

DWELLING IN GOD'S REST – PART TWO

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | February 5, 2023

Review of the previous sermon: Part One. God's Rest is essentially the Presence of God. Salvation Rest. Sanctification Rest. Sabbatical [eternal] Rest. **Salvation and Eternal Rest seem to be in the mind of the author of Hebrews.**

Recipients: They seem to have believed in Christ, but due to persecution and suffering, they seem to face the temptation to return back to Judaism.

The only mandates in the entire passage:

Practical observation: We all fear. Fear of snakes. Fear of terminal illness. Fear of dying. Fear of darkness. Fear of uncertainty. Fear of harmful people. **But God's Word encourages us to have a certain kind of fear:**

- ❖ [1] **Hebrews 4:1, 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.
- ▶ **Puritan John Owen (1616–1683):** The fear intended in this verse is a combination of two things. **First**, it is a reverent understanding of God's holiness and greatness, and his severity against sin. **Second**, it is using the means of grace carefully to avoid the evil of unbelief and disobedience.

Remember: When we fear God, we trust Him too.

- ❖ **Psalm 115:11**, You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.

Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*: "We cannot separate trust in God from the fear of God. We will trust Him only to the extent that we genuinely stand in awe of Him."

Note: There is a great need for God's fear in our hearts today. We either fear God unhealthily [merciless God] or lack fear of Him [irreverence towards God].

- ❖ [2] **Hebrews 4:11, Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
 - ▶ **4:1**, "lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it."
 - ▶ **4:11**, "so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."

Strive: Spoudazo conveys the idea of hastening to do something with the implication of intense effort.

How do you strive to enter into God's rest?

1. ENTERING GOD'S REST BY FAITH.

Hebrews 4:1-2, 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. 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.

Why couldn't the wilderness Israel enter God's rest? Because of lack of faith.

Why did the author of Hebrews point this example to the NT people?

Cigarette packets: Gory cancer pictures of throat/lungs (smoking causes cancer)

Point: The author points to the unbelief of the Israelites, implying that none of us can enter God's rest without faith.

Why faith matters to God, without which we cannot enter God's rest?

- ❖ **Hebrews 11:6**, And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Lack of faith is practical atheism: It doesn't believe God exists and that God rewards you if you persevere. Unbelief is an assault on God's character and Word.

Application:

- ▶ Do you truly believe that God exists and that you are accountable to Him?
- ▶ Do you truly believe that Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead?
- ▶ Do you truly believe that God is able to deliver you from your present sins?
- ▶ Do you truly believe that God is able to carry you through your difficulties, safely till the end?
- ▶ Do you truly believe that you have eternal life where you live or die?

4:2, "For **good news came to us** just as to them": **God is the Redeemer**

- ▶ **Good news to the wilderness Israel:** God delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and gave them the Promised Land (Rest). **When do we know that they truly did not believe in God?** In the wilderness.
- ▶ **Good news to New Covenant people:** God delivers people from the bondage of sin and eternal condemnation through Christ and gave us the free gift of eternal life (Eternal Rest). **When do we know that we truly believed in the Gospel of Christ?** In the wilderness (trials and temptations).

Illustration: When Susanne was going through fourth-stage thyroid cancer, she was depressed and had a hard time trusting in the Lord. Then she met an aunty who was suffering from some illness. Susanne asked her how her thoughts were when blood came out of her mouth/nose. She said with a smile that she would be with the Lord. Susanne was amazed and examined whether she had such faith in the Lord.

❖ **Hebrews 4:6**, Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter **because of disobedience** [previously used word “unbelief”]...TRUST AND OBEY

John MacArthur: The need for God’s rest is urgent. A person should diligently, with intense purpose and concern, secure it. It is not that he can work his way to salvation, but that he should diligently seek to enter God’s rest by faith—lest he, like the Israelites in the wilderness, lose the opportunity. God cannot be trifled with.

Note: Believing in Christ at the beginning is one thing. Persevering in our faith till the end amidst the storms of temptations and trials is another thing. It is our perseverance in faith till the end that speaks about our true faith in the Lord.

HEARING + BELIEVING = RESTING / HARDENING + UNBELIEF = UNREST

2. ENTERING GOD’S REST BY GOD’S WORD

Hebrews 1:1-2, Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke** to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son...**

Hebrews 2:1, Therefore we must pay much closer attention to **what we have heard**, lest we drift away from it.

Hebrews 3:7-8, Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you **hear his voice** [citing **Psalm 95**], do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness...**3:16**, For who were those **who heard** and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?

Hebrews 4:1-2, 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. 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.

Hebrews 4:12, 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.

Point: Today, if you **hear his voice**, **do not harden your heart** (vs. 3:7, 15; 4:7)

i) The word of God is living: It is not dead. It has life.

❖ **Deuteronomy 32:47**, For it is no empty word for you, but your very life...

ii) The word of God is active: It is not passive. It works powerfully.

❖ **David wrote (Ps. 19:7)**, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul”.

iii) The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword [Doubled-edged sword used by a Roman soldier], **piercing** to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, **and discerning** the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Note: Don't try to get much into the details of soul/spirit/ joints/marrow/ thoughts/intentions. Point: It is not blunt. It pierces and penetrates the depth and innermost parts of our soul. It exposes. It convicts. It breaks. [Hammer, Fire, Sword]

❖ **Acts 2:37**, Now when they heard this they were **cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Illustration [Unbelievers]: C H Spurgeon before conversion, “I was years and years upon the brink of hell—I mean in my own feeling. I was unhappy, I was desponding, I was despairing. I dreamed of hell. My life was full of sorrow and wretchedness, believing that I was lost.”

When Spurgeon was 15 years, he was walking on the street and there was a snowstorm. In order to take shelter, he ran into an old Methodist Chapel. An unknown substitute lay preacher stepped into the pulpit and read his text—**Isaiah 45:22**—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”

Spurgeon wrote in his autobiography: “He had not much to say, thank God, for that compelled him to keep on repeating his text, and there was nothing needed—by me, at any rate except his text. Then, stopping, he pointed to where I was sitting under the gallery, and he said, ‘That young man there looks very miserable’ ... and he shouted, ‘Look! Look, young man! Look now!’ ... Then I had this vision—not a vision to my eyes, but to my heart. I saw what a Savior Christ was.... Now I can never tell you how it was, but I no sooner saw whom I was to believe than I also understood what it was to believe, and I did believe in one moment.”

Illustration [Believers]: The story of Hien Pham, as told by Ravi Zacharias

Right after mentioning the power of God's Word, the author of Hebrews concludes:

❖ **Hebrews 4:13**, 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.

Remember: You cannot divorce God from His Word. Who God is and what God's Word does is mentioned simultaneously.

Therefore,

- ▶ Read God's Word every day with reverence (it saves, sanctifies and leads us safely till we reach eternal rest]

Illustration: Some of you know how I was preparing for the message and how I was deeply convicted by Proverbs and had to sit and reconcile a critical issue.

- ▶ Hear God's Word in the gathered church with reverence (it saves, sanctifies and leads us safely till we reach eternal rest]

Steven Cole: Expository preaching has fallen on hard times. Many are saying that people who are used to television and other modern media cannot handle a 40-minute sermon. Sadly, many pastors are heeding that advice. "Seeker" churches advocate 15-minute talks built around some felt need, accompanied by short dramas to hold people's attention. They say that we should never mention sin or anything else that will make anyone feel uncomfortable! The aim is to make everyone feel good in church.

The omniscient eye of God:

- ▶ God uses His Word to convict our sins, even the deepest and secret sins unknown to others and ourselves.
- ▶ God uses His Word to comfort us in our afflictions, even the pain that we cannot share with anyone.
- ▶ God uses His Word to give us hope to persevere till the end in the fallen world.
- ▶ We are accountable to God for how we responded to His Word:

Hebrews 4:13, 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. (cf. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10)

Jeremiah 23:23-24, Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.

Summary:

- ▶ Strive to enter and remain and hope for God's rest by faith.
- ▶ Strive to enter and persevere and hope for God's rest by God's Word.