

Rest: An Exposition of Hebrews 3:7-Ch. 4, February 16, 2020

I received a text message that was a word from the Lord 1 1/2 weeks ago. It said, "Stop striving to make it so. Strive to enter my rest." Then it followed with the person saying, "don't know what the word 'it' means. 'It' was clear to me. The things I'd like to make happen in church, family, and life. That sent me to God and I discovered Hebrews 3:7- chapter 4 is all about God's rest. It also fits in with our series on the devotional life. So I've been praying, studying, and learning about God's rest and hope to share it with you all in this message. God is definitely speaking to me, may He speak to all of us.

Lack of rest is horrible. Cold symptoms, coughing instead of sleeping, blowing your nose every few minutes, sore throat and suffering the next day. Because women have childbirth, they have a slight clue of what a man with a cold goes through!



Seriously, lack of sleep is dangerous. Sleep expert Dr. Harnett Walia, M.D. says, "Shorting yourself on shut-eye has a negative impact on your health... short term problems: lack of alertness, impaired memory, relationship stress, make you feel moody and more likely to have conflicts, less likely to exercise, and greater likelihood for car accidents (drowsy driving accounts for thousands of accidents and fatalities- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). Long term problems: high blood pressure, diabetes heart attack, stroke, obesity, depression, even appearance, premature wrinkling, dark circles, increase in cortisol, adding to breaking down collagen, which keeps skin smooth. Rest isn't just sleep. Emotional unrest or lack of peace is also draining. Loss, of a loved one a job, a home, worry, conflicts, stress, and anxiety also rob our rest. Trying to do what we can't and a guilty conscience rob peace and rest. Jesus had such times. He spent a sleepless night to choose His men, His great moment of stress and anxiety in the garden, and he dealt with both by prayer. We strive, medicate, connive, frustrate, and fight to get the peace and rest and make things happen that we want, feel we deserve and are left empty, even when we get our "it," hard to see things in God's hands.



God values rest. He rested, though I doubt He was tired, an example for creation of a cycle of rest and renewal. He demanded Sabbath for Israel, a day of rest. The permanent rest, "God's rest" is for Jesus' followers, 24/7 even in stress and activity, 12 x in Hebrews 3 and 4: failing God's rest 20x, how to get it 7x. In Hebrew the number 7 and rest are the same word! It's about attitudes; the unrested have bad ones.



Hebrews 3:7- Chapter 4 compares God's rest to the Israelites entering the promised land. Like taking Canaan, God's rest is *something to enter and fight for* so we can be where He wants each of us to be. The goal is to live *in God's rest*, secure He's the provider of true love, all I need in this life, and eternal life. His rest is no stress, knowing you're blessed, can't be messed with, because I know God's in control. If someone entered my soul and it was in God's rest, they'd find it quiet, clean, warm when cold, cool when hot, and a place they'd want to stay.

It's living life knowing God makes everything happen, not depending on me, trusting Him, yet I do what I must. Let's read the chapters, learn what prevents God's rest, how to get it, a promise, "it's" available to those who strive for it. **Be at rest instead of stressed!**

1 . Hebrews 3:7-Ch. 4:

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' 11 As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" 12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. 1 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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. 14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2 . What stops us from entering His rest:

For Israel, God's rest was the promised land. They didn't believe God would give it to them. Hebrews 3 and 4 explain what kept them from God's rest.



Their hearts were hard (4x). We're hard when God's word doesn't move us. Because of hard hearts, they were disobedient (3x) and rebellious (3x). Refusing to obey God will still rob us of His rest. They were in sin (2x) and failed (2x). Those 14 verses make it clear that a hard heart, disobedience, rebellion, sin, and failure to go forward take us out of God's rest. Unbelief (3x) sends us away from rest. Many claim belief, but it's trust as D. Romero says, "You bet your life on Jesus." Evil, (1x) Jesus said, "**you then, who are evil**" (Luke 11:13), deceit (1x), "**The heart is deceitful**" (Jeremiah 17:9), and even though people go through the motions,

"They go astray in their heart" (1x, 3:10), looking good on the outside but not really being crazy in love with God. Lots of times wounds led us to believe lies and go the wrong way. These rob rest!

In verse 12 the words, "**fall away**" are from *apostenai*, meaning, *go apostate*. God is after our hearts and the warning is very serious that a hard heart is spiritual death, testing God, seeing His works, going astray in heart, not knowing His way, allowing evil inside, unbelieving, and falling away. Consider all Jesus has done. He will still take care of us. Don't harden by not trusting Him.

3 . How we enter His rest:

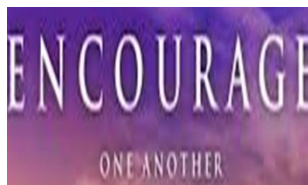
It's promised, God is honest, and it's still available, today. So how do I practically enter His rest? 1st it's impossible without Jesus, "**The perfect High Priest**" who was "**tempted as we are,**" He understands, "**yet without sin**" (4:15). He said, "**Come to me...I will give you rest...you shall find rest for your souls**" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Before moving to chapter 4 and all the positive steps to enter His rest, is the so important, "**exhort** (also translated, "encourage") **one other every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**" (3:13). It is like an antidote to the poison of hardening the heart and an emotional and mental stimulant to *not* fall into sin.

The greatest example for encouragement in the Bible is Barnabas. "**Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement)**" (Acts 4:36). Joe received a biblical tradition: the ol' name change. He saw people for what they would become, not what they were.



The word, **encouragement** is 2 words in one. The first is *para* which means "to the side" and *kaleo* which is "to call." Biblical encouragement is to bring someone to your side so that you can speak words that keep him or her going. "**The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;**" (Acts 11:22-23).



The apostles sent the great "Son of Encouragement" who had something good to say to everyone, for the Gentile mission. His first act was to rejoice at God's grace. To rejoice at grace,

God's favor to sinners, we don't focus on what's different or wrong with others, but at how God forgives and blesses them. William Arthur Ward, "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you." The greatest encouragement we can give is to remind each other to keep the heart strong and true to the Lord. **Verse 13 says that people keep from sinning by encouragement (Hebrews 3:13), and encouragement is also a reason to go to church (Hebrews 10:25).**

When we turn to him, we "**believe**" (4:3). Be sure to realize it's "**not by works**" (4:6), and it's a battle and we'll "**strive to enter**" (4:11), and then we have to be in His word in a way that's not dead rules but "**living and active**" (4:12). Another thing is stubbornness: "**Hold fast the confession**" (4:14), meaning never, ever, even in your weakness, give up on Jesus and but declare Him the Son of God. We need to fight for his rest, as if to enter the promised land, knowing we can win. First, enter the rest, then do what we have to, forgive someone, get a job, make boundaries in our lives, stop a destructive habit or behavior, start something we've been putting off, get some help, who knows what else? And finally, learn how to pray in boldness, pray in grace, and expect mercy (4:16). That is how to win, "the enter His rest fight."

From Stressed to Rest: E. Villanueva

Fears within, panic without, I say I believe, but really doubt. I love God, His word is true, does it show in what I feel and do? My words say I'm a rock, when I'm tested is it a crock? In pious religion, do we act like eagles when we're cackling chickens, and squawking seagulls?

When we're pressed under a test, thrown out of the nest, the world I've made gets messed, I get stressed, lack of sleep leads to cardiac arrest...

Don't trust my self or anything else, live by faith, not my goodness but his grace, heart's hard, arteries of lard, no relief, unbelief, go astray, disobey, it's evil, makes me feeble, deceit, defeat, stumble bumble lost in a jungle, to the promised land, Lord, extend your hand!

In trial and test, my hypocrisy's undressed, This trial's a pest, challenges my own interest, I got no zest, but God addressed, my rebellious flesh.

A choice, raise my voice to heaven above, what I really love, from Jesus' death, not the path of the flesh, not in my strength trying which is lying in my thoughts and feeling, in church praises I sing, but yes, did my own thing, I should be receiving and really believing. At last, I'll leave my past for a new path.

Then he sets me in this quest, to the crest, I'm obsessed, to bless and be blessed, like a person possessed, biased for His best, really want His rest!

God is honest, He promised, a proper offer. I believe, I'll receive, strive while alive to enter, the center of His rest, not by work, but the word, and my obsession to hold fast the confession, to the perfect High Priest, then striving will cease, my coldness turns to boldness, one who prays, at the throne of grace, mercy received in a time of need,

The best, God's rest, from Jesus who frees us with pierced side, who died, crucified, and bled, rose from the dead. Anxiety left my breast, I've found God's rest.