



GOD'S REST – NO TURNING BACK -

Hebrews 4:1-11

Have you been feeling a little bit like me – tired with all this Covid business, worn out with the limitations, isolated from friends and family – like you are sitting on a see-

saw – up and down and you feel like you are not in control and want to just get off?

But with restrictions perhaps you found you had more time on your hands. So, tell me – did you **REST**? Or did you look around your place and give in to your long “to-do” list – clean the cupboards, wash the walls, try to match all the tops and bottoms of your Tupperware dishes – take it from me – that is impossible – at least it didn't work for me.

But did your **REST** also include time out for God. Solitude, silence, reading His Word and praying – you know making time for your relationship with God?

God wants us to have rest and offers us this rest – not when we die, now – **today**. The rest God has in store is peace with Him now and eternal life in His presence – eternal life on a new earth later.

The writer of Hebrews is excited about the word **TODAY** – he uses it and cites from Psalm 95:7-8 King David warned the Israelites

“**Today**, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Today is the best time to find peace with God, for tomorrow may be too late.

We read in Genesis 1 that God provided a rest day for all humanity. On the 7th day God rested – but He didn't rest because He was tired – He

rested to indicate that what He had created was perfect and He was well satisfied. The rest is a foretaste of our eternal joy when creation will be renewed, restored, free from every sin and made perfect again.

Did humanity share in this rest of God in the past?

Adam and Eve initially did, they shared the blessing of a good relationship with God as He walked with them in the cool of the day, through the beautiful Garden of Eden.

What went wrong? Adam and Eve rebelled against God and were ejected from the Garden, leaving all of humanity lost to sharing in God's rest.

But God persisted. He tried rescuing humanity through Abraham and his descendants – bringing them to the promised land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, a reminder of Eden itself.

What went wrong? They also rebelled against God in the desert, their day-to-day difficulties overshadowed the reality of God's promises, thus God's rest alluded them also.

God continued to persist. He then led a new generation of Israelites to an earthly rest in the Promised land under Moses, but they too, turned their hearts and desires away from God – thus they were not allowed to enter.

God persisted again. He then led the next generation into the promised land through Joshua. They entered the land. **What went wrong?**

They continued to trust in their own efforts, resulting in King David warning them. In Psalm 95:7-8 King David warned them “**Today**, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

The writer of Hebrews uses the word **TODAY**. It is an ever-present warning, for every day is called “today”. We need to pursue God’s rest above every other kind of rest that we could pursue in this life.

What is this Rest?

This promised rest is offered to all who respond in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a promise that still stands today, awaiting ultimate fulfillment and realization in our lives. This is a promised rest, that’s made possible for us to one day enter into because of Jesus Christ our Lord, who when He ascended on high, entered into that Sabbath rest too.

Jesus Christ gives us a taste of that rest today.

In the Gospel of John, we read the final words of Jesus as He hung on the cross, getting ready to die. **“It is finished”**. What was finished - Jesus finished 2000 years ago all the work necessary for our redemption and then 40 days later He entered into God’s Sabbath rest, the same Sabbath rest that we look forward to. Only through faith in Christ, do we have hope that this promised Sabbath rest with God will be our inheritance too.

So in view of these things, how should we pursue this rest today?

Keep a Sabbath Rest. A Sabbath rest that God first entered into after His work of creation, when after labouring for six days He rested on the seventh.

Rest can so easily slip through our fingers, so we need to keep our eyes fixed on the only one who can give us true rejuvenating rest in the future, Jesus Christ, who offers us rest now and who holds the promise of an eternal Sabbath heavenly rest in the future.

Does this Rest comprise of becoming a couch potato once a week, zoning out, doing nothing at all, scrolling through your phone, computer, TV? No!

The kind of rest that God wants for us is to have an intimate relationship with Him and follow His plan for us.

We should spend time with Jesus Christ each and every day and one day we will share in God's rest. But nothing less than justifying faith in Jesus Christ will do. So, what does that involve?

The Bible teaches us that saving faith consists of:

Knowing the claims of the gospel – and what are they? That we are dead in our sins and trespasses and that apart from accepting and believing in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and Him alone, we have no future.

Believing and affirming those claims as true and trusting and living our lives entirely on the only person who can ultimately give us rest – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Rest in Christ begins when we trust Him to complete His good and perfect works in us. We do not need to wait for the next life to enjoy God's rest and peace. We can have it daily now. Our daily rest in the Lord will not end with death but will become an eternal rest in the place that Christ is preparing for us.

We are assured of this in verse 9 - "there remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God" In other words, today, the rest is still open.

And that is the foundation of God's message to all of us today: There is a rest open to all today. God offers rest. The door is not shut. The time is not past. You have not missed your last opportunity.

Don't harden your heart and say - "Yes, a rest remains for the people of God — but not for me." Do not rule yourself out. Look at verse 3 "We who have believed enter that rest."

There is one door to the safe, peaceful, happy rest of God — the door of faith. Anyone who puts faith in God's promises bought for us by the blood of Jesus, and is diligent not to throw that faith away, *is* a part of the people of God. So on behalf of God, I call you this morning, put your trust in the promise of God's rest.

Let us Pray:

Lord Jesus You have promised us rest for our lives – not only when we leave this earth, but now, Today. Many of us are feeling cracked and broken with life's pressures, but we know and are assured that You provide wholeness and healing.

We ask that You will refresh us anew and breathe new life into the areas that remain lying stagnant or dry.

We believe You can do it and we believe that it will happen Today, not tomorrow, today as we open our hearts to Your love and compassion.

Lord, we pray for You to rebuild us, to restore or replace anything in our lives that needs it – not to just make us better but to make us brand new.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

