

Hebrews 2025 | Resting in God's Comfort Zone

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Hebrews 4:1-13

What I want to do this morning is get you out of your comfort zone. Before I give you the goal, what does that even mean? What does it mean when someone says we want to get you out of your comfort zone? I heard a quote from an athlete this week that said the goal is to get you out of your comfort zone so you will be uncomfortable with being uncomfortable and that is your new comfort zone. That doesn't make sense to me but what we want to do this morning is this- I want to challenge you to get out of your comfort zone to rest in God's comfort zone. That is the goal. The goal is to get you out of your comfort zone to rest in God's comfort zone.

Now, as we do this I want to give you a few things upfront. First, this text has been hard for me. I've studied it and I've wrestled with it. There is a section that talks about how we've entered God's rest and then right after it says they haven't entered his rest so it's sort of confusing how this text is laid out. So I want to give some context here. Have you ever watched a show that you're in the middle of and someone tells you that you need to watch the first season before you watch the one you're in the middle of? That is what it's like. I want to give you some context this morning. Second, after the context has been laid I want to walk through the text. Then third, after we walk through the text, I want to give illustrations and application to bring the text to life and hopefully say the same exact thing in the context and in the text with application and illustration.

We will be covering Hebrews chapter 4, verses 1 through 13 but read together verses 1 through 3 only.

Scripture:

Hebrews 4:1-3 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the

message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Part 1: Context

This chapter and this section is dealing with God's rest and what we're going to see here and what I want to lay out is there are four different types of rest covered in this chapter. The first rest is creation rest. It goes back to Adam and Eve. God rested on the seventh day and now because Adam and Eve are in a garden, they get to rest but not just rest but experience the rest of God. Now, let's think through what rest means. Maybe this after you'll leave church and go watch an NFL game. You'll find a chair- maybe a comfortable recliner- and what do you do? You rest. You might even take a Sunday nap. What does that mean? There is no stress. There is no pressure. You're in a comfortable chair and resting. People are leaving this week to go on Fall Break. What is the goal of a vacation? The goal is to be in a comfortable place so you can rest. You might be doing things. You might be going to the beach. You might fish, play golf, or go to a seafood restaurant but the goal is being in a comfortable place where you can rest. That is what the original intent of creation is. It's because of who God is that we get to rest in him being the foundation and enjoy his creation. But what did Adam and Eve do? They sinned. They messed up. And because they sinned and messed up now man has a problem. Man's heart does not want to find rest in God but it is still wanting rest so what man will do is look for rest in God's creation without following God and at the same time be restless.

Elvis Presley, right before he died, wrote a note and threw it in the trash can. At the end of that letter he says, "I will find no rest tonight" and the last phrase of the letter says, "help me, Lord." He literally had everything of the world and yet he was still restless. That is the cursed rest. We need help and God wants to give us help so what does God do? After the fall God has a plan and the plan is to take a group of people and through that group of people he will bring about a savior. But, when we read the Old Testament, this group of people actually find themselves in slavery. What does God do? He sets them free from the Egyptian slavery and sets them

on a path to Canaan rest. They were going to have a land flowing milk and honey and be set free from slavery but there is a problem with the people and with Moses as their leader, instead of being faithful and trusting in God, their hearts are disobedient. Their hearts are not united in faith and because of their disobedience they find themselves not entering the land of Canaan and not entering the land of rest.

Now, there is another guy that comes along. His name is Joshua and Joshua actually enters in. The people are able to enter into the promise land with the new generation but yet at the same time this Canaan rest is still not final even though it is better than being an Egyptian slave. There are still wars and there are still conflicts which leads to the ultimate rest and that rest is the Christ-centered rest. What he did on the cross, even when life is hard and difficult, we can find rest in him which points us to a final rest where the curse of sin is completely gone. We learn about this in Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 through 30. Jesus says this, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

When I think of rest I think of comfort. I think of them as two similar words and I want you to see in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 3 through 7 how many times the word comfort is used. It says this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort."

This leads into what the author of Hebrews is all about in this section. He is saying this church has and can enter into this Christ-centered rest but he's concerned because instead of finding comfort from Christ they have either

one, really haven't done that yet or two, there could be temptation to be like the people under Moses and go back to the cursed comforts of this world and between what Kory hit on last week in Hebrews chapter 3 and what we'll go on to read, the author quotes Psalm chapter 95 five times. So what's going on with Psalm 95? In the beginning of that psalm he is praising the Lord and he's giving joy for who the Lord is and how great his creation is but then halfway through the psalm we see this in verse 7, "For his is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand," meaning we are supposed to rest in him but then there is a warning. There is a challenge with the encouragement. "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Even though you are enjoying worshipping and praising God, what is the warning? Do not harden your heart. Don't be like the people under Moses. Then he continues to talk about the rest of the psalm and what happened to the people of Moses? They disobeyed and the result is in verse 11, "Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest.""

Here the author of Hebrews mentions these verses five different times saying... *Hey, you've got the rest. Stay there! Or if you haven't gotten the rest let today be the day. Don't be like your ancestors. Continue to rest and find comfort in God...*

Part 2: The Text

Now let's get into the text and talk about comfort and rest in Christ. We are going to see the different types of rest mentioned here. Let's pick up in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 1, "Therefore, will the promise of entering his rest still stands..." Today, because of Christ, no matter where you are you can enter his rest but there is also a warning. The next part of verse 1 says this "let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it." Meaning there can be people in the church that have not yet reached this rest for good. Then, here again, he goes back to the Canaan rest in verse 2, "For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." Let's bring this to modern day culture and think through what these verses mean. The author here is talking about two groups of people- those who have entered it and those who might look like they've entered it but they've not actually entered it. How does that apply to us today?

Several years ago I was on campus meeting with about 15 guys and the thing about Murray State is that for the most part you're going to have kids from western Tennessee, southeast Missouri, southern Illinois, and western Kentucky. Some of them might not have been in church too much but they've got a mostly Christian worldview. We're not debating the resurrection. We're not debating whether Jesus really did it or not. The debate here is this- who do you really want to live for? We were having this conversation and they are getting the gospel. They are locked in on me. I'm asking them, do you believe that God is holy and just? Yes. Do you believe that you're sinful? Yes. Do you believe Jesus Christ died on a cross for your sins and it isn't based on your works but it's based on what he has done for you? Yes. Do you believe that you need to repent and trust in him? Yes. Do you believe if you do that then you'll now be with him forever and be in a new earth and new heaven? Yes. Do you believe if you don't do that then you'll go to hell? Yes. At this moment my heart starts pounding because I think 15 guys are getting ready to come to Christ but something happens and to this day it still breaks my heart. A guy raises his hand, the leader of the group, and looks at me and says this, "Chris, we agree with everything you're saying. You're right but we want to continue to live for our sin" and the other 14 agreed.

Now, here is what is sad and here is what breaks my heart. I have had that conversation probably every single semester if not every single month of doing college ministry. Think about that. It's so sad because they're not getting the benefit of rest. They're not getting the benefit of Christ. These kids can be going home saying hi to grandma and going back to their churches but they've never truly entered into a place where they're finding comfort and rest in Christ. They're finding much more comfort and rest in the world than they are Christ. Again, I've had these conversations all the time. They're anxious. They're stressed. They're worn out. And when it comes to the weekend they want to rest in the world, not rest in Christ. Again, they know they need to do these things but their heart's desire is to rest in the world.

Think about that. These are 18 and 19 years old but the author of Hebrews is saying that it can also apply to us today in this building. You could be in this church agreeing with everything that is being said, the songs that we're singing, and what you're listening to, but in reality your heart is

finding more comfort in the world than the Word of God. If anything should cause us to be anxious it should be that.

Now, the good news is there are people in this Hebrew church and in Hardin Baptist Church that have definitely believed. Verse 3, "For we who have believed enter that rest," and here is where it gets a little confusing. He says we've entered that rest and if you've entered that rest they you know what I'm talking about this morning. Christ is your source of comfort and rest and satisfaction no matter what happens in your life but then he says this, "as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" He just says we've entered rest but then he goes back to what? He goes back to Psalm chapter 95 and gives a warning. Remember the people of Moses. They experienced the parting of the Red Sea and they disobeyed. So even to people who have entered rest, he's giving a warning. Yes, you've entered the rest but remember your ancestors' past. Then also, in the midst of the ancestors, he wants this congregation to remember God. The end of verse 3 says this, "although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."" This beautiful rest in creation is God's design. We're not just supposed to rest. We rest with HIM. We rest IN HIM. Think about just resting with the king. Think about all the benefits of an earthly king. This is the heavenly king and he wants us to rest with him but what did we do? We sinned and the author is concerned about us sinning and forgetting about this creation rest that God laid out for us at the very beginning.

Next we pick up now in the next verse, "and again in this passage he said..." Again, this is like the fourth he has referenced Psalm chapter 95. He knows he's saying it multiple times. Again, "and again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." Here again we have another warning. The next verse says this, "Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience." He is telling us that we can enter it but remember the past. Here again he repeats himself. Those who had good news did not receive the benefit. Why? Because of disobedience. Because they were not united in faith. But the good news is even if that's been you, you have hope today. Verse 7, "again he appoints a certain day, "Today..." Now, when is that certain day? What does he say? Today! The good news

is if you're here and you've never entered that rest, you've never experienced that comfort, if you've been going to church but never truly had that, today is the day you can enter in and experience that. If we continue on, "saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." If you are not a believer in this room do not harden your heart. Enter that rest. If you are a believer in this room and you're struggling and wanting to wander do not harden your heart. Hear his voice. Enter his rest and comfort.

Next we bring up Joshua. Verse 8 says this, "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on." What he's talking about here is again the people under Moses didn't enter in but the people under Joshua and the people of the new generation did enter in and when they entered it was great but it sort of seemed like the savior but he's not the savior. The true savior is Jesus and what Jesus has done for us is not a Canaan rest and it's not a creation rest but it's a new creation rest. Let's pick up again in the next verse, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." This Sabbath rest is a different type of rest. If you look at the original language it means you celebrate and you rejoice. You are now resting like you've never rested before because Christ is in you.

Verse 10, "for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his." I hear this all the time, "I've got to clean up my act, Chris." You don't have to clean up your act! You don't have to do all these works. No, all you have to do is what? Rest. In who? Christ! Rest in his works and you will experience a comfort like never before. Now, at the same time here again he says this in verse 11, "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience." He keeps on encouraging the people and here is my question. Why? Why does he have to do this? If the creator of the heavens and the universe wants to give you rest and comfort why not run into it? If someone says they're going to give you the most comfortable vacation at a tropical resort and it's all paid for all you have to do is go and rest what are you doing? You're going! Yet he's almost challenging them to not back out of the all-inclusive paid resort. Why? I think it comes to the next couple of verses.

Verse 12, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." What does the word of God do? This message that did not benefit the people under Moses because they didn't enter the rest, this message that is actually good news is sort of uncomfortable news. Why is it uncomfortable news? Because when we really hear the word of God it's like a sword going right to our heart and the intentions of our heart.

Verse 13, "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Here is why I think it can be a struggle for us to enter and stay in this Christ-centered, heavenly rest- because it involves us getting out of our comfort zone. See, when we really get in this book it's going to cut to the heart and we're going to start seeing some things. Things like this... *I really sort of like where I am in the world. I like _____* ... You fill in the blank there. It could be sinful things or it could be good things but ultimately they're not God things and we just want to stay right where we are. That's cutting. In reality though God wants to take us from the good things of the world to godly rest.

Now, I want to go to another passage to flesh this out a bit. I want us to go to John chapter 3, verses 16 through 21 to talk about this a little more. This is the famous passage with Nicodemus. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus here, this religious leader, this leader who has so much going on for him and yet at the same time here he is and Jesus is saying... *guess what? Despite your natural birth you need a spiritual birth...* This story leads to John chapter 3, verse 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." When I'm

sharing this passage with folks and I'm trying to get them to see their need for Jesus I use this passage a lot. Almost every single time I walk through this passage do you know what the response is?... *It's easier to stay in the dark. I'm comfortable here. I don't have to worry about all of these questions. If I go over here to Christ what are people going to say?... I've got my friends. I'm comfortable here... I've got this relationship. I'm comfortable here... I've got my career. I'm comfortable here...* You can fill in the blank.

It's so easy to stay in the dark and not believe we're evil because if you really get into this book what is going to happen? All of a sudden you realize and understand we're living for cursed comfort that is going to lead to our destruction but yet at the same time it's the absolute best news we need to hear. A good doctor does not lie. If he finds out you have cancer he doesn't lie and say you don't have cancer. A good doctor tells you the truth. This book tells the truth about who you are. Also, when you understand the truth about who you are and you truly see your heart it leads to you being what? Uncomfortable. Uncomfortable in whom? You! You realize and understand and I realize and understand that we have to do what? Get out of our comfort zone. Let's read the next verse. Verse 21, "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." See, when we enter this rest and continue to strive in this rest, by letting God's Word speak to our hearts, cut to our hearts, it continues not only in a moment of salvation but throughout sanctification. It continues to make us uncomfortable in us but it leads to a heart that is no longer dark; it's filled with light. It takes us from a lifestyle that is restless to a lifestyle that can have rest and peace in Christ. It takes us from trying to please every single person to cover up our identity to knowing that we're completely comfortable in who we are because we're loved and forgiven by the Creator of the heavens and the universe. It leads to this absolute life change and no matter what comes our way, no matter how hard it might be, we now have peace and comfort and we can always rest in the midst of the storms even when we don't know they why because we know the who and he is never going to let us go.

Here we have this battle. Which comfort zone do we want to be in? Do we want to stay in our comfort zone and just rest in darkness or do we let the word of God penetrate our hearts and rest in him?

Part 3: Illustration and Application

How do we bring this to life? How do we do this? Remember this guy has quoted Psalm 95 in Hebrews chapter 3 and 4, five times. He's trying to make a point. He's trying to encourage the people. You have either haven't entered in and you need in or if you have entered in then you need to keep striving.

Now, I want to say something here too. I deal with a lot of folks all over this area as I'm sharing the gospel with them and I think there are three really important questions when it comes to salvation.

1. Have you been saved? Has there been a moment in your life where you've had a life change? Have you had a life change and you've come to Christ?
2. Are you in Christ? Right now are you in Christ?
3. Will you be with Christ when he comes back?

In other words, have you been saved? Are you saved? Will you be saved? Now, most of the time in the Christian culture we only want to focus on the first one. We were saved when we were eight years old then lived like hell but that's okay. No, that's a lie. Then the other thought here is if someone falls away from Christ we wonder, were they really saved? Scripture isn't concerned about whether or not they're really saved. Scripture is really concerned about question number two and question number three. Are you saved RIGHT NOW? Right now are you finding comfort in Christ? Then, number three, if you truly have found comfort in Christ will you be ready? Is your life in such a way where you have truly found comfort in him that you are secure, ready, longing, and wanting him because he is your comfort, he is your rest? The author of Hebrews is not saying we lose our salvation but if we're truly saved then we will persevere. We will endure. Does that make sense?

Next let's give an illustration. My kids just finished up New Covenant Christian Academy cross country season. If you've ever been to a cross

country meet then you know there are a ton of people there from a bunch of different schools. Each team will have their tent set up and inside their tent they'll have Gatorades and snacks. Sometimes they'll even have snow cones. They'll have music going and it's just a really fun atmosphere. People are just hanging out. These kids can just be sitting there so one of the jobs of the coach is to get them to the starting line. If they're truly a runner then they have to get to the starting line. They get to the starting line and there is a big crowd. The gun goes off and what does everybody do? They start cheering and the kids take off.

A couple weeks ago I was in Marshall County with Luke and Megan Thomas. These races are around one and a half to two miles so if you're not careful you'll see your kid take off in the herd of other middle schoolers and then hopefully see them at the finish line. So there is a strategy to these meets. You are basically running the same amount the students are running. As soon as these students take off there has to be a strategy in place to know where the kids are going next. Megan had this all mapped out. The race takes off and then Megan says, "alright we're going to go here and see them at the next part of the race." So we walk over there and what do we do? We cheer and clap and yell, "keep going, keep going!" Then Megan says, "ok, we can cut around here" and what do we do? We cut around and then here comes all the kids and we cheer and clap and yell, keep going, keep going!" Next Megan says, "ok there is this little, long area where it will be tough to get to. We aren't going to see them so let's just go to the finish line." So we go to the finish line and we even had a strategy at the finish line. This is the end of the race and they're tired. There is a big hill and it's going to be difficult. My wife, Brandy, and her family are at the finish line. I want to encourage Brax so I don't go to the finish line. I head to a different spot. I see Brandy at the finish line and out of the corner of my eye I see Coach Nick. He's further down as well so we have this last part of the race figured out. I'm watching for Brax in the distance and trying to see where he is. Then all of a sudden I see Coach Nick say, "GO BRAX GO! GO BRAX!" About the time Nick's voice fades I pick up, "COME ON, BRAX! KEEP GOING! KEEP GOING!" Then here comes Brax and he crosses the finish line with his whole family there with him to celebrate. He finished the race and he could rest.

Here is what I love about those races. Everybody finishes it! They start out and the kids follow a four wheeler down the path. As they are running this race even the last student finishes the race and that four wheeler will push that kid along to make sure the last kid will finish the race. Complete strangers are encouraging this kid to cross the finish line. Now let's make the application. Right now you can be in church. You can look the part. You can have the uniform on and instead of a snow cone you can be eating the donuts. Instead of listening to the music in Marshall County you can be listening to the Bluegrass band. You can be a part of the culture but if you have not truly entered the race this is what is going to happen- you're going to slowly drift away. Maybe not today but you've never truly entered the race. You might look it and you might act it but something will happen- it might be today or it might be tomorrow- and you will drift away. That crushes me when I see that happen in a church. It just crushes me. Yet at the same time I believe in the race and I believe I'm secure and when I see that happen it scares me to death. My prayer is this- Lord, please let me continue to run! I need you! Even though I feel like I'm secure I know that I'm tempted to drift away and I need Psalm 95 not once, not twice, not three, not four, but five times to continue to hear that truth.

Even with college ministry so many times this illustration applies to them and even though it applies to them it still applies to us. I can have a student that may look like they're in the race but they're not in the race. They come to Sunday School, they come to Bible study, and they're listening, but Christ has never truly been they're rest. I'm having these conversations and these battles for their hearts to come to Christ. Next they come to Christ and do you know what I tell them next? They need to get baptized. The screen pops up on Sunday morning and you all see those kids get baptized. As I have the conversation about baptism I say this, "Your baptism is a picture not as the race being finished but the race beginning. Now your life has just begun and there are couple things you need to know. You need the church and the church needs you because you're going to go on this journey and there are going to be times where you need spiritual mothers, spiritual fathers, spiritual brothers, and spiritual sisters to point you back to the Word of God. There are going to be times where it might be like sweet Megan clapping you on and it might be like Coach Nick yelling to go but in those moments and in those times you're

going to need them.” Usually for that young man or that young woman it starts about two to three weeks after they come to Christ. They’ve come to Christ and then get baptized and believe they’re never going to sin again but what happens a few weeks from now? The struggles hit. Those cursed comforts want to come back in... *What is so-and-so going to think about me?... How is this relationship going to be?... How am I going to handle mom and dad?...* It’s all of these different things that hit all of a sudden but we are all saying... *keep going! Keep going! Find comfort in Christ. Find rest in Christ. He is all you need...* Then they graduate and there is marriage, children, challenges, finances, and struggles in all of those areas and we say... *Keep going! Keep going back to the Word of God. Let him speak to you. Do not harden your hearts. Today is the day! Enter that rest and keep striving for that rest...* Sometimes there are things that happen in our life and we don’t understand what’s going on. There is no answer for the tragedy or the situation but yet at the same time we keep finding our rest and comfort in this book because this book is telling us who our God is and what he has done for us and even in the midst of the storm we can find rest and comfort knowing who he is and what he has done for us. We continue to live this lifestyle, running that race, and when we hit those hills we have people encouraging us all so we can finish the race.

With that being said, what is so glorious and what is so good, as we run this race here is what happens- eventually if we are truly a believer through persevering, by enduring, and by resting in Christ we reach the finish line. As we reach the finish line here is what happens- there are two funerals happening when we reach the finish line. Funeral number one is us. We’re dead but it’s not really a funeral. The coffin closes on us but we are now alive with Christ. There is also a second funeral that happens on that day. The death of sin because of what happened on the cross of Christ. Sin was defeated and now the coffin has been closed on sin forever. Now we get to reach the final resting place to be with King Jesus forever enjoying the comforts, enjoying the rest in a new earth and new heaven for eternity. That is the challenge; that’s the thought!

Here we are today so what do we do with this? You can right now continue to rest in the La-Z-Boy of this world and find comfort in this world. Even if you enter in you can be tempted to go back to that or you continue to let the Word speak to you reminding you who you are. Reminding you that

you are Ephesians 2. You were once dead but made alive and not just made alive but raised and not just raised but you're in a new type of seat, a heavenly seat with Christ. You are synced with Christ and forever enjoying the riches of God's kindness and grace forever.

Where are you? Where are you right now? I want you to think where you are. If you have not entered God's rest my challenge to you is let today be the day. If you have entered God's rest but you're wanting to stray my challenge to you is that you take some time right now and don't stay in your comfort zone in this world. Let the Word of God speak to your heart so you continue to find comfort in Christ and continue running for him. Right now if you're finding comfort in Christ my encouragement and challenge to you is to live in such a way where you point others to continue. Cheer others on so that they might find comfort and rest in only the way Christ can give so that you and them will all cross the finish line together.

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