

# Enter God's Rest

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] In the year 1930, there was a man with the first name with two initials. Gotta love those guys. F.E. And his last name was Smith. And he was an advisor to Winston Churchill, the prime minister of England.

And he was a very bright man. He made a prediction that 100 years later, work and machines would make life so efficient and easy that you would be able to work about a 20-hour work week and have plenty of time and money to just enjoy leisure.

That was 1930. And he thought, by the time we get to the decade we're in now, you would be able to enjoy things like horseback ride, fox hunts, and playing cricket.

Knowing this congregation, maybe we would choose soccer, basketball, fishing, mountain biking, exploding kittens, or something like that for leisure. I read an article this week, though, by a journalist.

She said, the reality is we are, quote, stressed. We're anxious. We're not getting enough sleep. Anxiety is so bad, it will doom us to an early death.

[ 1 : 1 7 ] Close quote. She was right. One out of every five adults in America are clinically anxious. That means they can get prescription medicine to treat anxiety.

One out of every five adults you see in a grocery store line. Well, here's the response that our world wants to throw. Products to solve problems.

The sleeping AIDS market. Things to assist you in sleeping is up to \$500 billion industry. Is it working?

The restless heart is not a new problem. In fact, the author of Hebrews is really addressing so much of that. The hearts are restless. The people fear man.

Persecution is mounting. And the church, the visible church, at least, is crumbling away. They have envy. They have strife. And he addresses them with God's word in this way.

[ 2 : 1 9 ] Let's hear what God says. Hebrews 4, verses 1 through 11. 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.

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.

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. Although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

This is Hebrews 4. I'm starting in verse 4 now. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way. And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.

And again, in this passage, he said, they shall not enter my rest. Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day.

[ 3 : 2 7 ] Today, saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 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. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

This is the word of God. And I forgot to have you all stand and sit down. I apologize for that. You know, in this passage, these 11 verses, the author of Hebrews, he's preaching, and he's taking a psalm, Psalm 95, that would have been very familiar to them, because in every synagogue, they would have included in their weekly liturgy a reading from the creation account, especially chapter 2, and Psalm 95.

And what he's really just preaching, he's taking this psalm of David, who's referring back to the disobedience in the generation with Moses, and then pointing out how even Joshua didn't fully accomplish what God had promised, and then pointing out, and this was written by David long after them, and it still applies to you today, church.

[ 4 : 56 ] That's exactly what he's doing. And it's a powerful psalm. We were introduced to that psalm last week. Here he continues it, but he turns now, what he's opened up, he turns it to exhortation.

He is giving the church a command from God. And here's how you could summarize what he's trying to want the church to hear, what he wants you to hear today, by the Spirit of God. Because God finished his work, the follower of Christ must strive to rest in God's promise while it remains.

Let me give that to you one more time. Because God finished his work, the follower of Christ must strive to rest in God's promise while it remains.

It's really a matter of eternal life and death for each one that's hearing this, that's hearing God's word, even today. God calls you, church, to strive to enter his rest.

[ 5 : 57 ] You do this by learning to trust the promise of the one whose work is finished. And here are the three exhortations. Number one, fear God.

We're going to see that starting at verse one. Number two, rest in God's kingdom. We'll look at that one starting at verse 10. And then finally, number three, stay tender to God's word.

We'll start that one at verse 11. So first, fear God. Look at verse one with me. While the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear.

Let us fear. That's the first exhortation. Church, you're here, hearing God's word. One of the responses you should have when you hear God's word is you ought to fear.

You ought to fear. Now look at the motivation behind the fear. You should fear not reaching God's rest. That's what you should be fearful of.

[ 6 : 58 ] But if your heart's like mine, I fear so many other things more. So often. So he says, fear God. You know why? There's only one thing that can melt away your fear of man.

And that's a greater fear of God. Fear God. So I want to talk to you about the fear of man first. Showing from this passage, I think what he's trying to connect some dots for us.

And then the solution, which is the fear of God. So first, the fear of man. Well, in Hebrews chapter six, we're told that many had fallen away from God.

In Hebrews chapter 10, we're told that this congregation, many of them had given up meeting together. In Hebrews three and four, we started this last week.

They had hardened their hearts to the word of God. And now, many have maybe seemed to that congregation like they have failed to reach God's rest.

[ 7 : 59 ] So we can maybe guess, maybe they had just had to perform a funeral for one of these members who had stopped meeting with them. I mean, how does that funeral go? We're sad, but when persecution started to squeeze the church, that member renounced the faith.

Now, here we are caring for the family, but we don't know. It seems like he failed to reach God's rest, ultimately. We don't know. But the fear of God, the fear of man had crippled them and it had paralyzed the church.

They were frozen. They were passive and frozen because the fear of man was so great. Many of them, maybe, had decided like Oscar Wilde, I don't want to go to heaven.

None of my friends are there. And if we were as honest as Oscar Wilde, we might reach repentance a little quicker. The preacher of Hebrews makes it clear, not all who are part of the visible church will reach heaven.

Apostasy is real. And when it happens, we should be sad. When someone renounces the faith, it says, it's all fake. I don't believe in any of that. We should be so sad, but we should not be surprised.

[ 9 : 11 ] Jesus said in Matthew 7, he's referring to the day when he will come to judge the living and the dead. He said, on that day, many, not just a few, many, will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

Let me just pause there. You know, Jonathan Edwards preached a powerful sermon. He stood up there trembling and read it from his manuscript. And it was called Sinners in the Hands of an Angry

God, which really begins with the end of the book of Hebrews as his text.

Well, R.C. Sproul made a comment about that and I agree. Today, for the visible church, you'd have to significantly edit that sermon, including the title, to be God in the Hands of Angry Sinners.

That's how bad the fear of man has gripped the church, I'm afraid. Well, here's what Jesus says to that. I will declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. John Flavel, a Puritan, said, the carnal person, so one who is still dead in sin, bound to the flesh, that person fears man, not God.

[10:36] The strong Christian fears God, not man. But it's not that clear cut. There's a third category that convicts me every day as well.

The weak Christian fears man too much and God too little. What a contrast this is to what David could pray.

He's in the wilderness, no comfort. He's in a cave and hiding because the king of his nation has him on the hit list and is hunting him down. Every reason to be stressed, every reason to have anxiety, every reason to need sleep medication, and he can pray because his fear of God is so great in Psalm 4a.

I will both lay me down in peace and sleep. Why? Because thou, Lord, only makes me dwell in safety.

What a contrast to today, right? Well, I'm going to transition now from the fear of man to the fear of God, but I want to show you how I believe the author of Hebrews is doing it, even though it's subtle.

[11:49] I think it's definitely an application, but I think there's a powerful connection. Brian Borgman helped me to see this one. The fear of God is what will melt away the fear of man.

Look at verse 2. Good news came to them. Remember from the sermon last week, that's the first generation that had been brought out of Egypt.

They had been in bondage to slave, brought out. And they stood before Mount Sinai and they heard the voice of God and the flaming presence of God.

It was terror striking. They had every reason to fear God. And yet, look at verse 2. The message they heard did not benefit them because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

So that's trying to draw in the mind of the audience that first generation out of slavery. Now look at verse 8. If Joshua had given them rest, okay, so remember Joshua, it was Joshua and Caleb among that first generation who went and spied out the land and came back and gave the report.

[12:59] Will you have faith and believe and trust God to do the work for you or will you coward in the fear of man? And it was Joshua now again with the second generation that God used to lead into the promised land, the picture of rest.

But that wasn't the ultimate rest because God would not have spoken later on of a rest that's yet to come. So even that land of Canaan, it was a picture and we should learn from that picture, but it's not the ultimate rest.

So think about this, the fear of man. The first generation, they were afraid of the sword of the giants in that land. The second generation, God said, I'll teach you to fear something bigger.

You need to fear your God. And they also had to face a blade. It wasn't, you're not going to face the sword of the giants trusting me? And so bring me all your men of fighting age, line up the army.

Every one of them passed through the blade of circumcision. You see that connection? The fear of man with the sword of man, the fear of God, the picture of circumcision, and then what that means for entering the rest.

[14:07] Now here's a really cool thing. Again, Brian Borgman helped me to see this. Look down at verse 12. Where does this, what does this mean for you today, church? What sword should you fear? Look at verse 12.

It's the word of God which is living and active, and it's sharper than any two-edged sword, sharper than the sword of the giants, sharper than the blade of circumcision.

It will pierce to the division of soul and spirit, spirit, of joints and of marrow and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the, what is it?

The heart. God is always after the heart of his people. Romans chapter 2, Paul draws it out. Okay, the visible church is what we can see.

We do the best we can on earth as sojourners and pilgrims. Members are admitted based on a credible profession of faith and baptized. That's the visible church. But the invisible church are those, according to Romans 2, those who truly revere God and who have been circumcised where?

[15:10] In the heart. That's the mark of the true church. If you fear God and his heart, his word does a work in your heart, you can find comfort.

But there's no shortcuts. You don't get to get around one blade or the other. There has to be some type of fear in your heart. Is it the fear of God or the fear of man?

Psalm 95 again. Listen to David's exhortation. He says to the people of God, Oh, come, let us worship. And what's the posture of the worshiper?

Let us worship and bow down. You bow down before someone you fear and revere and esteem highly. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker.

So even there in 95, David's pointing back to creation. This is where it goes next. Psalm 103. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

[16:14] As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion, not indiscriminately, I will do to all the rebels who hate him and who have no love for God in his heart.

His compassion goes to each and every one who fear him in the heart. Do you have a biblical fear of God in your heart?

Because if you don't, you have no hope of finding rest for your soul. This is not a new truth for the church. It's a very ancient one. In fact, there's no truth of gospel without this.

Augustine confessed it this way in a prayer. He said, My heart was restless until it found its rest in you. So let's talk next about that.

We looked at the fear of God which melts away the fear of man. Let's look next at what it means to rest in God. And I want to show you because he takes us all the way back to creation, resting in God is really resting in his kingdom.

[17:19] That's what I think the author wants us to see. Look at verse 3 and 4. We who have believed, now here's the contrast, if God has pierced your heart, he's given you a fear of God and you've repented.

If we have believed, then we enter that rest. As he said, this is verse 3. I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest. And look at what he anchors that statement to.

Although his works, God's works, were finished. That's a key word. Listen for that word every time it comes out. God's works were finished from the foundation of the world.

He wants us to now think way back. This is bigger than just the first and second generation with the land of Canaan. This is way bigger. We're talking cosmic global proportions. And he takes us back to the foundation of the world.

Turn in your Bible to Genesis chapter 1. While you're turning there, I'm going to remind you what you know. And I'm going to remind you using Milton Vincent's little poem.

[18:22] The first book I read here with Redeeming Grace. It was a men's Bible study and it was a gospel primer by Milton Vincent. So powerful and I was happy to see it on the book table not long ago.

This is a refresher of what we're building to the last verse of Genesis chapter 1. He wrote it like this. Beholding the heavens, I now understand God measured them all with the breadth of his hand.

He fashioned the trillions of stars in the sky, the sun and the moon he established on high. All heaven and earth, which he made in six days, showed daily and nightly his merit of praise.

That's why we worship our Lord as creator. So look at Genesis chapter 1, verse 31. God saw everything he had made and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day. So at the end of creation, God steps back and judges it.

[19:33] And he declares then, it is good. It is very good. So God does the work. The work is finished. God judges the work and he declares whether or not it's acceptable by his standard.

Do you see the hints of the gospel even in the creation account? And now look at the next three verses. Thus the heavens and the earth were, what's the word? Finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it, God rested from all his works that he had done in creation.

So the rest of God, God's rest, his kingdom rest was established at creation. A theologian named Meredith Klein at Westminster Seminary, he calls this the seventh day enthronement of God.

By saying this day belongs to God, it's a day that's holy, it's really the Lord's day or the day of the Lord. So even in the creation account, it should be making you think about his coming judgment.

[ 20 : 48 ] He will look at all his creation. And on the Lord's day, the day of the Lord, he will judge it all. And only by his standard will it be admitted to rest. So there's hints of the gospel right from the very beginning.

Isaiah says, thus says the Lord, heaven, so the spiritual realm, heaven is my throne. Well, what about earth? He created heaven and earth. Earth, says Isaiah, is my footstool. Well, there's the picture of enthronement. God ruling from the rest that he created for himself, his spiritual throne room and his footstool like a king stamping his foot on the map of all of his dominion. That's earth. That's earth. That's what the rest of God is. So you could say rest, God's rest is heaven. That's what it is. And he created this and designed it for his people from before the foundation of the world.

God wants you to behold his glory as creator and to rest in his kingdom. Okay, so that's the creation account. But now, we have a problem with Adam and Eve's sin.

[ 22 : 00 ] You know the story. Think of Cain. Genesis chapter 4, verse 12. Cain, the son of Adam, it's a picture of everyone that comes after Adam. He's described as a restless wanderer.

He's a restless wanderer. So we need a savior. We need a redeemer. We need a mediator, a high priest, someone that will stand in between and make this heaven of God, this throne room of God accessible and opened up to the people of God.

And that's the work of Christ, our Lord. Look at verse 10. We're back in Hebrews now. Hebrews chapter 4 and let's look at verse 10. How is God's heavenly rest opened up to you and to me?

Verse 10. For whoever in the ESV, whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

So, okay, he set up the creation account. He's established God's rest because it was finished but now there's an analogy that's being drawn. Whoever has entered God's rest has also finished his work as God did from his.

[ 23 : 12 ] It's connecting it back to what God did at creation. So, verse 10 is very, very important if we're going to really understand the meaning of this passage. The word whoever, the word whoever could just be translated as he, he who.

So, if we read it that way, it would say, verse 10, he who has entered God's rest has also rested from his own works. Or it's in the singular, the one who. The one who has entered God's rest had rested from his works as God did from his.

So, there are three possible meanings here. Which, which is the most, probably the most helpful and accurate based on the context and the book of Hebrews? One possibility, probably the most traditional, this refers to all who die and go to heaven.

So, all those who enter God's rest by dying and going to heaven have entered their rest. But, but then you have a problem because their work, the work that they did in their whole life, it's not enough to earn salvation for themselves.

So, the analogy breaks down because it says, as God rested from his works. And our works, Paul says, are like filthy rags. So, our works are not a good comparison to God's work.

[ 24 : 25 ] A second possibility is that this just refers spiritually to every believer who is justified. But the problem with that is that it's in the singular. In earlier, every other exhortation is in the plural.

Let us fear the Lord let us strive to enter his rest. It's in the plural. Why is verse 10 in the singular? So, John Owen and the interlinear Greek Bible, I think, they just hold on to that.

It's in the singular and it refers to someone whose work is comparable to the work of God in creating the world and judging all that he created. So, the best interpretation is that this refers to Christ himself.

And that fits with what's coming up. Look at Hebrews chapter 4. Scan your eyes down to verse 14. Since we have a great high priest, and where is this high priest?

Who has passed through the heavens. That's a picture of Christ entering God's rest already on behalf of his church. This also fits with what Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 1.

[ 25 : 29 ] God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet. There's that picture again. Christ now enthroned with dominion over all things. And now here's the key part.

Ephesians 1. He gave all of this to him as head as a gift to the church. In other words, the kingdom of Christ in the age to come, it's already there accomplished in the spiritual realm.

It's given as a gift through the church, his special kingdom on earth right now because all things were received under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And this fits.

Think of the work of Christ. His work on the cross in the Gospel of John says before he gave up his spirit and died, he says, it is finished.

[ 26 : 37 ] The Father looked at Jesus' entire life, his active and passive obedience for 33 years every moment of his life. And think about this, not only did he keep God's law, but when Christ proclaimed the law in Matthew 5, he said it's not a matter of outward obedience.

Even David knew that. It's a matter of the heart. So every single law that Jesus kept, he did it by his own heart, his own joy in obeying the Father.

So he honored his Father perfectly and he loved his neighbor perfectly his entire life. And the Father looked at his life and said, it's accomplished.

It's finished. And by raising him from the dead, he now was appointed to rule over everything that the Father had entrusted to him. He got the charge from the Father, he accomplished the work, and now he is seated and enthroned with his foot on the earth, coming back to judge the living and the dead.

The author of Hebrews says, our Lord is a consuming fire. He has Jesus Christ in mind. That's where Christ sits right now, enthroned.

[ 27 : 49 ] He has entered God's rest as the high priest and he gives access to the glory presence, this rest of God by grace to all who respond to his word while the promise remains.

I want to show you next now what that looks like for you as the church. How you respond is what this hinges on for the fate of your soul.

Verse 1, the promise still stands. Verse 2, good news came to us just as it did to them. Verse 6, it remains for some to enter it.

today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. That's verse 7. Verse 9, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

And verse 11, therefore let us strive to enter that rest. How can you not fall away? No one knows how many days you have left.

[ 28 : 57 ] Verse 1, verse 7, how can you not harden your heart? And how can you not fall in disobedience? Verse 11, I want to give you three ways to keep your heart tender to God's word.

And I want you to think about it this way. Nathaniel Hardy, another Puritan pastor, he said, spiritual rest makes no man idle or lazy or passive.

Spiritual rest makes no man idle and spiritual walking makes no man weary or tired. Strive to enter his rest.

Here are three ways. Number one, guard against sin. Chapter 3, we saw this last week, the deceitfulness of sin. Well, think about this.

The reason, one of the many reasons sin is so dangerous for your soul is because it poisons your thoughts, your feelings, and your attitudes toward God. Yes, the outward action, it's bad and it breaks God's law, but more than that, for your own soul, it's poisoning how you think about God.

[ 30 : 12 ] That's why sin is so dangerous. Guard against sin. That's one of the ways we must strive. Guard against sin. So easily entangles each one. Number two, rest in Christ, live in gratitude.

Rest in Christ, and then live in gratitude. And I saved this verse for last year, on this application point, because there's a lot there. Look at verse 9.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 9. So then, there remains, it's not abrogated, it's not over, it's yet to come, and it's already a taste of it.

There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Every other reference to rest is using a root word, kata, you know, rest, you know, kind of like physical rest, but this one time in this verse uses the word, a different Greek word, sabbatismos, which is a celebration, rest, that's a covenant response for the people of God to his word.

You're in covenant with me, one of the ways you display that is by showing that I am the Lord of your life. There remains for the people of God a sabbatismos, still remains.

[ 31 : 30 ] Turn to Isaiah 56, Isaiah 56. This was another little book on our book table by Robert Haldane, he helped me to see this.

While you're turning to Isaiah 56, I'll read verse 6. he points out that Isaiah is given a vision of the future. So he's an Israelite in the covenant of works under Israel, but he has a vision of the church age, the global age of missions, which we're in now.

It began in Acts 2, and it'll go until the second coming of our Lord. And here's what this vision includes. Isaiah 56, verse 6, the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, that's us, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast to my covenant.

You see how we're fulfilling now in the church age as Gentiles brought into God's covenant of grace, that vision that God has had all along for his people. The last reason I want you to think about this and practice it is this.

If your whole life or your week, you're like one of those balls in a pinball machine. You are disturbed and you're restless, you're bugging yourself, you're bugging your family and those you live with.

[ 32 : 54 ] You need to somehow stop and settle your heart down, but it is physically impossible to do that because of Newton's first law of motion.

It says this, in the first law, an object, think of your own soul or your heart, an object will not change its motion unless a greater force acts on it.

So think about every Lord's Day when you join with the covenant people of God is the force of God, a much greater force than your little heart that's restless and bouncing, acting upon your soul.

And the last day of the weekend was last night. Today's the first day of the new week. On the sixth day of creation, God finished all his work.

On the sixth day of the week, Christ said it is finished. On the seventh day of the week, God rested and evaluated his work. On the seventh day of the week, Christ rested in the grave.

[ 33 : 54 ] Then comes not the first day of the new week, it's the eighth day. By the way, what day were you circumcised on? It's the sign of a new creation. So Christ was brought forth from the dead on the eighth day, the first day of the new creation.

Redemptive history turns a corner, opens up a whole new chapter, new revelation, poured out in the Bible. And that's how you need to be marked by in your life. You need to begin your week resting in Christ.

If you start your day with Christ as your Lord, you're so resting in him, you'll have a much better shot at being out of the bondage to anxiety and stress and sleeplessness.

Now, there are other reasons you need professionals, but as a general principle, as a correction to society as a whole, how about we try obeying God's word on this? Rest in Christ. But that's just one week, that's just today, we still got the next six days, what should that be?

Should be like a reflex, just a response of gratitude. Should be a response of gratitude the next six days, you're not earning anything to save yourself. Christ has earned it all, you're resting in him, but you're living in obedience as a response of gratitude.

[ 35 : 05 ] So guard against sin, rest in Christ, live in gratitude. Number three, let Christ clean you as you walk. Our assurance of pardon today, you heard these words, Jesus said, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest for your soul.

My yoke is easy, my burden is light. And this is the picture that I just, I keep coming, this is how I feel about my soul toward Christ. You know, Ephesians 2, you were dead in sin.

So I picture myself, and I want you to picture yourself as that prodigal child in the pit, surrounded by the most ceremonially unclean animals. And there is feces and urine, and you're so grossed out, you're vomiting on top of that, on yourself, it's horrible.

And then that pit turns into sinking sand, and it sucks you all the way down. You are totally buried, hopeless. And then Christ, because he loves you, because God is love, and that's what he came to reveal.

He nose-dives into that pit all the way down, plunges you up, wipes the muck of sin from your eyes, and he points to you. He says, look, that's what my father is like.

[ 36 : 18 ] You see the celestial palace behind him, and you see him, he's got his robes up, his arms open, he's ready to bring you home. Walk with me. And he puts his big brother arm around you, and he can't get contaminated by your sin.

You know, the unclean woman could touch him, but she would get clean. He wouldn't get uncontaminated. He would stay pure. He's holy. And his big brother with his arm around you, showing you the Father one step at a time.

Because spiritual rest makes no man idle, and spiritual walking makes no man weary. Christ will carry you all the way to the Father. And you can have comfort in this.

100% of the invisible church, those for whom Christ died, the elect, all who are appointed to eternal life will make it all the way to the Father, however short or long you have on earth.

Number one, fear God. Number two, rest in his kingdom. Number three, strive to keep your heart tender to God's word.

[ 37 : 26 ] That's what he uses to bring you home. Let's pray. From Psalm 145. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, O Lord.

Your dominion endures throughout all generations. You, O Lord, are faithful in all your words and kind in all your works.

You, O Lord, uphold all who are falling and raise up all who are bowed down. Teach us to trust in Christ's finished work and to trust you alone as we strive and enjoy your rest.

Inaugurated now, soon to be consummated. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. God's people say, Amen.