.

That is why David was still calling them to enter just as Moses had.

#### **Hebrews 4 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

What a play on words! STRIVE, LABOR, WORK at resting...Listen to me - you ought to be very worried, very anxious, laboring with all your soul to be certain your soul finds it's rest in the Gospel.

WORK to find your REST!

The next verse is very familiar, although we typically forget it's context...

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

That verse is saying God's Word is able to pierce us in such a profound way that it can reveal where our heart really is. You want to make certain you have entered into the rest, the true Sabbath... hear and believe what God has said.. then look to your walk and ask yourself, ***"What does my life say I believe?"***

Does your life testify that you deeply, genuinely believe God?

Don't you see - he is NOT saying DO MORE he IS saying BELIEVE DEEPER.

**THEOLOGICALLY** - The REST of God can be seen as the bookends of History. If we are to understand it we must look back in time and forward in time.

- We look back to **CREATION** - God created the Heavens and the Earth on six days.. then on the seven he sabbaths... he rests....what does that mean? Does that mean that the infinite power of the universe totally and completely ceases to move? NO - it means he shifted to a different mode of activity. From creative energy to sustaining energy... enjoying that which he had labored to create.
- We look forward to **NEW CREATION** - the New Heaven and New Earth. In heaven we find our ultimate rest. That is the ultimate rest.

The bible presents Heaven as a rest from our trials, tribulations, struggles, temptations... not an eternal NAP, but a change in mode, a change in activity from battling and struggling to eternally **resting** and **enjoy** what God has created.

### **Revelation 21:3-8 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

THAT is the ultimate rest - NO MORE TEARS... friend when God wipes your the tears from your eyes... THEY STAY DRY.

Has your soul found the rest Augustine spoke of? Have you labored to enter that rest?

Do you see now how I could boldly look into the ladies eyes and say, "YES!" I keep the Sabbath, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day?

Because I am resting from trying to earn my salvation. I'm believing and obeying God's word. I'm resting in him and his work on my behalf.

That bring rest to my soul in this life... and one day I will truly REST IN PEACE in the next.

How about you?