

"GOD GIVES US ... REST!"
by Rom A. Pegram (7/16/17)

Let me begin, by way of introduction today, with two scriptures... First, John 17:3 (NLT) speaks to the reason why we need the Book of Hebrews. Listen to these words: "And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth." *This describes for us why we need the message of Hebrews!* Once again, folks, Hebrews is all about discovering who God is ... through the gift God sent to us in his son, Jesus. The more we get to know who Jesus is—the image of God (imago dei), the more we will get to know who God is. And, the more we get to know who God is, the sooner we will get to know who we are—who God has made us to be, with a healthy respect for ... or fear of ... God as well.

Last week, we said that Hebrews was going to help answer these questions for us, on our quest to know God better:

1. What has God done for us?
2. What is God doing for us now?
3. What will God do for us in the future?

In Matthew, Chapter 28, Jesus says, "Come to me...." And that's exactly what we're going to do right now, as we get into God's word together. Here's our scripture for today (Hebrews 4:1-11, NLT)...

God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. ² For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. ³ For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, "In my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest,'" even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. ⁴ We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work." ⁵ But in the other passage God said, "They will never enter my place of rest." ⁶ So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ⁷ So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." ⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. ⁹ So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰ For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

Have you ever had one of those days where you are just soooooooooooooo tired, either physically or emotionally or spiritually ... and you just feel like you desperately need some rest, but no one seems to understand how you feel! Well, today I'm here to

tell you that there is someone who does understand! *God understands ...* and, in fact, God wants to give you HIS REST, because God knows you need it!!!! 'Rest' may seem like an insignificant topic, in the realm of faith, but know—without a doubt—that what God wants to give us is very, very important ... *kind of like the 'rests' in music...*

Have you ever thought about this? Here's what one man said about the importance of 'rests' in music:

There's no music in a rest, but there is the making of music in it. In our whole life melody the music is broken off here and there by 'rests,' and we foolishly think we have come to the end of the tune. Not without design does God write the music of our lives. Be it ours to learn the tune, and not be dismayed at the 'rests.' They are not to be slurred over, not to be omitted, not to destroy the melody, not to change the keynote. If we sadly say to ourselves, 'There is no music in a rest,' let us not forget that there is the making of music in it. *Source unknown*

'Rest,' folks, is also crucial to the quality of our lives, too ... and God knows that! So, here's what you need to know about this gift...

GOD HAS ALWAYS DESIRED TO GIVE HIS PEOPLE THE GIFT OF 'REST!' Verses 1-6 tell us, "God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. ² For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. ³ For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, "In my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest,'" even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. ⁴ We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work." ⁵ But in the other passage God said, "They will never enter my place of rest." ⁶ So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God." So, the 'rest of God' has something to do with ... A PROMISE—a promise of rest that still stands today ... and A HISTORY—a history of a people who lacked faith in God and whose disobedience kept them from experiencing God's 'place of rest.'

Here's a bit of the history of that people of God who missed out... Chapter 4 of Hebrews opens with a warning based on Israel's tragic failure in the wilderness. We read that... ([Hebrews 4:1-2](#)). Israel had heard "the gospel preached" (that is, the *good news* brought by Caleb and Joshua that the land was theirs for the taking, the Nephilim notwithstanding). So confident were Caleb and Joshua in heralding the good news that they said, "We will swallow them up" ([Numbers 14:9](#)), or literally, "they will be bread for us"—or in today's language, "It's a piece of cake!" Virile chaps, these two—with a virile faith!

But Israel's response to the good news was tragically deficient: "But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God." Literally, "they didn't

mix it [the Good News] with faith." This is amazing because they had had constant witness of God's character and provision ever since they'd left Egypt—the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillars of cloud and fire, the daily provision of manna. *But now, faced with a new challenge, they simply did not trust God and so failed to enter their rest.* Many, perhaps thousands, were believers (they *believed* in God), but only two really *trusted* God and found rest (*a faith connection*)...

The Israelites of Moses' day illustrate a problem facing many who fill our churches today. They know a great deal about Christ, but they do not know him personally — they don't combine their knowledge [the Good News or message they hear] with faith. Folks, *let the Good News about Christ benefit your life.* Believe in him and then act on what you know! Trust in Christ & do what he says. Then, you'll know...

GOD STILL DESIRES TO GIVE US THE GIFT OF 'REST!' Verses 6-11 say: "So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: 'Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts.'⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come.⁹ *So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God [italics mine].*¹⁰ For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall." – Hebrews 4:1-11 (NLT)

This 'rest' of God is ... *a physical rest*. We see that in Genesis 2:1-3 (NLT) where it says this: "So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed.² On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work.³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation."

This 'rest' of God is ... *having a peace* in our lives like no other! Charles Wesley (of the famous Wesley brothers) once wrote, "I rest beneath the Almighty's shade, my griefs expire, my troubles cease; Thou, Lord, on whom my soul is stayed, wilt keep me still in perfect peace." This, folks, is the peace that Jesus talked about in John 14:27 (NLT) when he said, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." This, folks, is the 'peace that passeth all understanding' that scripture refers to. It's unexplainable, except that it's a gift from God—a gift of being able to rest in him...

This 'rest' of God is also about ... *being content* no matter what our outward circumstances happen to be—a holy contentment...

So, what needs to be done that we might come to know this gift of rest that God so desperately wants us to have? There is a catalyst. And it's exactly what the Israelites failed to have. The catalyst is ... FAITH! Faith is what triggers 'God's Rest' in our lives. Again, we need to combine 'the message we have heard' [Good News] with FAITH ... BUT so often, we just don't put our faith into action...

In the Philippines I heard a local pastor use the following parable to illustrate Christ's offer of rest (Matt. 11:28) and the response of people who won't trust Him completely: The driver of a caribou wagon was on his way to market when he overtook an old man carrying a heavy load. Taking compassion on him, the driver invited the old man to ride in the wagon. Gratefully the old man accepted. After a few minutes, the driver turned to see how the man was doing. To his surprise, he found him still straining under the heavy weight, for he had not taken the burden off his shoulders. (*Larry Chell*)

In Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT) Jesus tells us, once again: "... 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.'"

Folks, what's it going to take ... for us to let go of the load we carry? We need rest. God desperately wants us to know his rest: physical rest ... and peace ... and contentment. *And let go of all of those guilty feelings* about needing rest ... or resting! And I'm speaking of this in every way it applies. I know how those of you who are workaholics feel, because I've been there too. Let go of those guilty feelings—feeling like you always have to be doing something all the time—and enjoy the incredible gift of 'rest' that God wants to give you ... desires for you to have ... and knows you need!

- Do you need physical rest? God's there for you...
- Do you need peace in your life? Are you troubled by current circumstances? God's there for you...
- Do you desperately need to feel a sense of contentment—to know that all is right with God and with your life, no matter what your outward circumstances? God's there for you, too...

As we close today, whatever your need is ... please join me as I pray and let's turn it all over to the only One who can make a difference... Would you join me?