

# MOVING TOWARD MATURITY

## ENTERING GOD'S REST

TEXT: Heb. 3:7-4:13

INTRODUCTION: When I ask people how they are doing, the most common response I hear is "Fine." The second most common response I hear is "I'm tired."

People are tired these days, men and women alike. Tired at work, tired at play. Even the little ones are tired. Some are barely tired; some are dog tired; others are plain ole exhausted. A lot have tired feet; others are too tired to eat. Some are too tired to keep on truckin', and on Sunday morning, guess where all the tired folk end up?

So maybe this morning, you will have special interest in the subject matter of our text in the Book of Hebrews.

The subject of our passage today in Hebrews is "Entering God's Rest." Actually, I could have called it "Missing God's Rest" because the primary thrust of the passage is a word of warning and exhortation to believers not to miss the rest that God has for them. Are any of us in danger? I am afraid we are! Let us read and be informed and warned, and I hope encouraged on how we can enter God's rest.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, <sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' <sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" <sup>12</sup> Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." <sup>16</sup> For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? <sup>17</sup> Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; <sup>5</sup> and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. <sup>9</sup> There remains therefore a rest for

the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

## I. THE RESTS GOD OFFERS

**A. The rest that comes with salvation** 4:3 For we who have believed do enter that rest...

1. Rest from worry about God's just condemnation for our sin.
2. Rest from works trying to merit the favor of God.
3. Rest from uncertainty about eternity.

**B. The future eternal rest** 4:9-10 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.

1. Rest from temptation and sin.
2. Rest from sickness and death.
3. Rest from sorrow and tears.

**C. The rest of victory in the midst of a long and difficult race.** 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

1. The Christian life is oft described in Scripture as a race that we are running.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.

2. Our lives are not merely one single race, but a series of races, comprising a marathon.
3. The rest that is the focus of this passage in Hebrews is the rest that comes after completing one leg of the marathon.
4. This is the rest of confident peace in the midst of trial.
5. This is the rest of victory over seemingly impossible odds.
6. This is the rest that comes from a source of power outside of yourself and far greater than your own.
7. This is the rest that comes from a life that is full, meaningful, abundant!

And many Christians are not only physically tired, but spiritually, mentally and emotionally tired as well because they do not have that rest.

God says there is such a rest. God says you can enter into His rest not just at the end of your life but in the middle of it, over and over again.

But entering that rest is not automatic, because he warns us about missing it. He tells us about people who lived long ago that could have entered His rest but did not. They missed it. Now he warns us so that we will not miss it also.

## II. THE LESSON FROM ISRAEL'S WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

- A. God gave Israel the opportunity to enter the promised land of His rest where they would experience victory and abundance. The land was called a land of milk and honey.
1. God gave Israel the opportunity to enter this promised land after spending a year at the foot of Mt. Sinai.
  2. Fourteen and one half months after God delivered Israel from Egypt, Israel was making its way, led by the glory of God in a pillar of fire and smoke to the border to the land where God's rest awaited them.
- B. But when Israel arrived at the border, they refused to go into the land of victory and rest which God had promised them. Why?
1. Their opponents seemed too powerful.
  2. The opposition seemed too large.
  3. The difficulties seemed insurmountable.
  4. The Holy Spirit in Hebrews summarizes their failure as unbelief.  
Unbelief prevents us from entering God's promised land of rest.

**The Promised Land is a picture of the victorious and abundant life that is available to every believer in the here and now.**

**Jn. 10:10b I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.**

**It is a picture of the rest that the Christian can experience here and now, in the midst of the race we are running.**

- 1. This is the life of victory in the midst of spiritual warfare.**
- 2. This is the life of fruitfulness in the vineyard of God.**
- 3. This is the life of faithful service to the King which will be rewarded by His Majesty saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."**
- 4. This is the life intended for every born again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 5. This is the abundant life Jesus promised.**
- 6. This is the life of rest which is victory in the midst of trials and troubles.**

**C. In the same way that unbelief prevented Israel from entering the Promised Land, unbelief prevents the Christian from living the abundant life and entering God's rest.**

And for that reason the Holy Spirit offers

### III. THE CHALLENGE FOR BELIEVERS TODAY

**A. Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**

#### 1. Unbelief in a believer?

**Yes!** Not unbelief about Christ or salvation, but unbelief concerning the commandments and promises of our Lord.

**2. Unbelief concerning His promise to answer prayer** leaves you restless about unsolved problems.

**3. Unbelief about His presence with us always, even in the valley** leaves you lonely during the hardest part of the journey.

**4. Unbelief about His ability and willingness to supply all our needs** leaves you worried and anxious.

**5. Unbelief about His use of our witness and testimony for Him** leaves you afraid and unfruitful.

**6. Unbelief about His desire for us to serve Him as an indispensable part of the local church body** leaves you unfulfilled.

**7. Unbelief about the superiority of spiritual discipline over physical disciplines** leads to a life without meaning and purpose.

**8. Unbelief about the blessings of honesty, integrity, and faithfulness** leads to a life stacked with lies like Jenga blocks, ready to crash to the ground at the smallest wrong move.

**B. Let us fear lest any of you come short of entering God's rest. 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.**

**1. Every Christian does not enter into the rest of the victorious and abundant life!**

**2. It is available to all.**

**3. Like the masses of Israel, many do not enter it.**

**4. He is not speaking of not entering salvation rest or eternal rest, but the abundant life, the victory rest that Christ offers every believer.**

**C. Let us be diligent ... lest any fall ... in disobedience. 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**

**1. Let us labor, work hard, be careful, endeavor strongly.**

**2. This is the opposite of the drifting of which we were warned in 2:1 which leads to a neglect of our great salvation.**

**3. It is a life overflowing with evidence of obedience to every word and commandment spoken by our Lord.**

- 4. It is a life teeming with joy that comes from the victory Christ gives in the daily battles and in the abundance of His provision to His obedient, faithful child.**

Listen to what the Spirit spoke through Peter about diligence in the Christian life.

2 Peter 1:5-12 <sup>5</sup> But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, <sup>6</sup> to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, <sup>7</sup> to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. <sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

- D. The Word of God is the key to dealing with unbelief and disobedience.** 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.

1. The Bible is not just a book.
2. You get and stay under and into the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and the Spirit of God Who breathed that Word will use it to expose to you your own thoughts and intents of your heart and reveal to you that God knows completely what you thought was hidden from the eyes of everyone.
3. And He will convict your heart to deal with that matter with God.

**CONCLUSION:** And that is where we are today. Let me conclude by asking:

1. **Do you have the rest of God that comes with salvation and culminates in eternal life? If not, trust Christ today.**
2. **Christian brother, sister, are you living in the rest of victory and abundant life that Christ offers to everyone who believes? If not...**
  - **Confess your unbelief to Christ, in whatever area it occurs, and instead put your faith and your obedience in Him. He will forgive, cleanse, empower, help.**
  - **Be diligent. With the power of the risen Christ in you, be diligent about those very things where you have been unfaithful and start walking in the victorious, abundant, restful life that God intends for you.**