

The Gospel of Rest Hebrews 4:1-11 23 August 2015

And as a church we have been journeying through the book of Hebrews and today we arrive at chapter 4. If you have your Bibles, you may turn with me to Hebrews chapter 4. There's a story of this man who is a chronic worrier. He worries about everything. He worries about his health. He worries about his family. He worries about his job. He worries about his car. He worries about everything and then one day his friend met up with him and realized a big change in his life. He says "hey John I realize you're so much at peace, you are so calm, you are so at rest, just a different John from what we knew. What happened to you?" Well John then says, "hey, I ...I really change because I found someone to take all my worries for me...." say "Really? You found someone to do that?" "Yeah.... I have to pay him good money to do so." "How much do you have to pay him, John?" "Well I pay him about 10,000 dollars a week!" "Wow... that's a lot of money... when did you get all that money from?" John says, "Well, that's for him to worry about."

If only worries are to be taken so easily by someone else. In America, Charles Swindoll, a pastor, he says that two of the most commonly prescribed drugs are Valium and Tagamet. What's Valium and Tagamet? Valium is a relaxant for those who are stress and in panic, and so on..... Tagamet is an ulcer medicine so according to Pastor Cha...Chuck Swindoll, 2 of the most commonly prescribed drugs are related with stress.

If you talk to people today in Singapore, you asked them "how's life?" What will they often say? Very stressed! The reality is all of us in modern society live in stressful conditions. It's restless, it's anxious, it's fearful and that is why it is so encouraging when we come to the Bible, the Word of God gives us a message of REST.

Today we're going to look at REST in a biblical way. See Hebrews chapter 4 talks about rest in verse one we read these words. "Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands." There is a promise of rest and not just in verse one, let me just fast track, I hope you've read Hebrews 4 before you came. Hehe says, "for we who have believed enter that rest. They shall not enter my rest." God rested on the seventh day and then in verses five and seven..... "they shall not enter my rest. Therefore it remains for some to enter it, and then again in verses 8 to 11 for if Joshua had given them rest, there remains a Sabbath rest. Whoever has entered God's rest has also rested let us therefore strive to enter that rest." Now I don't think you need to be a genius to figure out that Hebrews 4 verses 1 to 11 is about rest. I mean 10 times in these verses the word rest or rested occurs. So this morning we're

going to look at the message about rest. The author of Hebrews says this is good news. That's why we call this the gospel. This is the gospel, the good news of rest and it's a tremendous theme to consider this morning.

Let me start right away by sharing with you what is the meaning of rest. Very simply, rest has two aspects to it, I believe. One is a rest from outward activity, and two a rest in inward anxiety, it's very simple. Real rest is a rest from outward activity and the rest from inward anxiety. In other words, you rest from working and you also rest from worrying. I think you can appreciate it if you go to a holiday... go for a holiday... go overseas trip....trip..... you ... you go to the Maldives.... You're in a beach, you're..."zo-bo la" [local dialect : literally do nothing] you know you just rotting under the sun as it were, physically you're not working, but would you say that's a good holiday, if you are always worried while you're in Maldives about your job, about your business, about your career. Would you be really resting? No...if it is tumultuous on the inside, even though you are rested in your out ward activity you have inward anxiety, you're not rested....so real rest has two dimensions. An outward rest and inward rest about work and about worries, activities and about anxieties.....in the passage here we are told that God has a rest for us. "Whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works." There is a rest from outward activity of working...you say what kind is this? In the context of Hebrews, it's about resting from trying to become good enough for God. That's a whole theme. It's a rest from our own works it's a rest from legalism it's a rest from trying to deserve right position with God. So this is a rest from self-effort to becoming righteous... to...to earning our salvation. So the author here says, because of what Jesus has done, because he came as man went to the cross and died for us. He opened the way of salvation because of his finished work on the cross. We today don't have to work for salvation anymore. He has done it, and on the cross, he said, "It is finished." So now we rest we rest in a sense, we don't have to work for salvation because he has done it, and we rest, because we don't have to be anxious or worrying or insecure about our standing before God because Jesus has done it.

You know the completeness of his work, the sufficiency of his death, is where we rest in that now as followers of Jesus Christ or anyone at all. If you place your trust in Jesus, you don't have to work neither do you have to worry about righteousness with God. The completeness is so sure that the Bible actually tells us that "after making purification for sins, he sat down." He died on the cross, he shed His blood necessary for the cleansing, the purification of sins and after he did it the Bible says he sat down. You don't sit until the work is done right, don't ..."zo-bo" and sit there la! you say.. you must like finish your work and the Bible specifically tells us Jesus sat

down because he has completed it. No priest, no priest in the Jewish worship for thousands of years ever had a chair for them to sit down in the tabernacle, there wasn't because the whole Tabernacle worship is just to tell you is a picture of what Jesus would do but it would never be sufficient to cleanse people of their sins, but when Jesus came the full fulfillment of all those picture lessons, he finished the work on the cross and now he's sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and in that we can rest.

See every religion tells you to do, every religion.... every religion says you want to be right with God, you want to go to heaven, you want to be able to...a.... escape from hell, then you must do, do more, do many good works, come to church, come to worship. Do this give this and obey that don't disobey this do, do, do....endless list of doing so you're always working for salvation and you're always worried about salvation, because even up to the day you die you're not sure whether you've done enough, so religion is restless cannot give you rest. But what is the Christian faith. The Christian faith is not about do, Christian faith is it is done. Jesus paid it all and now I don't have to work for my salvation. Now as Christians, you actually labor harder than you would before, but the motivation is totally changed. You don't now work for salvation neither do you worry about salvation....it is all done in Christ, and therein you rest. So this is the rest that Hebrews is bringing to you, but this concept of rest is not just something that started during Jesus' time. The author here is going to tell you the various expressions of rest, because this idea, this concept, this reality of rest is an age-old reality. You say, how old as old as this earth is. Say why?

Look at thisfirst of all the author here talks about a rest that began at creation. We call this creation rest. The author says..."although his works that is God's works of creation were finished from the foundation of the world, for he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way and God rested on the seventh day from all his works." So there is a rest at creation that God enjoyed. God rested on the seventh day say why did God rest.....is it because he's very tired already ... wowcreate, create, create, create.....until ah... so tired7th day better take a nap. Is that the idea of course not? FB Meyer puts it very well. He says, "what is meant by God resting? Surely not the rest of weariness"..... because "he fainteth not, neither is weary. It was the rest of a finished work of divine complacency, of infinite satisfaction, of perfect content, a rest of satisfaction not after exhaustion." So this is a delightful rest, he created the world, and then on the seventh day, he rested. It's a delightful rest of contentment of satisfaction of joy. Meyer continues to give us an interesting perspective that many of us, in...myself included didn't realize he said "whereas we are expressly told of the evening and morning of each of the other days

of creation, there is no reference to the dawn or close of God's rest day" so on the first day there is the morning there's the evening, second day there's the morning, there's the evening specifically and explicitly mentioned in Genesis. But when it comes to the Sabbath day there is no mention of morning and evening, that's what is drawing our attention and so "we are left to infer that" this rest day of God, this Sabbath day "is impervious to time independent of duration, unlimited, and eternal: that the ages of human story are but hours in the rest day of Jehovah.....but better than all, it would appear that we are invited to enter into it and share it....." so God created the world in six days and the seventh day he rested and man is invited to share in this eternal originally eternal bliss and satisfaction and contentment and delight and joy with Him. Piper someone nearer to our time and age would say "God who has a rest and a peace and a place of joy where his people can enjoy fellowship with him, he will call it a Sabbath rest because on the seventh day God rested. But in reality it lasts forever" now all that you may be still not so clear, but it will, trust me, by the end of this day. So there is a rest that is found in creation, that God enjoyed that is eternal meant for all of humanity for all ages and it is one that is deeply satisfying. Creation rest now of course, we don't enjoy it now, because we, we sinned against God. Humanity's sin against God and we lost that rest, but it was meant to be eternal and unending. So, what's going to happen?

Let's continue the author's teaching on rest, he then talks secondly about a rest in Canaan. This is given to us in verse eight, when he says, "for if Joshua had given them rest..." are just a side note for those who are reading King James Bible which I do and I did. This absolutely confuses you, because in the King James, it is not translated Joshua it is translated Jesus. Now, if Jesus had given them rest and you read it in the context, it makes no sense....a.... the right translation is Joshua now you can probably understand why they will trust in Jesus, if you know that Jesus and Joshua are actually the same names just that one is Greek, the other is Hebrew so Jesus is Joshua Joshua is Jesus, depending on Hebrew or Greek. So that's why the King James or translators they put it as Jesus and it can really be confusing but there is no doubt whatsoever amongst everyone that this is referring to Joshua and is referring to the time Joshua led Israel out of the wilderness into Canaan now Canaan is a picture of rest. I mean they were wandering for 40 years. In Chinese "wu jia ke gui ????? [Chinese Proverbs meaning homeless] no home for 40 year.... finally arrive home.... huh (sighed)... we can rest....it's a place where there is abundance where milk and honey flows so Canaan is a kind of rest. But it is not the ultimate rest. That's not all that God intends for his people, because later on, he says, "if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on"

but if that is the ultimate rest, then why did God talk about another day of rest later on, you say when is later on? This later on is about a few centuries later, 500 years later, about 500 years later, David, in Psalm 95 says..... There is a rest for the people of God.... Now that's very strange because Israel is now at Canaan so why did David say there's another rest. Obviously Canaan rest is merely a shadow, a type, a picture, a forecast of something even better. So there is Creation rest. There is Canaan rest. But that's not the ultimate thingthere's a third thing coming up and we call this the Calvary rest... this....why Calvary? Ah... for those who are uninitiated never been to church, like myself years ago when I heard the word calvary.. I thought it's the...the soldier on a horse charging "te de te de" [sound of horse riding] Calvary rest doesn't make sense. Now the Calvary here simply refers to the place where Jesus was crucified, all right, that's the name of the place that is where Jesus died. That is where Jesus gave his life that is when Jesus sacrificed himself to save us and to bring us rest. So this third rest is the ultimate rest for people today, a rest from having to earn righteousness with God, a rest from achieving salvation a rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This rest is available to those who will repent and believe in Jesus because Jesus brings us back to communion with God. This is the rest the ultimate rest. Therefore, as I've said this rest is spoken about by the author of Hebrews, because he says..... "today saying through David so long afterward"... few centuries afterward after Joshua had led them into Canaan David still talks about another rest available to you. It was available to the Jews in David's time, it was available to the Hebrews audience during 2000 years ago and this today is still valid for us right here, right now, it is a rest again as I've mentioned from self-righteousness to the given righteousness in Jesus. This is tremendous rest. It would have been of a tremendous message for the Jews. Why, because the Jews are very familiar with this concept, the Jewish religion is a concept about....do do do do do....endless list of works. In fact, Jesus exposed their religion... the... the wrong teachings of the Pharisees, the scribes, the religious leaders when he said "they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear and lay them on people's shoulders...." they heaped upon them whole list of religious items to chalk off the list is so tiring it's so burdensome. It's so impossible and everybody is straining under the weight of religion. That's why one day, along the streets of Palestine Jesus said these beautiful words "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" never had rest...the Jews didn't understand this. It's all about work, work, do, perform, achieve, try harder, but Jesus says rest. Rest from outward activity and inward anxiety, rest from working and worrying about your salvation. He obviously is pointing to the day that he is going to go to the cross and bear our sins away, when

he's going to say "it is finished." The Greek word there is just one word that means, fully paid, it is done. You can rest in my finished work you can rest in the sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So Calvary now offers to humanity real rest. A rest that we have lost....when Adam and Eve sinned.....a rest that God all the time had intended for humanity from creation. If you think about it Creation rest and Calvary rest is a rest in God. One is where it all started and one..... the other is where it is all recovered. This is a rest God wants for you and for me and so when you look at this this is really interesting when when the author wrote the book of Hebrews say, he says, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Now this is two words in the English language, but it's actually one word in the Greek and this is a unique word, because it never occurs anywhere else in the Bible except here is an almost a unique invention of the author in Hebrews.

So what is he saying, why does he talk about this Calvary rest this salvation rest to be a Sabbath rest. Ray Stedman, he says "the use of the term sabbatismos in the Greek suggests that the weekly Sabbath given to Israel is only a shadow of the true rest of God." Now you know that in the 10 Commandments, there is a command to keep the Sabbath. The Jews kept it legalistically somewhat in the times of Jesus, ah...even today, you cannot tear toilet paper, you gotta tear ahead of time, because tearing toilet paper when you go toilet is work, so they observe the strictness of it, but maybe they've forgotten and left out the real intent of it the real intent of the Sabbath is to remind the people that, yes, you have blown it, you have wasted God's rest. But there remains a rest for your soul every once a week, I want to remind you, there remains a true rest for the people of God. So he says truly keeping the Sabbath is not just observing a special day, in a week, but Sabbath keeping is achieved when the heart of man is weaned of self-works, weaned of self-worries and rest on the great promise of God, rest on Jesus and him crucified. That's what Sabbath is all about. It's bringing us to this cosmic reality of the creation rest recovered at Calvary.

I read the Bible with my son and one of the Bibles we use is pictures, Picture Bible. I mean, I know it's not very high class. It's a just very prehistoric or very simple, but I.....I enjoy it and a...on the first page of this big picture story bible which I've actually shared with you all before are these words, the Bible is God's story. I like how it begins. I like it to....to realize that the Bible is not just a random accumulation of various authors' works, but the Bible is really the story of God... the story of God's salvation.....the story of God's deliverance, the story of God's kingdom, the story of God's love but don't forget the Bible is also a story of God's rest. So I like you to put on a pair of glasses that has these shades of rest.....so when you put it on and you look in the Bible, you see rest from the beginning to the end. See how does it all

start? It tells us that when God created the heavens and the earth God rested isn't it.....and before sin came in Adam and Eve enjoyed that rest, they were delighted, they had no worries, no fears, no anxieties, they had no sin, they had perfect communion with God. It was rest at its ultimate it was perfect, full original rich rest with God. They had oneness with God in a sense....they walked with God, God walked with them, beautiful satisfaction, enjoy wondrous state for Adam and Eve, and you know what that is really God's intention for man. He wants to bless, he wants us to enjoy, he wants us to know him, to commune with him that's God's story, but alas, we knew it didn't last long because the couple took of the fruit under the temptation of the evil one. They listen to the voice of Satan instead of the word of God. You know something about Adam and Eve... they were not satisfied with God's rest. They wanted something more. They wanted something else and indeed, it became a very sad day, worms came out of this fruit... I don't know whether real or not just a, just an artist's impression it was a poisoned fruit and on the very same day, they took of the fruit, they lost that rest. Originally they were naked and not ashamed but now they hide. Now they are ashamed. Now they are fearful. Now they're anxious, they're worried, they are no more what they were... they have lost the rest God has intended for them because of their sin. The Bible continues to tell us, they were chased out of the garden of Eden cherubim's were... cherubim was placed there, a flaming sword was kept there so that they will never come back to Eden anymore. They have lost that rest. It is the story of the Bible ends that we would have no hope. But there is a glimmer of hope. Indeed, a strong hint of the glimmer of hope when we come to Exodus and when God issued the 10 Commandments. The 10 commandments may seem like ten harsh statements, but then there is a aspect of it, where the 10 commandments revealed and remind us that God has not forsaken humanity because there remains a kind of a rest that you are to recall and to look forward to in the fourth commandment keep the Sabbath rest unto the Lord. There is a rest folks hang in there.

Joshua called Israel or let Israel into the Promised Land. It's a good rest after 40 years, you you'll enjoy Canaan enjoy the milk and honey, the grapes the vine you will, but much as it is great, it's not the ultimate rest. It's just a picture God intended it to be a picture and really, they didn't experience it, because no judge, no king no prophet really led them to full rest. They had turmoil they had conflicts, they had sins so whilst it's a picture is not a full picture and all that is brewing it's simmering to the wonderful time when the Messiah will be revealed. So when Jesus was walking the streets of Palestine and says come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. It is a tremendous statement and he achieved it, he

paid for it on the cross, when he went to sacrifice himself for our sins. Now the rest that is forfeited by our sins could be recovered because Jesus paid it all. Of course, one day, I dare not put a picture of heaven. In case you all scold me. Heaven where got look like that so I didn't put it, but the reality is the book of Revelation ends with a picture of rest, did you realize that, of being one with God, where there's no more sorrows, no more tears we're back in the garden, there's a tree of life God is in the midst of his people. There is a river of life.

You see, the Bible is God's story about deliverance about salvation about love, but also a book about rest and so if you look at the Bible this way, history, and all of Scripture is a call of God for the people who have rebelled against him to come back to rest in him, because that's what you are made for your hearts are restless, till you find your rest in him. The Bible is a glorious message of rest of being one with God, of being in communion with him. How do you enter this rest? How do you get there? Some words of advice from the author. He says number one fear, fear there are people who say there's nothing to fear except fear itself sound cool but not biblical. The Bible says here fear, fear what you say, fear, fear itself....no, of course not there is a very objective thing to fear. Look at what precedes this and look at what follows this ... all right, what precedes this is Hebrews 3, verse 19. Notice that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. So what should you fear? Fear unbelief and then later on in verse two, they could not enter it not because they were stupid, not because they were not powerful not because there were small it was very simple, they could not enter because they did not believe what message they heard was not mixed with face it did not benefit them, so they could not enter so if you were to fear, fear this, fear unbelief, fear this, fear that each and every day you see the miracles of God and you still would not believe, if you want to rest. It takes more than just being here and listening and seeing...it takes your heart believing.

Many of you, you come to church, for what I asked? If you want to find rest to your soul today, you can't achieve it, just by coming to church, you've got to believe, now I know many of you come to church to rest....literally....you come in you [action nodding away] wow this is a great time to sleep, man! There is a lullaby called PJ sermon and [action nodding away]...Now if you were just want to rest physically, all you need to do is come, no problem you can rest but if you want to find rest to your soul, you've got to believe you got to believe so you must fear unbelief, which is a real danger for those who are in the midst of the preaching of God's Word. This is the story of Israel. They were in the midst of the miracles of God, but they still did not believe ... so please don't sit here assume that you are saved you're secure or simply because you are in church, or you were baptized or you're raised in a Christian

home. It's about your heart. Did you believe? The author not only says fear, the author says strive. Now there's a little bit of a kind of a paradoxical thinking. I want to rest but I've got to strive to rest. You get that? I... I... want to rest but got to strive to rest. But you... you... must see that this striving is not earning or achieving salvation is something that is given, but you still need to do your human part to grab on to really be secure holding on to it. The word strive means to put in effort to be diligent...say alright Pastor need to be diligent to enter that rest, but how? Huh ha... work hard in what? Come to church, give offerings specifically what? I'm glad I don't have to give you the answer, because the author gives you the answer, the author says, you... you... just... just... backtracked what we have learned so far, the author says, by the way, this is the very first command the very first action word given to the hearer. Right, remember that? Chapter 1 is about telling who Jesus is, how great he is and then the first application action is you must pay attention... wow this one really applicable to many of you every Sunday come to church, you must pay attention... now I say it like a joke, but the reality of it is more serious than we sometimes appreciate. Worship takes effort. The hearing of God's Word takes effort. Too many people are too slack and casual about hearing the Word of God, now a preacher, I hope myself or any other preacher speaking God's Word must labor must be diligent to preach truthfully, but the real work is I think when you are there, listening to God's Word too. How you listen is so important, it's so sad when I see people come to church and week after week, they're not hearing ... they are just playing their phone. I mean, I do not know why you come to church, maybe because you really think you come to church, God will bless you somewhat like osmosis the words from my mouth is so powerful it's sh....sh....sh..sh.... osmotically enter your brain and enter your heart and it blesses you emm...I.. I....learned that in science, but I don't here in the Bible osmosis? No! the Word of God did not benefit them, because it was not mixed with faith and for you to believe, you must know you must understand you must pay attention. Now some...I... I do appreciate that the Bible is not always easy to grasp. I mean, this is not mathematics, this is not, well mathematics is even harder, but this is not ah... this not entertainment, this is not the things that we see and look and feel all the time... I know is spiritual, it's heavenly, so it does take some effort to grasp heavenly truths, but there is no excuse for us not to try. Now if I make things so complicated you don't understand one day I'll stand before God and I will be the one accountable for that but you are accountable for how you listen, worship service takes effort, hearing God's Word takes effort, when you sing a song don't sing it mindlessly eh....eh... eh....eh...eh.... and you just sing the melody...it's ridiculous what you doing? Worshipping G