

Lesson 13
The Rest of God
Hebrews 4:3b-10

What one word would best describe the world today? It might be rebellion, hate, confusion, frustration, corruption or selfishness, for these words do describe the world. However, the one word that best describes the world in my opinion is “restless.” The world and the individuals who make up the world are restless. They do not know where they came from, where they are going or what their purpose in life is. The world is restless because those in it have not found the real meaning to life. This is why men must gain more wealth, more power and more prestige. They are restless in soul and think that all there is to life is to be found in this present material world. This is why men are always seeking for some new fad or new pleasure or new experience. They are not at rest within themselves. They have not been able to anchor their souls to anything that is solid and lasting.

Man’s restlessness is really a spiritual problem. Man was created for God but sin has separated him from God and keeps him from experiencing God in his life. His unrest is due to the fact that he does not know God in a personal way. There is, however, spiritual rest for the people of God, and it is only as one is anchored to God that life will take on its true meaning. There is spiritual rest for men and that rest is centered around the person of Jesus Christ.

The context of Hebrews 3 and 4 is about the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt and they failed to enter the land God promised them because of their unbelief. This land was a place of rest and they could not enter the land without faith in God and His promise. Consequently that whole generation wandered in the desert for forty years and died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. They never entered into God’s temporal rest or His spiritual rest.

TEMPORARY RESTS - Hebrews 4:3b-8

“...although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.” --This clause actually goes with verse four which speaks of a rest of God that was in existence from the creation of the world.

“For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, ‘AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS’...” -- The whole idea of rest was not something unique to the children of Israel. There had been a rest from the very creation of the world. This is a quote from Genesis 2:2,3.

“And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. The God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

This was the beginning of the sabbath rest. God created the universe in six days and on the seventh day (the Sabbath or Saturday) He rested. Why did God rest? Was He tired? Think of God creating all the millions of galaxies, billions of light years away. He created millions and millions of celestial bodies, which are a thousand times larger than planet earth. What a tremendous work of God. Was He tired? Is this why He rested? No, God is all-powerful and He never tires from any labor. He rested on the seventh day because there was nothing else to do. God ceased from His creative activity. He had provided everything in six days of creation and then rested. The Jew was told to recognize the Sabbath as part of the Mosaic Law.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD you God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you” (Exo. 20:8-10).

The Jew was told to do nothing on Saturday as a memorial that God provided everything in creation. The Sabbath, as it was observed before the Mosaic Law, and the Sabbath of the Mosaic Law is but a type or a shadow of the spiritual rest of salvation that God offers to all His people in Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of the Sabbath in His person and work.

Lest we miss the argument, it is that there was a spiritual rest for God’s people before the children of Israel failed to enter God’s temporal rest of the land of Canaan because of unbelief.

“...and again in this passage, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’ -- This should be translated “they shall not enter into my rest.” This merely shows that the rest of Canaan was not the ultimate fulfillment of God’s rest. Canaan was temporary and it was a type or shadow of the rest of salvation that Christ provides in His death for all who receive Him.

“Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience...” -- Even those who entered into the land did not experience complete temporal rest which indicates that the rest of Canaan was temporal and not final. It was only a type or shadow of the heavenly rest Christ gives His people.

“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.’” -- This is a quote from Psalm 95 to show that five hundred years after Moses and Canaan, King David was still speaking to people about God’s rest of salvation. Canaan rest was not the final rest, and even the rest that King David spoke of pointed forward to the coming of Messiah who would make a perfect sacrifice for sins that men might enter God’s spiritual rest.

“For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that” -- Even when Joshua led the people into the land, this was not the ultimate fulfillment of the rest of God. The final, complete and total fulfillment of God’s rest is in Christ. Creation rest, Canaan rest and sabbath rest are types and shadows that point forward to Messiah-Christ who is the reality and fulfillment and the substance of all types and shadows.

PERMANENT REST - Hebrews 4:9-10

“There remains (is remaining) therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” -- The rest of God for His people is not limited to one generation but is available to all generations. The rest of salvation is open to all men everywhere if they will avail themselves of it. Those who do not harden their hearts to Christ but believe the gospel shall be saved. They shall enter into God’s salvation rest.

“For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.” -- As God ceased from all creation works after six days of creation, a person who believes in Christ must cease from all human works and trust wholly in Christ if he is to be saved. A person has not exercised saving faith until he ceases from his own works. Saving faith is exercised when a person stops trying to save himself by good works and believes that Christ provided a perfect salvation in His death. Christ has secured the rest of salvation and all one can do to enter into that spiritual rest is believe. This is more serious than most of us realize, for God will not save a man who does anything to save himself. Christ procured and secured a perfect salvation at Calvary’s cross. He did everything that was necessary to bring salvation. No man can add anything to Christ’s work. All any person can do is receive Christ by faith. Christ cried out on the cross, “It is finished” and that settles it forever. Christ offers His salvation to all and all anyone can do to be saved is say, “I believe that Christ died for me.” You can only say as the hymn writer, “Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe!” It is through Christ’s blood that we have obtained eternal redemption. ***“...and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”*** (Heb. 9:12). To be saved, we must rest where God rests and that is in the shed blood of Christ.

Think about this for a moment. All of you who are presently saved had to come to the place where you stopped trying to save yourself. You received Christ and rested on that fact by faith; you stopped your own efforts; you ceased from your works and rested in Christ’s work.

THE LIFE OF REST

Every Christian, in a positional sense, has entered into God’s rest by faith. Salvation and heaven are the certain possession of all who are true believers in Christ. Yet, God’s rest is not something that we must wait until eternity to experience. Christians can begin to experience in degrees something of God’s rest now. There is a moment-by-moment rest for God’s people who continue to exercise faith in God’s promises. As long as we are in this unredeemed body, we will never experience God’s rest totally, completely or finally but we can progressively experience the rest of God. The key to experiencing God’s rest is continued faith in God and His promises.

As Christians, we must understand that God has prepared, before the foundation of the world, this life of rest in God. God has already prepared in Christ all we need to walk the Christian life but we must claim it by faith.

Let us suppose that you go to someone’s home and the host and hostess prepare a ten course dinner for you. For some reason, however, you do not trust the host. The dinner is beautifully

prepared and they say, "Dinner is served." Even though you are very hungry, you turn your back and say, "No, thank you. I am not interested in food." If you do not partake of the wonderful food because you distrust the host, you shall never be filled and have your hunger pangs satisfied. God is saying to each Christian, "I have prepared a rest for all my children. I am inviting you to eat with Me. Your spiritual dinner is served." But if you do not trust God, you will never eat at His table and you will never go deeply into His life of rest. You must eat His meal. You must believe the Word. You must claim the promises. You must mix the Scripture with faith. If you do not eat, you shall starve spiritually.

Christian, you entered into the rest of salvation when you believed in Christ, but are you experiencing God's rest in your life? If you have trusted Christ for your salvation, which is the greatest thing God could ever provide for you, if you have trusted Him for eternal life and the forgiveness of sins which is the biggest thing of all, can you not trust Him for the little things - the problems, the heartaches, the difficulties? Can you lean only on God and wait patiently for Him to work in your behalf? You must begin TODAY to trust Christ for everything, for He is your God.

At this very hour there is a beautiful suspension bridge across Niagara Falls. This bridge was built very ingeniously. One day an engineer flew a kite across the falls. When it came down on the other side, he had it anchored so that there was a slender cord stretched across from one side of the falls to the other. Now who would have believed that a little cord would have become a suspension bridge? However, the engineer did not stop with just one cord. He tied a heavier cord to the little cord and pulled it across, then a heavier cord and another and another, until soon there was a steel cable across the falls. To this was added another cable and another and finally there was a powerful bridge there where people can cross and look down over the falls. This is true also in the Christian life. By faith, we lay the first strand across the spiritual chasm which is our initial act of faith in God and His son Jesus Christ. But we do not stop there; that is just the beginning. Now by faith, we continue to lay more strands and then more strands until we have matured enough to have a solid cable. But we do not stop there, for we continue to build the superstructure on a solid foundation. We spend our whole life building the superstructure, or the bridge, but we do it from a solid foundation. We build our foundation by claiming one promise and then another until we have a solid foundation. Then we continue to build the bridge by continued faith and obedience. However, the bridge will not be completely built until we reach heaven, our eternal home.

You must develop by God's grace a habit of trusting God in everything and for everything. You must learn that your power, strength and stability come from God. In your problems God will stand with you.

"Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because he cares (is caring) for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

"...The battle is the LORD'S..." (1 Sam. 17:47).

"...Stand by (stand still) and see the salvation (deliverance) of the LORD..." (Exo. 14:13).

As you keep on believing and continue to mix the promises of God with faith you will go deeper into experiencing the rest of God.

When you enter into the rest of the Lord, you are letting God do the fighting and not you. Your problems are turned over to the Lord. When you are resting in God, you are trusting God to work on you, in you, through you and for you. You stop trusting in the arm of the flesh and trust wholly in God to work out His sovereign will. When you enter into God's rest, you learn to relax spiritually. You are delivered from fleshly efforts. You stop manipulating people, religious hustling, fleshly programming, phony religiosity, external hypocrisy, church facade when you enter into God's rest of faith. The rest of faith sets people free to be what God wants them to be. You can relax and know that God has all things under control.

The rest of faith does not mean inactivity but it means we stop trusting our own efforts and we trust God to work through us. When we are depending on Christ, we will be working for Christ. When we are believing, we are doing things in Christ's power and not our own.

It is the faith-rest life that gives us the power to be a witness to this world. We can know something of God's rest when our whole external world is crumbling out from underneath us. We do not have to push the panic button. This is the sort of thing that impresses the world that Christianity is real. The world watches our lives to see how we react to situations. If we fret, moan, groan, complain, panic, or fall apart at the seams, the unsaved world concludes that Christianity is purely psychological and a hoax. But if the world sees quietness, calm, peace and stability when crisis is all about us, then they know that the Christ we claim to follow really works in our life.

Recently a Christian businessman told me of an interesting experience that happened to him. As you know, the business world is in a state of panic - there are great shortages of material, inflation has made it difficult to make a profit and the national business scene is very shaky. He was dealing with a group of business people from somewhere in the east. There was a business woman who was a very strong supporter of women's liberation who noticed something distinctly different about this Christian businessman (she did not know he was a Christian). She asked him outright, "How come you are so calm when the rest of these businessmen are in a frenzy?" He quietly told her, "It is not me who is calm but it is the Christ who lives in me who makes me calm." He went on to give this woman his testimony. She did not receive Christ but she heard the gospel. Who knows, perhaps God will in grace save her!

CONCLUSION

What is the problem with the world today? People are restless. Why are they restless? Because they are unsaved and they have no rest for their souls. St. Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless, O God, until they find their rest in Thee." Man's constant quest for rest can only be satisfied in Christ. Christ fills the void of the human heart and prepares a person to live as well as to die.

Are you burdened? Are you tired of the whirlwind life? Are you weary of the phony life of constantly putting up a front? Behind all these problems is the problem of sin. Sin has separated

you from God and only Christ can bring you back to God. You must stop all your human efforts to save yourself and you must turn only to Christ, for only Christ can bring you the rest of salvation.

Almost two thousand years ago Christ made an offer to men and this offer is just as true and real today.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and ‘YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.’ For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30).