

58-04-02.wpd --The Rest of God's Promise

faith, works, rest, peace, Sabbath, wilderness, unbelief

Heb 4:1-11

Our hearts are restless until we rest in God and in His promises.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

--[Have you ever been interrupted in the middle of hearing a story or watching a movie, so that you didn't hear the ending. You wanted "the rest of the story."] The name of this sermon is (**title**). God has promised us full salvation, and we're in the middle of benefitting from that promise. But the object of (**title**) is just that: REST.

--The **text** is a difficult one to interpret, because the writer of Hebrews uses 3 different meanings for "rest": 1) *rest* as the peace of God; 2) *rest* as the Promised Land (*rest* from wandering in the desert); and *rest* as the Sabbath day of rest. All of these meanings have a single principle behind them: **HOM.idea**.

I. Israel's Rebellion in the Wilderness Journey, (re-read v.1-3a)

- A. When Israel refused to obey God's instruction about entering the Promised Land, Moses interceded for them in prayer--Num 14:19-23
 "In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times -- not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.
- B. During the next 40 years, the wilderness became the graveyard for all those who refused to obey God (they fell short of entering into the Promised Land) and their failure is our warning (repeat v.1)

TRANS: What does this teach us? (repeat v.2) God told Moses He had *forgiven* them, but they still spent the rest of their lives in restlessness! It wasn't about entering Canaan, because it says in v.3, "*Now we who have believed enter that rest...*" The physical Promised Land deal is over with, yet we enter the rest that they failed to enter, because what it's really talking about is a walk of faith with God. **Our hearts are restless until we rest in God and in His promises.**

II. The Sabbath Rest of God, (re-read v.3b-6)

- A. Something's missing in the 7th Day account-- Gen 2:1-3, Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (What's missing? NO "and the evening and the morning" [Wm.Barclay: "From this the Rabbis argued that, while the other days came to an end, the day of God's rest had no ending; the rest of God was for ever."])
- B. Adam & Eve lived in God's Sabbath rest but lost it...
1. NO NEED in the garden paradise of Eden for a *promise of rest*, because there was no struggle against nature. They were at one with creation in *diet*, in *dress*, and in *direction* (under God's)
 2. Man's "work week" began with the Fall (but God left a Sabbath reminder every 7 days to point towards His original plan)
 3. God's work had been completely finished, but the blessing of His *endless Sabbath rest* was forsaken by our original parents
 - a. God didn't scrap His plan and start His work of creation over, but Man's work week had began, and only Man could finish it.
 - b. Fallen man could not finish it, so God stepped into history as the God-Man, Christ Jesus, to complete the work that would bring about a New Sabbath for a New Humanity.

TRANS: Weaving was Adam & Eve's first work in disharmony with nature. But clothing couldn't hide guilt. God showed them what would atone for (or cover) their sin: the work of animal sacrifice. In the Law God explained this sacrificial work in detail. But Jesus brought that work to an end when He said from the Cross, "*It is finished.*"

III. The Rest That is Still Promised, v.7-9

- A. The Promised Land story points to another reality of rest that was not fulfilled when Joshua led the remaining Israelites into Canaan.
- B. Hundreds of years later, in describing our relationship to God as His people, the Psalmist David says the opportunity is still open-- Psa 95:6-1, Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was

angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

- C. Hebrews tells us that this appeal made in the Psalms is still valid today (re-read **v.9-10**)--(It's not talking about taking the 7th day off to rest from a busy week, putting our faith in Christ's work as a lifestyle instead of trusting our own work.)
1. **v.1** tells us to "*be careful that none*" fall short of the promise of entering his rest. (Wm. Barclay offers another translation of **v.1**, "*Beware lest you think that you have arrived too late in history ever to enjoy the rest of God.*" [a child, who was told some of the great OT stories, said, "God was much more exciting then."] (God is still exciting, still doing exciting things in the lives of all who rest themselves in Him.)
 2. The great danger is to believe that God's offer is no longer good at this point in your life.

CONCLUSION:

--Our hearts are restless until we rest in God and in His promises.

Our world has become quite sophisticated since the loss of paradise in Eden. Science has given us technological advancement, but not rest.

"*There remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.*" Jesus wants to take our hand and lead us not back into Eden, but the lead us through life with an Eden-like openness to God in our hearts.

Heb 4:1-11 (NIV) Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. {2} For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. {3} Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. {4} For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." {5} And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." {6} It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. {7} Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." {8} For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. {9} There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; {10} for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. {11} Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.