

The Rest You Need

Hebrews 4:1-14

The writer ends chapter 3 with a sobering picture of a generation of ancient Israelites who died in the desert, because they didn't believe God's word to them. He doesn't want his friends to make the same mistake.

Weary and Restless

The people who he's writing are weary and they feel like giving up. There are times when we also feel weary – weary of heart, with a restlessness, a driven-ness churning away within us.

One reason for this restlessness is that we're looking for a Promised Land: for a life that will satisfy, to be loved, to matter, to prove ourselves to others, and to ourselves. As a result we can feel restless and weary, with an inner fatigue, because these things we're working at ultimately never satisfy.

A Deeper Rest

The writer talks about two different levels of rest. The first rest he talks about is the rest that the ancient Israelites turned away from: the rest that was offered in the Promised Land – a physical rest free from slavery and the slave-driver, where people could put their work down.

If you can't put your work down then you're a slave. For the ancient Israelites rest was freedom from Pharaoh, but for us, being able to rest is a sign that you aren't a slave to whatever might drive you: money, recognition, the need to prove ourselves.

But physical rest is not ultimately what the writer is talking about here. Instead, he talks about a deeper rest: God's rest. God rested on the Seventh Day, not because he was tired, but because his work was completed. There is a deeper rest than a day off a week – it's a deep inner sense that all is well, that we are accepted by God, that we don't have to prove ourselves.

But how can you enter that rest?

Getting to the Heart Problem

The writer tells us that the word of God exposes the motives behind what we do. It shows us why we feel this restlessness and the desire to prove ourselves. It is only once we see that – and see ourselves naked and exposed before God, and unable to save ourselves, that we can enter his rest.

The Rest Giver

On the cross, Jesus was stripped naked and exposed for us. And he said 'it is finished!' He has finished the work – he has lived the perfect life for us, so we don't need to keep proving ourselves, so that we can enter his rest. He calls those who are weary to come to him, and find rest. Deep, inner rest comes from knowing you are loved and accepted by God, from knowing that your sins are washed away, that your guilt is atoned for. The only way to know that is not by trusting in yourself and your work, but in Jesus' finished work.

When you believe that you are accepted by God because of Jesus, and hold on to that by faith, you will know deep rest.