

Jesus is the Rest Giver

Portrait four of Jesus in Hebrews

Opening Prayer & Introduction:

Welcome! This is the fourth message in the Hebrews series. The writer has devoted the first half of the book to building an apologetic (defense) of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In these early chapters, he has shown that Jesus is the Lord incarnate, the creator and sustainer of all things, and the revelation of God in the earth in these last days. So far, we have seen the portraits of Jesus as the Revelation of God, the Redeemer of Mankind, the Faithful Son, and as the Rest Giver. In this week's study, we focus on the gospel of rest in the finished work of Christ. The writer makes the point that rule keeping, traditions, and other religious duties lack the power to save. The gospel compels every believer to rest fully in the finished work of the cross. When Jesus said "it is finished", salvation really was finished...Jesus paid it all! This week, we'll explore the "rest" that believers have in Jesus.

Ice Breaker Question: Share about a time when you were so excited about something that you didn't want to miss it (like waiting for a phone call, watching for a special TV show, or anticipating an important event). How did that anticipation affect your attention and focus?

Key Scripture: *Hebrews 4:12 - "For 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." (NKJV)*

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Hebrews 4:1-3. What does the writer mean when he says we should "fear lest any of you seem to have come short" of God's rest? Why should this create a healthy fear in believers?
2. According to Hebrews 4:12-13, what makes the Word of God so powerful? How does it function in the life of a believer?
3. Pastor Joel mentioned that many Christians believe salvation is about "checking off a list" (walking an aisle, saying a prayer, getting baptized) and then returning to life as usual. Have you ever viewed salvation this way? How does this sermon challenge that perspective?
4. The sermon taught that Jesus paid it ALL, not just "almost enough." Are there areas in your life where you've been trying to "help Jesus out" with your own works or religious efforts? What would it look like to fully rest in His finished work?

5. The sermon compared guarding our faith to holding onto a zipline harness "like your life depends on it." What specific practices or disciplines help you "hold fast" to your faith?
6. Pastor Joel emphasized the importance of putting "wood in the stove"—being disciplined in prayer, Bible reading, and personal worship. Honestly assess your current spiritual disciplines:
 - a. How consistent is your time in God's Word?
 - b. How active is your prayer life?
 - c. When was the last time you worshiped God outside of a church service?

Practical Applications:

1. Daily Word Intake: Commit to reading Hebrews chapters 1-6 this week, asking God to speak to you about the sufficiency of Christ.
2. Faith Inventory: Set aside 30 minutes for honest self-examination. Ask yourself: "Am I resting fully in Christ alone, or am I trusting in Jesus plus something else?"
3. Confession and Surrender: If you've been holding onto works-based religion or self-righteousness, spend time in prayer making a complete surrender to Jesus and His finished work.
4. Memorize Scripture: Memorize Hebrews 4:12 or 4:14-16 to remind yourself of the power of God's Word and the accessibility of Jesus.

Key Takeaways:

- **Apostasy vs. Backsliding:** Apostasy is the willful and deliberate rejection of Jesus and His grace—not struggling with sin, having doubts, or changing churches. It's like deliberately cutting the rope rather than letting it slip.
- **The Danger of Works-Based Religion:** True spiritual rest comes when we cease from striving through our own works and fully surrender to the saving work of Jesus Christ. Jesus paid it all—not "almost all."
- **Belief and Unbelief Have Consequences:** Just as the Hebrew fathers missed the Promised Land due to unbelief, Christians can miss God's promises when they drift from faith.
- **Guard Your Faith:** We must watch over our faith with fear and trembling, recognizing that spiritual drift can happen to anyone, even longtime believers.
- **The Power of God's Word:** The Bible is living and active, serving as God's instrument to keep us grounded in faith and protected from spiritual drift.

Closing Prayer:

Let's take a few moments to pray about the things that we have studied this week and to make it personal. As God leads you, pray for yourself and for someone else in the group. Perhaps you would like to pick one person to pray for secretly this week.