**Hebrews 4:1-13 A Better Rest**

**September 14-15, 2016**

*You rest when you stop doing labor, stop acting, when exertion is over. Applied to our relationship with God, to rest means no more self-effort as far as our salvation is concerned. It means the end of trying to please God by our feeble, fleshly works. God’s perfect rest is a rest in free grace. Rest can also mean freedom from whatever worries or disturbs you. It means freedom from guilt over sin. It means no more shifting about in frustration from one thing to another, no more running in circles, it means remaining confident, keeping trust. To enter into God’s rest means that for the remainder of our lives and for all eternity we can lean on God. Such rest is full, blessed, sweet, satisfying, and peaceful – this is what God offers in Christ. This chapter continues the warning to some of the Jews who knew the basic truths of the gospel but still did not trust in Christ alone. This warning can be summarized: “Do not harden your hearts like Israel did in the wilderness.” Though the Israelites left Egypt, they often longed to go back. They stubbornly refused to trust the Lord completely. The old way of life, oppressive and disappointing as it was, still had an alluring appeal. The writer reminds us that unbelief forfeits the possibility of rest.*

Describe the most restful place you’ve ever been. What made it so serene for you?

**Read Hebrews 4:1-13**

How would you describe or define the rest that God offers to his children?

 *“Promise” – “entering his rest.”*

 *“Finished…” – the spiritual rest which God gives is not something incomplete or unfinished, it is a rest based upon a finished work which God purposed in eternity past.*

Who gets to experience God’s rest?

 *“Faith” – mere knowledge of God’s message is not sufficient, this generation has received the message through the preaching of the gospel, but must have saving faith.*

 *“We… enter” – those who exercise faith in the message of God will enter into their spiritual rest, opposite of Psalm 95:11 that an unbeliever will not enter into the rest God provides.*

 *“Some must enter…” – the opportunity to enter God’s rest remains open, it is not yet too late. God had offered the rest to his people in Moses’ time and continued to offer it in David’s time; he is still patiently inviting people to enter his rest, and the author urges an immediate positive response – these themes are combined into a clear invitation to readers.*

 What role does the Word of God play in the life of the believer and unbeliever? Why does the author start talking about the Word of God here? How does it relate to the idea of rest?

 *“soul and spirit” – do not describe two separate entities. Similar to thoughts and intents or used like “heart and soul” to express fullness; used elsewhere to describe man’s immaterial self, his eternal inner person.*

 *“Hidden” – we are all individually accountable to and judged by the written living word and to the living God who is its author.*

Have you experienced the sharp discerning power of God’s word in your life lately? How has it helped you grow? How has it helped you fight against temptation?

**Read Joshua 21:43-45**

Describe the kind of rest the people experiences, of what did this rest consist?

How does temporary rest compare to the spiritual rest that the writer of Hebrews encourages us to enter?

 *(God’s true rest did not come through Joshua or Moses, but through Jesus Christ, who is greater than either one. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the land of their promised rest, however, that was merely earthly rest, which was but the shadow of what was involved in the heavenly rest. The very fact that, according to Psalm 95, God was still offering his rest in the time of David, long after Israel has been in the Land, meant the rest being offered was spiritual – superior to that which Joshua obtained. Israel’s earthly rest was disturbed by the attacks of enemies and daily cycle of work while the heavenly rest is characterized by the fullness of heavenly promise and the absence of any labor to obtain it.)*

**Read Galatians 2:16**

How does experiencing God’s rest depend on personal faith?

**Reflection**

“You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.” – Augustine. What do you think he meant by this and have you ever experienced this?

Have you entered into God’s rest through faith, or are you still trying to be saved through your own work and self-effort?

What most often keeps you from experiencing God’s perfect rest?

Think of someone you know who has heard the message of the gospel but has not yet entered God’s saving rest. How can you encourage them to trust fully in Jesus Christ?