HEBREWS 4:1-13 //

BACKGROUND

- Last week
  - Overarching aim :: Hebrews continuing the explanation of who Jesus is
    - last lesson specifically that’s He’s greater than Moses

Context

- A group of people who only knew enslavement, had no identity, and no idea how to be united as a nation - God gives the law out of love for them to Moses.
- The law literally saved their life, practical guidance, but they took a turn in how they utilized it in time and developed a distorted view until Jesus came
- **What are the consequences of unbelief? (3:7-19)**
  - Consequences of unbelief described in 3:7-19, and goes on in chapter 4 with another invitation to stop churning and start resting
  - “Since Moses was unable to lead the Israelites into Canaan, the writer reflects on the position of Joshua, who did lead them in. But he shows that even Joshua did not secure for his people true rest. Joshua failed for the same reason as Moses, that is, through the people’s unbelief.” - Guthrie
  - The only solution is resting. The consequences we see of unbelief is an inability to live that rest.

- What images come to mind when thinking of rest? All characterized by either low-stress, no pressure, reduced tension activities; or calm, serene, restful inactivity. Our bodies and minds scream for these brief intermissions from the unending drama of life.
  - Same is true of our souls. But unlike our bodies and minds that will break down and refuse to go on without rest, the outcry of the “inner person” is often drowned out by the bustle of busyness.
  - “I’m convinced that if our civilization were to be uncovered by curious archaeologists thousands years from now, they would see relics of an anxious society. Vacation destination provide havens for those approaching the critical zone of “burnout”… our generation is marked by all the ingredients of a society dominated by anxiety, which include feelings of apprehension, uneasiness, worry, and dread.” - Swindoll
- Five views of “rest” in Hebrews - track all
  - Meant to give guys a full picture far beyond our natural perspective
  - 1: Heaven
    - readers should fear that they would not go to heaven if they proved unfaithful
• 2: present rest in (enjoyment of) our riches in Christ
  - the "faith rest" life. Having been saved, we enter into our rest as believers by surrendering our lives to Him and enjoying peace with God.
• 3: future (eschatological) end times enjoyment of all that God wants us to enjoy (i.e. our full inheritance
• 4: some particular blessing in the eschatological end times future
• 5: a peaceful life as Christians

- BIG TRUTH to dig into ::
  • Spiritual rest is available. It doesn’t require us to vacation or a masseuse or therapist.
    - Great luxuries and tools
  • God has made provision for us to enjoy real spiritual rest every day. The problem is, seemingly few believers enter into that rest.

VERSE BY VERSE
- chapter 4 opens with a warning based on Israel’s tragic failure in the wilderness.
  • In OT, God had promised the people of Israel they could enter and possess the land of Canaan, attaining rest from their wanderings and enemies. They had waited and persevered for this moment. In ways I can’t imagine.
    • I think I know - half marathon. Then hear of a spartan race, then I get checked
  • Israelites instead of taking what’s offered, they resisted with hardness of heart and unbelief.
    - tragically deficient - they didn’t mix the message they heard with faith. Stayed compartmentalized.
  • They had a constant witness of God’s character and provision, spectacular historical examples from plagues to parting the Red Sea, manna falling from the sky and pillars of fire, but now. They faced a new challenge, and they simply did not trust God and so failed to enter the rest.
  • Exchanged abundant joy and refreshing rest with generation after generation of anxious churning
- 1 Begins with a conclusion
  • “Therefore” starts a logical conclusion - what is this conclusion?
    - Concludes the previous discussion of Israel’s failures to embrace rest available to them, and so they were filled with fear rather than emboldened by faith
  • Define godly “fear”
    - Keep his commandments in faith, in spite of distractions and obstructions.
    - Healthy respect for the dire consequences of faithlessness and disobedience
Inspired by humility - understanding who I am in relation to who God is

- Key words to track :: fear and rest.
- Apparently some of the original readers had doubts because the Lord had not yet returned. They expected Him to return very soon after He ascended into heaven (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).
- Doubts being a result of experiences and our temperament. Tried to put their human logic into use and resulted in doubt
- Note ** None of the original readers had failed to enter their rest (full inheritance) because they had missed the Lord's return. Can’t be rest in that view. Salvation
- Can’t be heaven view - God has promised heaven to every believer—regardless of their faithfulness to Him. Salvation
- “To equate the inheritance [only] with heaven results in a glaring inconsistency.
- Rest in present life seems unlikely - the writer equated "rest" and "inheritance" after the pattern of Old Testament usage, namely: as a future possession.
- if "rest" equals "enjoying our spiritual blessings now," the writer should have at this point warned his readers about losing their rest if they departed from God. Instead he warned them about failing to enter into their rest.
- The writer used the term "rest" as Moses did -
  - throughout this epistle, the writer used the terms "rest" and "inheritance" as the Old Testament used them, when speaking of what the Israelites in the wilderness anticipated.
  - Its equivalent to ceasing from the work of fulfilling God's will and entering into all the inheritance that God promised His people
- For you Christian, this full inheritance is everything that God desires to bestow on us when we see Him. All encompassing
  - It is an eschatological rest, not a present rest.
  - We enter into our rest after we cease from our labors in this life.
  - We enter into our "Sabbath rest," the rest that follows a full period of work = lifetime.
    I'm done with my work when God takes me home
  - not talking about living a peaceful life here and now

- Entering God’s rest takes the right formula (4:2-3)
- God doesn’t post warning signs without also posting directions.
  - There’s a difference from the primary experience of rest and living a life of rest in life that will always be the uneven & unfair on earth
- When we came to God in Christ, it was like pulling into a snug harbor from a stormy sea. There is no rest for the heart apart from Christ.

- "good news" = the news about their *inheritance*
  - The good news the Israelites heard "did not profit them," because they refused to trust God and rebelled against Him. Likewise, the good news of our inheritance and rest may not profit us, if we fail to trust God and turn from Him in unbelief.
  - Israelites that crossed the Jordan with Joshua only entered into *partial rest* in the land, due to their failure to trust and obey God completely.
    - generations after experienced the same partial rest
  - the Hebrews readers - there experience of Christ was not living up to the expectations. Instead of rest there was turmoil. They gave up their ancient religion and were suffering for their new faith. To some it seemed like the initial experience of rest was a cruel delusion.

- Enter = present tense. We are in the process of entering. Active verb
  - **Formula :: Belief + trust = rest**
    - Must keep a clear distinction between belief and trust - to understand what faith we need for rest.
  - Other words - “we who have wholeheartedly trusted enter that rest”
    - Belief - the mental acceptance of a fact as true - will not bring rest to any soul
      - Stop light red believe must stop. Do I trust it
    - Other half :: acknowledging Christ as Savior of the world will not give us rest. Trust in Him is what gives rest to our souls
    - trust in Christ's sacrificial death begins our rest by giving us rest from the burden of guilt for our sins and a gnawing conscience
      - trust in his character gives us rest as we place our burdens on Him.
    - The more trust, the more rest. There is rest for you. It is not beyond your capacity. You can have it, but it may have to fight for it.
      - Fight against your internal position of thinking you’re right, you see things correctly
        - Those are deceptive, and can often counter the God-determined truth
  - The concept of “entering into God’s rest” is very important in Hebrews 3&4, repeated several times to emphasize the urgency.
    - Quote from Psalm 95:11 emphasizes the *impossibility* of entering without faith
      - God’s purpose and provision did not guarantee that His people would experience it. These things also depended on their faith.
- Entering God’s rest takes the right attitude (4:4-6)
  - The generation of faith = the attitude of trusting God wholeheartedly
  - The writer here evidently introduced the idea of God resting "on the seventh day" (cf. v. 3), because it illustrates the fact that rest follows work.
    - The work God called the Israelites in the wilderness to do, was trusting and obeying Him.
    - The work He calls us believers to do is also to continue to trust and obey Him. God is consistent in character, there’s no guessing game with him.

- v.3-5 describes the nature of rest
  - Divine rest
    - Quotes psalm 95:11 twice. His purpose is not to imply they really won’t get rest, but to show God calls it “my rest” because it is the rest that He Himself enjoys
      - Not just given relaxation or relief of tension by him, he shortchange it to that.
      - the quality is the same as His personal rest that He’s shared with us
        - A moment of sharing I cannot fathom.
        - When I’m depleted, I don’t think, “here, try my rest out. There’s enough to share.” No way! I’m thinking - “get away from me, don’t talk to me, I’m dying, I’ll get to you later. My instinct when I’m resting is to isolate, not share.”
        - Our God is so much better than anything man has the ability to offer.
  - Cosmic rest
    - The fact that there is no morning or evening mentioned in that verse like the others means that the 7th day still continues. God’s rest began with the completion of the cosmos and continues on and on. So it’s available to us and all people throughout generations.
      - It’s fullness is available to all.
      - It never runs out. There’s no times up. We put it in our time frame and that doesn’t make sense.
  - Ideal rest
    - It echoes the joy of the Creator - like at creation when Job tells us that “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7)
    - His rest is satisfying - it was good and very good
    - It’s a working rest - God finished his great work and rested, but it was not a stop of work but a proper follow-up to great things.
Jesus talked of it saying “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (John 5:17). In His rest he keeps working, even now.

- God doesn’t just offer us any rest. We can’t chalk it up to what we can comprehend by what our human bodies & minds can relate to. Don’t short-change it by putting it in terms we can understand. It’s so much more.

- In all this = our experience of rest is proportionate to our trusting in Him
  - If we’re not careful, our own weakening, waffling faith can do us in
  - The most insignificant obstruction in our path can look like an insurmountable barrier
  - The smallest critic of our faith can look like a giant
  - But rest we’re offered is divine, it is cosmic, it’s ideal. And totally attainable.
    - Can I trust that? Have to ask

- Not all of the descendants of Abraham lost the opportunity to rest and receive God’s inheritance just because the generation of Israelites
  - In David’s day, God re-extended His offer of entering rest, and his generation had to respond for itself. The psalm quoted throughout this passage in Hebrews is one David wrote!
  - Each and every generation of believers needs to continue to trust and obey in order to enter into their rest (full inheritance).
    - Each generation has their opportunity in their “today”
  - “Tinas [“Some”] is generally explained as implying a warning
    - Some members of the church were so disheartened that they thought the rest really was not available to them. Can you relate?
    - Maybe the Israelites in the desert, or to David’s hearers of Psalm 95,
      - but rest was not really available to them in their difficult circumstances.
    - The author starts to argue this in v. 6 to 10

- **Entering God’s rest takes the right timing (4:7-8)**
  - When we hear His voice, we have a choice: Harden our hearts in unbelief and disobedience, or soften in faith and action
  - This is a constant, ongoing, every-moment decision - not a one-time event

- **The rest remains** whether I like it or not or accept it not. It does remain.
  - (v.6). Those who had the good news initially did not enter the land of rest because of their lack of faith, which created shameful disobedience. Cyclical
    - Nothing can prevent the promised rest from taking effect except distrust and disobedience. God’s promised rest stands. Anyone can have it.
    - v. 7 quotes Psalm 95:7,8 to focus on the promise of rest.
Today meant now, in the reader's time. The only way rest will be missed is through a hardened, disbelieving heart.

Reiterate Alisha's breakdown :: the descent of hardness of heart

- Hope to disbelief to disobedience
  
  - v.8 develops that point further.

  - Something lost on English - the words for (OT name of) Joshua and Jesus are exactly the same in the Greek.
    
    - The OT Joshua had led his followers to the land of Canaan, but that wasn't the real rest but only a type.
    
    - But now there is another, Jesus, who can lead His people to true rest.

- That same rest remains for us (4:9-11)

  - v. 9&10 total availability stated. fact.

  - When Christ cried "It is finished" He forever rested from His atoning work.

  - But even the resting Christ works, even as the working God rests.

  - When we believed, we finished with our works-dependent hope and entered God's rest. Yet we long to serve Christ.

  - 2 Peter 1:3 - "his divine power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

  - "the rest" is bigger - it's in view is still future for us (cf. vv. 1, 6, 9, 11). We have Jesus now, and we can't underestimate the change that comes with that in all categories and compartments we try to put up

    - We have so much more offered to us than the generations of old

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  - In the meantime, we need to follow Jesus' and Moses' examples of faithfulness to God. We need to carry out the work He has given us to do

    - Note again that the writer said he faced the same danger as his readers: "Let us"

  - Christian - we need to "be diligent to enter that rest."

    - If the "rest" were just getting to heaven, we would not have to exercise diligence, because God has promised that all believers will go to heaven (John 10:27-28; Rom. 8:30; Phil. 1:6; et al.).

    - Or, if the "rest" were just the rest we presently enjoy, because God has forgiven our sins, we would not have to be diligent to enter it, either—because we already have entered into that rest.

  - “The promises of God are not merely beautiful pieces of literature; they are not merely sweet sayings which mean nothing; they are promises on which a man is meant to stake his life and by which he is meant to dominate his action.” - Barclay
• Closes the section with a challenge to the church. How do we strive to enter that rest?
  - We must do everything we can to focus on the rest. We must strive to comprehend that it is His rest that he extends. It is Sabbath rest, as old as the universe. There is no room for mental laziness.
  - And we must do everything we can to combine the hearing of good news of offered rest with genuine faith - belief plus trust. No matter the storm, the sea, the entrenchment of chaos we are in, the busyness, the justifiable excuses.
• Do we believe that our God is such a God? With all our heart? We have to fight for that belief, and not settle for the lie. What keeps us you from believing?
  - Take the time to address it, otherwise how can anything change in ignorance, and how can we trust God in it if we can’t identify it
  - We must add trust. There is no rest in this life without trust.
• What’s the greatest problem we face? Do we believe God can meet it? Can we - will we - trust Him?
• Strong language - more than the usual exhorting, encouraging, persuading. The author knows old habits die hard.
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  • Spiritual surgery by the Sympathetic Surgeon (12-13)
  • Four breakdowns of the surgeon’s technique
  • Living word
    - It lives because it endures forever. Even more so - it is life in itself. The Word being God breathed shows off his living character.
    - Active
      • Part of being alive - it is effective. It moves to fulfill the purpose for which it was spoken.
        - Isaiah 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
        - It will not return to Me empty,
        - Without accomplishing what I desire,
        - And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.
    - The word does what it promises to do. It regards neither age nor education.
      • If you will listen to God’s Word, it will change your life. Be a hearer and a doer
  • Penetrating
    - Sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing
    - Poetic statement we often overthink and make literal. God’s word can cut through anything and bring conviction, human personality to it’s very depth
    - It moves through our hard-shelled souls like a hot knife through butter.
- When God wills it, his Word will pierce anyone. The true hearer invites the divine surgeon to do his gracious cutting.

**Discerning**
- The heart = the “radical center of human selfhood” as Philip Hughes calls it
  - The seat of human personality. Yet hidden from all. And God’s word sifts through it still
- Ephesians 6:17- the sword of the Spirit tells us what’s in our hearts. If we want to understand ourselves we need to be filled with God’s Word, because from it will come rich self-knowledge.
- James 1:23-24 - the Word functions like a mirror revealing who and what we really are.
- Gift of self-knowledge is no small grace

**Reckoning**
- v.13 - God and His Word cannot be separated. God sees everything, and that is discomforting if we have something to hide. Proverbs 15:3
  - All - everyone - everything. Nothing to hide in or behind
- "What the author is saying is that God’s Word can reach to the innermost recesses of our being. We must not think that we can bluff our way out of anything, for there are no secrets hidden from God. We cannot keep our thoughts to ourselves.”- morris
- Many Christians use this verse to show that God will judge unbelievers with His piercing Word, but in the context it refers to God cutting into believers.
  - Sober warning to those who disregard God’s word, while on the flip side reminds of the privilege to open it week by week because of the power we hold at our fingertips.

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- Laid bare, Exposed = literally “twist the neck” or “take by the throat”.
  - Used for bending back the neck of a sacrificial animal to administer fatal stroke.
  - Sometimes used to describe a wrestler’s hole on opponent, rendering him helpless.
  - Described how a man being led to execution had a knife placed beneath his chin so he could not bow his head in shame away from gaze of people.
  - No consensus as to what exactly that metaphor pictures. Whatever the exact metaphor, meaning is clear: all creatures are in the grip of God, totally vulnerable, helpless, and exposed to “the eyes of him whom we must give account?
  - Language forces us to imagine ourselves in that grip. He cannot be fooled. Duplicity or hypocrisy will not work. When happily, He doesn’t miss a thing. To the self-righteous, total unmitigated terror.
  - Meant for sanctifying instruction - calling them not to rebel but submit to the Word and find rest in the storms.
APPLICATION

- First enemy - panic. “you’re not going to make it!” We see our problems as so big not even God can really handle it. Or we’ll rationalize reason why God won’t.

- Second enemy - pride. “you can handle it on your own.” The end will always have one result - destruction. No effort, self-motivation, personal endurance will overcome our own struggles in the wilderness. Don’t be convinced otherwise. You need God, and you need His rest. Your reset you’ve established will never work. You aren’t the creator, don’t follow creatures including you.

- We need to submit to God’s healing touch. Those who desire spiritual health should never fear the word of God or the God of the word.

- Psalm 139. Lord I believe, help my unbelief. Lord you know me, help me let you in.