

*Live THIS Promise...I dare you.*

*Hebrews 4:1-16*

*Sermon by David Reed Thoughts and excerpts from Bob Brower "Who is Jesus" Part 4 Feb. 3 2008*

1 For as long, then, as that promise of resting in him pulls us on to God's goal for us, we need to be careful that we're not disqualified. 2 *We received the same promises as those people in the wilderness, but the promises didn't do them a bit of good because they didn't receive the promises with faith.* 3 If we believe, though, we'll experience that state of resting. But not if we don't have faith. Remember that God said, Exasperated,

I vowed, "They'll never get where they're going, never be able to sit down and rest."

4 Somewhere it's written, "God rested the seventh day, having completed his work," 5 but in this other text he says, "They'll never be able to sit down and rest." 6 So this promise has not yet been fulfilled. Those earlier ones never did get to the place of rest because they were disobedient. 7 God keeps renewing the promise and setting the date as today, just as he did in David's psalm, centuries later than the original invitation:

Today, please listen, don't turn a deaf ear . . .

8 And so this is still a **live promise**. It wasn't canceled at the time of Joshua; otherwise, God wouldn't keep renewing the appointment for "today." 9 The promise of "arrival" and "rest" is still there for God's people. 10 God himself is at rest. And at the end of the journey we'll surely rest with God.

11 So let's keep at it and eventually arrive at the place of rest, not drop out through some sort of disobedience. 12 God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. 13 Nothing and no one is impervious to God's Word. We can't get away from it - no matter what. The High Priest Who Cried Out in Pain 14 Now that we know what we have - Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God - let's not let it slip through our fingers. 15 We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all - all but - the sin. 16 So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give.

Take the mercy, accept the help.

Hebrews 4:1-16 (The Message version)

Now, may the God who saw to it that his thoughts and desires for you and I were recorded and delivered to us in such a way that we all could understand it - bless it and continue to make it live in us by his Spirit this morning, today, this week and forever more. Amen

## What comes to mind when you think about RESTING?

- 15 hours of sleep?
- Phone off the hook, doors locked, a football game or soccer match on
- A shady garden, some soft music and a good friend?
- A beach resort, a good book and a waiter bringing cool drinks and sandwiches?
- Sailing on the sea?

Well, forget it! Leisure and sleep are not the focus of the rest God has made for us! Now, there's a lot going on in what God has written down for you and I here...so lets get to it.

There's a formula for rest included in this passage. As has been made clear it is not physical rest - though the results of God's rest have a powerful influence on how we live our lives – the promise here is for a spiritual rest.

### I. The formula for “REST” is found in verses 2 and 3.

#### 2 We received the same promises as those people in the wilderness Remember that

Israel wandered around for 40 whole years and that's a long time to backpack with a million or so people. God used these years to develop and grow Israel's Faith - their trust in God), *but the promises didn't do them a bit of good because they didn't receive the promises with faith.* When they came up to the point of entering the land God had promised generations before, and by-the-way that land represented a people given and consecrated to God alone, who were receiving the land because their God had promised and because they were faithful and obedient to their God - they were in good relationship with God so the land represented these things as well as a rest from laboring to **arrive** in that good relationship and **BE** in that good relationship.

So they were standing of the border of this land and they sent 12 spies in to check it out. 10 came back saying no way there are huge people in there and we'll never take them out. 2 said they don't matter. We have to believe God and go in. God will take care of them. The people balked at the challenges before them, they were afraid of those giants; fearful they decided not to go in, not to trust God. As result of this lack of trust, this disobedience - they were made to miss out on the promise and the REST –except for three - So this is a picture of what often happens to us, in our hearts today. We face challenges that require faith and trust and we falter...we think no way God can't pull it off, can't be done, too many giants over there so I'm outa here.

The formula then tells us Learning + Faith = Rest - Spiritual resting

**We do our part - learning about God by reading. We allow God to do his part - providing faith. And we experience rest in our hearts and lives**

***II. History of the word "REST" The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chapters of Hebrews refer back to Genesis 2:1-3 "1 Heaven and Earth were finished, down to the last detail. 2 By the seventh day God had finished his work. On the seventh day he *rested* from all his work. 3 God blessed the seventh day. He made it a Holy Day Because on that day he *rested* from his work, all the creating God had done".***

This is the almighty who was busy creating all that there is – galaxies, planets, people, the whole package and set it all into motion then rested from his creation. Do you think God was tired? Did God need physical rest...a nap? No. All God had to do was speak and the heavens came into being. What's the rest he is talking about? It is a spiritual rest. My take on this is that God poured his nature, his spiritual nature out as life and in all kinds of ways – the creation work was done it all reflected back to God (Romans 1:20), everything that needed to be set into motion was doing it's thing, it would continue so God rested from that very spiritual work of creating.

Now you and I are not creating galaxies and all that but we are busy creating and setting stuff into motion in our lives, some good and some bad and that's what we need to consider. What's it all about? What is the nature of what we are busy creating? What is happening to our spiritual core as we go about creating this stuff. This rest allows us to recognize who the real creator is and be with him...It is a ceasing to create ourselves and allow what the creator has already created and set into motion to be our reality. However, it is made clear that there is no rest if we are doing all that without faith...creating, living for ourselves. It takes faith.

**\*\*Now, here's the part that really takes faith...there is this idea in the word that as God created the heavens he fashioned its purpose and meaning – to reveal and glorify him - and set it all into motion. AS God created all the stuff of the universe he had already planned for and fitted you and I AND the purpose for our existence within that creation (Job 38-41; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 13:35, 25:34; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4, 2:10). We were included in the creation that God set into motion from its very foundations not as an afterthought but with purpose...even though it was beforehand. Wrap your heads around that! It all sounds like fantasy but its not. It is our reality in Christ a faith reality.**

***What this rest is all about is rest from the endless and impossible work of finding the purpose for which we exist and a rest from the endless and impossible work of creating good standing and right relationship with God - ON OUR OWN.*** What it means is that God does it for us through Jesus and the cross. It is an internal spiritual and emotional rest of being with our creator in a faith based relationship. I gather that the rest means satisfaction or contentment in ***being*** and who doesn't want that, an inner peace, and

knowing a right relationship with God. Read Matthew 11 where in Jesus' own words  
 "28 *"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.*  
 29 *Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.* 30 *Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

III. "REST" is a live promise today (v. 7-8) 7 God keeps renewing the promise and setting the date as today, just as he did in David's psalm, centuries later than the original invitation: Today, please listen, don't turn a deaf ear . . . 8 And so this is still a **live promise**. It wasn't canceled at the time of Joshua; otherwise, God wouldn't keep renewing the appointment for "today."

"Today" = ALWAYS AVAILABLE, ALWAYS ACTIVE Always ready to go off! Our family are Stargate fans. It's a science fiction thing we all share that, mercifully, I won't explain in detail. In one episode there was a machine some people turned on for a few seconds that unknowingly emanates a radiation that creates exploding tumors in people. They grow inside and can go off at any moment. Like I said, it's science fiction. The point is that this rest God has for each of us is ready and waiting and like one of those tumors, it's ready to explode into our lives from within at any moment. "The promise is still alive today, now, this or any moment and all we have to do is add faith and boom...REST. *We can stop fighting to find meaning and purpose and good relationship with God and REST in the one God has ALREADY made for us!*

The Good News is that this inner rest is available right now and right now every day and it is up to you and I.

So let's start to apply this idea

There are two key elements in the last part of the passage. Verse 12

*God means what he says. What he says goes.* God said what he said and the book is true and reliable, don't need to change or add a thing. God's message to you and I has some internal qualities we can count on as well. Paul in his second letter to Timothy talks about God's word as being alive and breathing - not meaning we need to feed it but that it is dynamic in the sense that it is always up to date, always active and relevant today and every day. Isaiah 55 says God has filled his word with the ability to do what it was sent out to do...never returning empty. It speaks into our lives in every circumstance; it applies to all of us all of the time and does not go out of date by some or any passage of time or culture or philosophy or new knowledge. It's not a dead book...it is transforming. So you can take any promise found in here and find that it's ready to go off in your life. God's word to us carries the truth of God for us and when we learn it carefully and follow it in faith we are no longer the same. Life is different, better.

Here's what I mean, I'm going to read a passage but, before I do I want you to think about what's bugging you, the stuff you want to move from, maybe it's the garbage in your life...experiences you would like to forget, habits you would love to burry, characteristics about yourself you would like to get a hold of and overcome, pain; emotional pain you have received from people you love or from whom you thought loved you, disappointment, discouragement, failure, depression, a lousy self-esteem....wrap all the garbage together.

I want you to hear what Jesus says about the past. He says it through Paul in Philippians 3 verse 13 "The one thing I do forgetting what lies behind, I press forward to what lies ahead." That means I can literally turn my back on all the destructive inner voices, past experiences, habits, addictions, pain, failure...and move forward into the brightness and beauty and power of living in his rest today. I have to trust God through his word and in obedience, move into God's rest from fighting all those battles.

There's another idea that comes through Timothy about the Bible and it is that the Bible is penetrating. This is all built on the idea that it comes from God, its his word, God is alive and well, so God's word takes on the characteristics of God and one of those is penetrating. God goes deep and so does his word. It like a surgeon's scalpel the Bible says. Now when I've been in surgery I wasn't awake so I couldn't tell you if the thing was sharp or dull as a spoon, all I wanted to do was wake up and get out of there. I'd hope the thing was really sharp so it could get deep to the problem cleanly. No one likes the idea of being cut into but it is necessary at times.

The point is that the surgeon is able to get at the garbage and get it out or fix it, correct it, make it strong again. And I am very happy that surgeons can do that. And that's what Paul is getting at for us...that's what God does in our lives when we allow God to operate in and on our lives, to clean up the mess or repair the damage. He penetrates. He gets to the garbage, the sin, and takes care of it, and gives us rest where there was brokenness, disobedience, struggle, hardship, a battle going on and we become transformed. It's amazing what God will do when we are willing and boom suddenly we are resting in him in a whole new way not possible before. Have you thought also that we don't have to fear the future because this whole thing, this rest of God's, is already ready!

The Bible has this transforming power if we are willing to learn and obey in faith that the promise comes true...and we're free of what torments inside.

The third idea about God's word in Timothy is that it is scrutinizing. It means to examine in detail or give critical attention. We all have areas inside we don't even want to look at let alone scrutinize and we are usually not willing to look too closely – but God already has. God has looked deeply, Our Lord already knows and is ready to forgive AND give

me with his REST to deal with life in the new day which I couldn't do in the old day – The promise is about anything in life...not just the easy and uncomplicated stuff...all of it.

The Bible is: **Living, Dynamic, Penetrating, Scrutinizing**

**God has made sure this word was recorded, saved, and protected – for you and I - Have you made this message part of your daily life? It is key to the rest that God desires to pour into your inner being and your life n o matter what Giants you or I or we are facing. Our part is to learn it then add faith as we live it and we find rest as we experience a dynamic living of what has already been planned since the beginning of everything.**

Now, CrossRoads seems to be coming to another crossroads. Some more decisions about our future. We need to grow-up and Grow-out. More people are going to have to step up and accept the responsibilities of this ministry. We already need a bigger worship center. We have a couple choices. We can get fixated on the problems and obstacles or on the one who removes problems and obstacles. One way leads to more struggle, more hardship, and greater problems. The other leads to living out God's promises, the life and church God has already created - IF we set ourselves out to learn in God's word what God has for us and that add the faith it will take to live it out - we will experience not a weary, endless, impossible, and defeating trek through the desert but God's rest...God's pleasure and goodness and blessing.

May each of us and all of us known as CrossRoads Accept the mercy, Take the help – decide to step into God's rest for our lives and for this church.