

Enjoying True Rest during a Pandemic

Hebrews 4: 1-14

COVID-19: a forced “sabbath”?

“These are disorienting times. Due to COVID-19, our professional, relational and recreational routines as ... Christians have been disrupted by quarantines and social distancing. In our typically fast-paced world, it feels strange when things suddenly come to a halt. But what if God is using our disorientation for reorientation? What if, amid the coronavirus pandemic that now envelops us, we can rediscover the importance of Sabbath?”

– Julia Wallace

<https://www.baylor.edu/communityconnection/news.php?action=story&story=218355>

Effects of Sabbath

- ◇ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2hNKrfsyNw>
- ◇ Gravitas clip; Mar 19, 2020; (0:09-2:38)

“Sabbath” ?

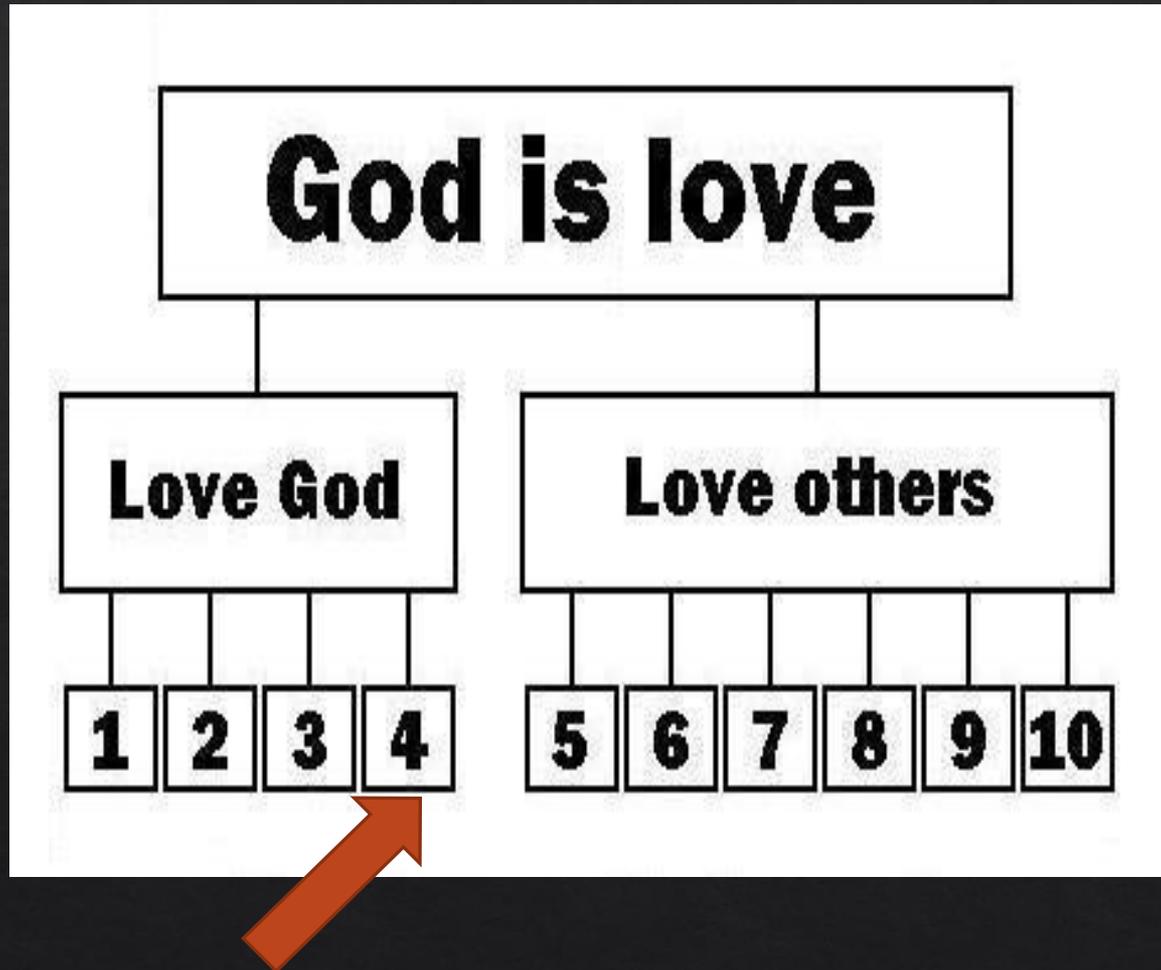
- ◇ from Hebrew word *shabbat*, meaning “to cease” or “to stop”

“Sabbath”



How important is it to observe the Sabbath ?

- # 4 of 10 Commandments

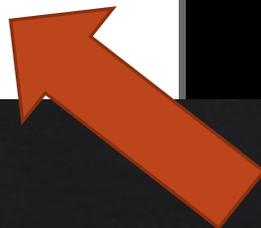


GOD

- 1: Do not worship any other gods
- 2: Do not make any idols
- 3: Do not misuse the name of God
- 4: Keep the Sabbath holy

MAN

- 5: Honour your father & mother
- 6: Do not murder
- 7: Do not commit adultery
- 8: Do not steal
- 9: Do not lie
- 10: Do not covet



Would obeying the “sabbath” commandment...

- help us enjoy true rest during this pandemic?

Book of Hebrews ...

- written to those experiencing social upheaval, loss, and an unknown future
- Jewish-Christians in extremely stressful situation
- They considered returning to Judaism (their former religion) to decrease these tensions
- writer encouraged them to “hold on” to their newfound faith lest they compromise Christ and lose their blessings
- God’s word to us who are experiencing social upheaval, loss, and an unknown future

Enjoying true rest during a pandemic

- Importance of Rest
- 2 Levels of Rest (Heb. 4: 2, 8)
- Process of Entering God's rest
- Giver of Rest – Jesus our High Priest

Hebrews 4: 1-11

- ❖ word “rest” occurs 11X
- ❖ Good news = God’s promise/offer of rest

❖ 2 groups: “they” / “them” and “you” / “us”

❖ Past

Present & Future

❖ Jewish Christians

❖ Israelites Moses led out of Egypt

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. (v. 1)

[promise of rest; us/you; present]

² For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. (v. 2)

[good news; we/us ~ they/them; past]

³ Now we who have believed enter that rest,
just as God has said.

“So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

And yet his works have been finished since the
creation of the world. (v. 3)

[we ~ they; present ~ past]

⁶ Therefore since

it still remains for some to enter that rest, and
since those who formerly had the good news
proclaimed to them

did not go in because of their disobedience,

⁷ God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.”

(vv. 6-7)

[some remains to enter (present & future)

those who did not go in (past)]

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. (vv. 8-10)

[them = Israelites who came out of Egypt;

us = people of God who enters God's rest]

The same good news (gospel) proclaimed to them and to us

- “You/We can enter God’s rest”
- for Israelites: Promised Land (past)
- for us: eternal salvation (present & future)

1st Level of Rest

- ❑ A home to settle down peacefully – Promised Land (v. 2, v. 8)
- ❑ After 40 years, Joshua led a new generation into Canaan; an entire generation missed it
- ❑ This “rest” was for “them”, in the past

2nd Level of Rest

Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words:

“On the seventh day God rested from all his works.”
(Hebrews 4: 3-4)

God: 1st person to rest

Tired out after 6 days ?

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Gen. 1: 31)

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. (Genesis 2:2)

- ❖ NO. God stopped because He had finished all His work (of creating our world and us)
- ❖ NO. God stopped working to enjoy and appreciate what He has created

2nd Level of rest ...

- deep, inner spiritual rest/satisfaction
- God paused to enjoy what he has created; he considered them all “very good” (Gen. 1: 31)
- Able to pause & enjoy what God has created?
- “I’m a unique person created in God’s image”
- Satisfied with who I am, as created by God?
- Or ... do I need to work harder to make myself more acceptable to others (including myself)?

What does it mean ?

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. (Heb. 4: 9-10)

- ❖ to receive salvation through Jesus Christ = to rest (to cease) from most debilitating work of all

“most debilitating work of all” ?

- ❖ the work of establishing my worth through my efforts (hard work)
- ❖ the work of “earning” my salvation

Sabbath is more than “external” rest

- ❑ inner rest of our soul
- ❑ Overwork: attempt to justify ourselves
- ❑ Overwork: attempt to gain God’s blessings
- ❑ Overwork: attempt to make ourselves appear “righteous” ...
- ❑ to “justify” ourselves through wealth, status, high competency, or the reputation we think we deserve ...

Process of Entering God's rest ...

□ is a most humbling & terrifying process !

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb. 4: 12-13)

“Word of God” ?

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. (Heb. 4: 9)

God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” (Heb. 4: 3)

This he did when ... he spoke through David, ... :
“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.” (Heb. 4: 7)

□ Word of God = what God said; what God promised

Can't enter God's rest unless/until we ...

- ❑ embrace, admit and deal with our spiritual “nakedness” (sinfulness)
- ❑ stop (cease) our self-justifying good works
- ❑ humbly embrace the Gospel

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(Heb. 4: 12-13)

**God love us so much
That's why He gives us His Word**

- ❖ ... both His promises and warnings
- ❖ Hebrews 4: 1-11; NLT

God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. ² For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. ³ For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, "In my anger I took an oath: "They will never enter my place of rest,"" even though this rest has been ready since he made the world.

⁴ We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: “On the seventh day God rested from all his work.” ⁵ But in the other passage God said, “They will never enter my place of rest.”

⁶ So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ⁷ So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today.

God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

“Today when you hear his voice,
don’t harden your hearts.”

⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. ⁹ So there is a special rest [or a Sabbath rest] still waiting for the people of God.

¹⁰ For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹ So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. (Hebrews 4: 1-13; NLT)

Let us come to the Giver of True Rest

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.

¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. (Hebrews 4: 14-16; NLT)

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True rest during pandemic possible ?

- ❖ God's promise of entering his rest still stands ... there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God (4: 1 & 9)
- ❖ For only we who believe can enter his rest (4:3)
- ❖ it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God; ... those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God (4: 2 & 6)
- ❖ For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world (4: 10)

True rest during pandemic possible ?

- ❖ “Today when you hear his voice,
don’t harden your hearts.” (4: 7)
- ❖ For the word of God is alive and powerful. ...
It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.
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