

Rest for Today

Hebrews 3:16-4:10

- I am an avid sports fan. I know that no one here really knew that about me. But I love sports, I always loved playing them growing up, and my favorite hobby right now is following my favorite professional teams. And I've always been a passionate, enthusiastic fan, to say the least. I tend to get more emotionally invested in my teams than the average person.
- But this year, I've started doing something that I never thought I would do... I think in this season of life, I just can't handle the stress of live sports the same anymore. The Eagles might have done it to me. They said 33 was my Jesus year, and I get that because the Eagles are my Judas.
- But I have found myself this Basketball season, even though I have bought the package to be able to watch every game, every time the

Sixers play, I have been waiting until the game is over before I actually watch them. I follow and keep up with the score on my phone, and if we win, I go back and watch the game from the beginning later than night. If we lose, I don't bother myself with it. A few years ago, I would have thought this was a completely ridiculous way to be a sports fan. But I have been able to watch each game from a place of rest and enjoyment. Even when the opposing teams make a comeback or takes a late lead, I get don't have to get stressed out, because I already know the outcome. I get to have a much more pleasant experience because I am confident in the end result and I just get to enjoy The Process. (Pun intended)

- Now, wouldn't it be a little weird, if I already knew the end result, I already saw how the whole game was going to play out, and still woke Rachel up by yelling at the tv. What if I started pacing back and forth in a tight game and was restless the whole time, even though I

know that they're going to win by 7? That would be a little ridiculous, right?.

- *Yet, how many of us Christians, have read this Book, know the end result, have seen the promises of God, know the Victory that we are assured of, yet still live completely restless lives?*
- If you have your bibles, go ahead and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3... and we talked about last week from this chapter 3, how the Israelites had their hearts hardened because they lost sight of all that God had done for them.
- How, whenever they were lead out of captivity in Egypt, they missed out on experiencing the promises of God because of the hardness of the their hearts.
- The writer says in verse 15, ***"As it is said, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by***

Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief." -Hebrews 3:15-19 (ESV)

- Here's our first point for today:
- **UNBELIEF RESULTS IN RESTLESSNESS**
- This is definitely true on an eternal level. Those who never come to faith in Jesus will never truly experience rest in their lives.
- They cannot experience the rest of knowing the end victory because they do not know the Victor Himself, that is Jesus Christ.
- And we as humans spend our entire lives seeking rest.
 - *We think if we can get the right relationship or marriage, we'll experience the relational rest we're longing for.*

- *Then we think that if we can get to a certain salary, then we will experience financial rest and things will get easier*
- *We think that if we can just achieve enough, then we can find the reputation-al rest we're longing for*
- But no matter who we're with or what we get, there is still a restlessness within us, that we're longing to satisfy.
- Which is exactly Jesus says, ***“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”- Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)***
- That is exactly what every human being, living and breathing on this planet is searching for whether they realize it or not. Rest for their souls.
- Which is exactly what Jesus offers. Literally by definition, *“The blessed tranquility of soul”*
- But how many of us Christians, have come to Him, took His yoke upon us, have learned from Him, and yet still live our lives more Restless than Restful.
 - And this is due largely in part to our unbelief.
- Yes, even Believers in Christ can live in the midst of unbelief.
 - And in turn, we miss out of the Rest that He offers us for today.
- In Chapter 4, Verse 1, it says, ***“Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.” -Hebrews 4:1 (ESV)***
 - You see where many people have a hard time in interpreting this book, is that we forget that this was written to believers. Not unbelievers.

- If we see this as being written to just unbelievers, we look at a verse like that and think, “Oh we’re good. So I am going to enter the rest of God in Heaven.”
- But that isn’t necessarily just talking about Heaven. Now, there is a level to that.
 - *But the confidence we have in the future should result in rest for today.*
- You see, the Israelites are used as an example for the instruction in the life of a believer. Not as a warning to the unbeliever to come to faith.
- The Israelites were God’s Redeemed people. And even in their unbelief, they never stopped being God’s Redeemed people, but so many of their generations couldn’t walk in promises and plans that He had for them because they kept falling into unbelief.
 - And their story is supposed to serve as an example and warning to us as God’s redeemed people, to show us how fickle our hearts can be.
- *How quick we can be to go after other gods?*
- *How prone we can be to let fear dictate our decisions?*
- *How easily we can miss out on the Rest that He offers us ?*
 - All due to the unbelief that we allow to go unchecked in our hearts.
- **Unbelief is the Refusal to Trust the Promises of God**
 - The Israelites refused to trust that God has promised them the land of Canaan, and as a result, that generation lived out the rest of their days wandering and restless.
- Again the writer says, ***“Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.” -Hebrews 4:1 (ESV)***
 - That word fear, means “to take anxious care”
 - The fact that we are prone to unbelief should bother us, and we should care enough to

realize the areas of our lives where unbelief tends to exist, so we don't fall into the same things that those Israelites.

- This takes place in so many areas of our lives:
 - *We trust Him as deliverer, but not so much as our developer*
 - *We trust Him as our spiritual protector, but not our physical provider*
 - *We trust Him as Lord over the church, but not always Lord of our lives*
- The writer says, it should not seem as if we do not have the Rest of God in our lives.
 - It should not be hard to tell, if we are people of faith or not.
- In verse 2 he goes on to say, ***“For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” Hebrews 4:2 (ESV)***

- Now we know the ULTIMATE Good News of Great Joy that is for all people!
- The Good News that God became a Man and beat death so we could live eternally with Him.
- That is THE Ultimate Good News!
- So we have Good News for Eternity, but we also have good news for today as well. We have very practical every day good news provided for us through the Gospel that we don't take advantage of
 - For example. Jesus says in Matthew 6, *“Don't be anxious about your life, what you eat or drink, your body, your clothes. Look at how God takes care of the birds and dresses the lilies, will He not even more so take care of you, or are of infinite more value??”*
- Then He goes on to say, ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” -Matthew 6:33 (ESV)***

- Now we hear good news like that! But we don't live as if we believe it
- Why? Because we don't seek the Kingdom of God first. We seek after prominence, performance, and paychecks until we hit a snag or bump in the road, and THEN we anxiously seek the Kingdom of God for help to get us out of our mess!
- Whenever we live that way, we *seem* as if we failed to obtain ANY of God's rest in our lives.
- Our eternal security is not on display for the rest of the world to see, and we just live just anxious, restless, lives as those who don't have the love and hope of Jesus Christ.
- But God has more for us and wants more for us.
- Verses 4, 9&10 say this, ***“For He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works...So then, there***

remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His.” -Hebrews 4: 4, 9-10 (ESV)

- Keep in mind that the Jewish writers that are being written too, have a history of having a very works based relationship with God.
- They had 613 laws, traditions, and customs that they were supposed to adhere to in order to keep some sort of established relationship with God
- But then Jesus came, not to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law, so that now, the writer says, God's people could rest from their works
- That phrase literally means: *“To rest from the law that demanded good works with the suggestion of toil or struggle with hindrances”*
- Simply, Jesus came to complete the work that we could never complete no matter how hard we tried.

- But that in essence is the truth of the Christian life.
- **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT ABOUT TRYING HARDER BUT TRUSTING MORE**
 - Now, are we expected to do good works and live Godly moral lives? Absolutely... “Faith without words is dead”
 - But the point is that we do not put our trust in our good works, we put our trust in the work of Jesus and all that we do flows from that.
 - Because whenever we believe and rest in His work, the pressure is taken off of us and we are given what the writer calls a “Sabbath Rest” in verse 9.
- That term **“Sabbath” (sabbatismos): The blessed rest from toils and troubles by the True Worshipers and True Christians**
 - You see this was the whole point of why God instituted the Sabbath in the first place
- The basis of it was founded upon God’s day of Rest after the 6 days of creation
- And when He rested, that doesn’t mean He was tired and took a nap. It means that He took the time to Enjoy His Work
- And He wanted His people to have a day every week that they took the time to just put everything on pause and enjoy Who God is and All that He’s done for them
- It was one of the two things that separated the nation of Israel from every other nation on the planet.
 - It made no sense from an economic or military standpoint, for an entire nation to have a full day once a week where all defenses were down and no goods were produced.
- It was a day of blessing and remembrance that even when they did nothing God still did everything and they could rest in that truth.

- But then fast forward to the time of Jesus, the Sabbath was no longer a day of rest and remembrance, it was more so a day of dread.
 - The practice of the Sabbath had been distorted by the tradition of man.
 - At the time of Jesus there were approximately 6000 pharisees or religious leaders who monitored the people to make sure they kept the sabbath. And if anyone was seen as doing anything that would be considered work on the sabbath they would be stoned.
- But the problem was, all of the pharisees could have different interpretations of what “work” actually was
 - One Pharisee would say that if your animal fell into a pit, you could pull that animal out and it wouldn't be counted against you. You could be taught that by one pharisee but if another pharisee that didn't agree with that philosophy caught you pulling out your

animal from the ditch he could have you killed.

- Some of these rules got really out of hand. Some would say you could only travel so many steps away from your home on the sabbath. But if you absolutely HAD to keep traveling, then just declare the nearest tree you see as your home, and you're fine. But others would disagree
- So it was very hard to keep up with what keeping the Sabbath actually meant
 - People would walk around on egg shells, terrified of being accused of doing anything a pharisee would deem as work
 - So instead of it being a day of blessing and enjoyment it was a day of fear and confusion.
- Which is also why some of Jesus' most dramatic showdowns with the Pharisees were over the controversies of the Sabbath

- Too often, we Christians, acts just like the pharisees. We make up our own rules for what being a Christian looks like.
 - We sell it as a list of do's and don't do's. You better mind your P's and Q's or God's gonna be mad at You's.
 - How often do we sell our faith as this performance based religion that causes people to just live in fear and confusion.
 - We can sell this faith as a life of walking around on eggs shells, but Jesus says that this is supposed to be a life of Rest and Enjoyment!
- The writer of Hebrews reminds us that because of the Work of Jesus, we can get back to experiencing the Rest that God designed the Sabbath to give us, and we can experience it now!
- That's why he keeps emphasizing the word "Today" like in verse 7
 - He's saying TODAY don't harden your heart
- TODAY rest in the work of Jesus
- TODAY ***"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."* -Hebrews 4:11 (ESV)**
- It's interesting, with all of this talk of rest, that the writer would tell us to "strive" to enter the rest
- Idk about you, but Striving and rest don't seem to go hand in hand to me
 - *Gene Henry just had neck surgery. It is not natural for Gene, to just lay back, binge a show, rest, and get better!*
 - *He's a workin man, the more he rests the more restless he tends to get...he's going to have to strive to rest these next couple of weeks*
- It's very similar to our Spiritual lives, it's not natural for us to just rest in God's promises and His work

- It's more natural to me to try and take matters into my own hands
- It's more natural to act of emotions in the moment, than to trust that God will take care of something in His own timing.
- We know the right answers on paper, but it's a whole other ball game when life starts to get real.
 - *We trust that God will work all things out for the good of those who Love Him and are called according to His purpose....until something happens to us*
 - *We trust that He'll never leave us or forsake us...until the doctor gives us bad news*
 - *We trust that He is the Way the Truth and the Life...until we start getting berated for our faith*
 - Then it's more natural to feel sorry for ourselves and wallow in self pity, bitterness or anger, then rest in God's plan, promises, and provisions
- And if we as Christians seem to be just as miserable and restless as the rest of the world, why would any one want to come to our faith?
- *We're the ones who have rest in the midst of a diagnosis*
- *We're the ones that have joy in the midst of the trials*
- *We're the ones who can smile in the midst of the storm*
- Because we have the promise that this life is but a vapor and the sufferings of this present world are not even worth comparing to the Glory that will be revealed to us
- Again, our eternal security gives us rest for today
 - IF, we can put our natural tendencies aside, and rest in His promises
- In verse 8. Joshua is mentioned because the Israelites, originally gave into the natural tendencies of fear and fell into the

disobedience of not Believing God's Promise and not Trusting He would Prevail

- So, like we talked about last week, that promise was passed off to the next generation
- And so when the time came, this next generation DID believe God and moved toward the promised land
 - But God didn't just hand it over to them immediately
 - They still had to take steps of obedience and faith first
 - God still put things in their path that could cause them to revert to fear and unbelief like the previous generation did
- The first thing God has has the people do, under the leadership of Joshua now, is go to the Jordan River
 - On the other side of this river was Jericho, a fortified city built on the land that God had promised the Israelites

- Jericho strategically built their city near this river because it served as another line of defense from invaders
 - Especially at this time, this would not have been a peaceful river, because verse 15 of chapter 3 tells us that this was the time of harvest
 - So at this time all of the snow from Mount Hermon would have melted and flooded down to the river and made it 14 feet higher and 100 feet wider than the river normally was.
 - And God was going to have them cross this river just like the previous generation had crossed the Red Sea
 - But the way it happened this time, is He made the priests with the Ark of the Covenant all walk into the rushing, raging river. And once all of the priests touched the soles of their feet inside of the water, THEN eventually the waters began to subside

until they were able to walk on across on dry ground

- Then after they crossed the Jordan, they didn't just walk in and take the land. No, they had to march around the city every day for 7 days, being haunted by 40 foot plus impenetrable walls before they let out a shout of praise and then the walls came down.
- But they passed the test of obedience, they trusted God's promise, and because of that Joshua 21 says, ***"Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that He swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers."*** -Joshua 21:43-44 (ESV)
- So they got to experience the rest that God promised, but there was still some striving they had to do for it.

- And the same for us: **WE FIND REST IN OBEDIENCE**

- Now, God may not call you to walk across a raging river or march around a city, but there are things in your life that God is calling you to do.
 - And the longer you push that calling off, the longer your soul will feel restless.
- I've shared this story before, but back whenever I moved to Shelby to be a student pastor, the church wasn't able to pay me at all and I eventually got a full time job at a physical therapy clinic in town. And after I was there for a little while I began to get convicted that the Lord wanted me to start praying with my patients
- But if I'm going to be honest, I was hesitant to do so. Now, that might seem very unspiritual of me because I was in ministry, I had dedicated my life to the sharing of the Gospel, but if I'm honest I was weary of seeming like one of those overly religious guys (which probably

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wasn't the right way to think and feel, but I'm just being honest)

- But the longer I put that conviction aside the longer I was restless in my spirit every day when I went to work.
- And eventually the restless was getting so heavy I finally made a deal with God one morning, and said, "Ok God...if we have any first time evaluations today, i'll pray with them to start off their therapy process."
- And sure enough, the very first patient of the day that morning was a first time evaluation.
- And I was nervous, I was awkward as i'll get out. But finally I moved in obedience and after I did, there was a rest in my spirit.
- From then on, anytime we had a new patient come in I would get that same restlessness until I prayed with them.
- And I had to make it a regular practice, and it was such a fruitful experience...I loved what I was able to do there. I was able to do more

ministry in that clinic than I was ever able to do in the church, I thought I would do something like that forever.

- But one day, about 2 years later I started feeling a restlessness again. it was like a switch went off in my spirit, and I felt like I wasn't supposed to be there anymore.
- But it didn't make sense to me, I didn't know why, but for the next couple of days, I would go into work I would just feel that restlessness.
- And that Wednesday, my pastors that I worked for at the church, Skip and Jeff asked me if I would be willing to come on full time at the church.
 - *You see, sometimes, The Spirit will convict you and you'll feel restless until you take that step of obedience, and other times you'll experience the restlessness and He will reveal why later.*
- But either way, you will not experience the rest until you take the step of obedience

- That's why it's strange to me when I hear people say, "Well if it's what God wants you to do, you'll have a peace about it."
- Well, maybe sometimes. But I haven't really experienced that, and I don't really see people experiencing that in the bible either.
- I see Moses being terrified to be the one to lead the people of Egypt
- Joshua had to lead the people to a chaotic rushing river and the peace didn't come UNTIL they stepped in
- Gideon was hiding in a cellar
- Even Jesus was sweating drops of blood in anticipation of the cross
- When the Holy Spirit is convicting me, when God is calling me to take a step of faith, I'm not feeling peace, I'm feeling restless...and then I have to strive to enter the peace and rest by being obedient to His call
 - And then after I take the step of faith, then the peace comes
- So let me ask you...what have you been restless about?
 - *Have you been feeling restless about being more open with your faith at work?*
 - *Have you been restless about someone you need to be praying with or for?*
 - *Have you been restless about taking a step of faith?*
 - *Have you been restless about the need to be more plugged into a Christian community?*
 - *Have you been restless about your faith being more of a Sunday morning hobby than an everyday lifestyle?*
- I don't know what gets you restless, but I do know its time to strive to enter than rest by being obedient to whatever God is calling you to do.
 - And again, this doesn't mean you need to try harder to be better, this just means that you need to Trust God more, that He will be there with you every step of the way and bless you

with every spiritual blessing to carry out what He is calling you to do

- Maybe you've been restless over something that you need to repent of?
- I love in Peter's second sermon he ever gave, recorded in Acts 3, he says, ***“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”***
-Acts 3:19-20 (ESV)
- That word, **Refreshing**, literally means: **a recovery of breath**
 - It gives the picture of us getting so caught up in the restlessness of life, just running and running and running, going, going, and going, but God just wants us to take a break! Catch your breath!
- For our last point for today, we need the:
- REST OF REPENTANCE

- Now, a lot of people have a tough time with that word now a days...for a couple of reasons
 - First, we have a hard time with the idea of repentance because it causes us to admit that we are wrong
 - *Refusal to admit wrongdoing is the greatest hindrance to a real relationship with God*
 - We hate being told that we think, act, or see things the wrong way
 - We believe for anyone to tell me that the way I see things, the way I feel, the way I think, the way I live, is wrong... they are just intolerant
- And we are told and we are encouraged to dig our heels in and get defensive if anyone tells us that we are wrong, but can you see how that leads us susceptible to an undue amount of pressure that leads to depression

and anxiety because we feel like we're supposed to have all of the answers.

- That's an incredible weight to carry
- On the other hand we struggle with repentance because whenever we hear the word "Repent," we associate it with the angry man with the backpack microphone, standing on the street or outside of stadiums, yelling at everyone and telling them how bad they are.
 - So when many of us hear the word repent, we hear it as..."REPENT!"
 - "Change everything about yourself or you'll burn in hell for eternity"
- So even Christians sometimes have a hard time talking about repentance because we disagree with the approach of some
 - And we have this idea that repentance looks like: I'm right here, and God is back there, and He's yelling at me, telling me to

turn to Him, and then I have to struggle and try and get my life turned around so that I can live in His favor and He will be pleased with me.

- However, that type of repentance can only result in two things:

- Pride & Despair

- Pride because we'll feel like we made something of ourselves, and want everyone to look at what I've done, all the good things I do, and what I was able to STOP doing.
- But eventually pride will turn into despair, if it didn't start there to begin with, because it's only a matter of time before we realize that we can't be good enough. I may be able to string together a few good days, weeks, maybe even a few good years, but eventually I'm going to fall again and be left in despair

- But I don't want anyone to know that I'm in despair, so I'm going to put on this facade that I'm living a squeaky clean life, because I don't want anyone to know that I'm struggling or that I'm in despair
- But in the middle of pride and despair, comes the Gospel. Because the Gospel breaks down any form of pride and builds us up out of despair, because the Cross of Jesus Christ shows us that God did for us what we could never do for ourselves.
- So, repentance can actually be a refreshing experience because true repentance isn't about working hard to change your actions, it's more resting in God and changing your mind.
- **Repent (metanoēō): To change one's mind; to reconsider**
 - The word repent can also be translated, "To look again"
- So when Jesus said, "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*" He was saying, "*Stop looking to the law, stop looking to yourself, stop looking at this world, AND LOOK AT ME!*"
- "*Fix your mind on ME! And THEN you'll experience the rest of repentance*"
- Now, repentance DOES result in a change of actions, but it cannot start there
- Because I cannot effectively change my actions if I do not change the way I view my actions
- That's why Paul says in Romans, "**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...**" -Romans 12:2 (ESV)
 - And this renewal of the mind cannot come from my efforts to be smarter and wiser, it can only come from looking to Jesus

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- So repentance actually looks like, I'm right here...God wants me turned over there. And it's when I stop looking down, I stop looking around, I stop looking in the mirror...and I start looking up
- And I Look to Jesus, and become captivated by how good He is, how caring He is, How loving He is, I consider the lengths that He went to in order to save my soul. I read about His grace and mercy that He show toward humanity, I sit at His feet like Martha did...
- And then all of the sudden, I find myself turned in a completely different direction because my attention and focus is no longer on what's around me, but Who's above me.
- And I cast all of my cares upon Him because He cares for me.
- And the only times whenever I start to get restless again, is when I get fixated on my problem and say to God, "Hey!? DO YOU SEE THIS??"
- When I should be focused on God, and tell my problem, "Hey, DO YOU SEE HIM??"
- IDK about you, but I could use a time of refreshing that comes from true repentance
 - I got some things that I need to leave at His feet?
 - And I know that I'm not the only one...