

Entering His Rest

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Date: 23 January 2023

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] And the last time we met, we examined in some detail a warning issued by the Lord.

! This warning was first issued to the Hebrew people after God miraculously removed them! Their bondage in Egypt after some 430 years and much of that in slavery. The same warning was reissued to the members and attendees of the Hebrew church we are studying.

And the focus on these warnings are people that have made no commitment to Christ and His atoning sacrifice and were thus yet unsaved.

And by extension, the church today must heed the same warning. It's given to us in the Old Testament, given to us in the New Testament.

[1 : 10] Our passage today found in Hebrews chapter 4, 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.

For we who have believed in that rest, as He said, as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. Although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way. And God rested on the seventh day from all His works. And again in this passage He said, Thou shall not enter my rest.

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience. Again, He appoints a certain day.

[2 : 24] Today, saying through David not long afterward, and the words already quoted, Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.

These verses just mentioned are essentially a continuation of the warning that we've already studied when we covered Hebrews chapter 3 verses 7 to 19.

And if you missed that lesson, we can make arrangements to get a copy. The warning that began in Hebrews 7 and continues today is to the Jewish attenders in this Hebrew church that were non-responsive to the message of Christ.

They were non-responsive to the salvation that He offers. There were individuals in the church, as there are undoubtedly in all churches, that simply do not believe the claims concerning the finished work of Christ and rejected the message of the Holy Spirit and the message He was giving them of their need to close with Christ, to be one with Him.

And the sad thing is that these uncommitted church members had been exposed to the truth.

[3 : 59] Same can be said for people in the church. People come, they sit around, they listen, and they leave. These people were exposed to the truth.

It can be argued that they had actually severed their relationship with Judaism or they would not have been attending this church.

Still, they did not believe. Still, they did not believe. That, of course, is a great sadness that extends down to our day. The message that God gives the uncommitted in the church of the 21st century is the same message that He gave this Hebrew church, which is the same message He gave to the Jews that left Egypt and wandered around the wilderness.

And what was that message? Do not harden your hearts. Don't be hard-hearted. Like the Jews in the wilderness and like the Jews in the Hebrew church, those who harden their hearts to the gospel will not enter into the promised land.

They will not rest in the Lord for eternity. So what the author of the book of Hebrews is saying, unbelief forfeits rest.

[5 : 30] You're not going to get rest if you don't believe. And we've said many times in there, we have a responsibility to believe, trust, commit our lives.

What do we mean by that word rest as in the rest of the Lord? Well, it's used various times in the Bible, over 500 times in the Old and New Testament.

There's a Greek word for it. I won't begin to try to pronounce it. It means to cease from work. In other words, stop what you're doing.

Do not labor and do not exert yourself. Now that doesn't mean on the day of rest you get in your hammock and lay back and watch the cowboys get beat.

Let's know what that means. But there is a deeper spiritual meaning underlying this. As we apply rest to the church, it means we no longer exert self-effort as far as salvation is concerned.

[6 : 40] We cannot achieve a relationship with God through Christ by working for it. Well, I had perfect attendance this year.

Well, okay. It does not come with so much church attendance. If we are Catholic, we do not achieve that with so many prayers to Mary.

I heard Dr. McCarthy the other day said, you know, Mary's never heard a single prayer offered to her from earth to heaven. If we're Muslim, we don't enter in to a relationship with God by journeying to Mecca to attend the Hajj, H-A-J, H-A-J, at least once in a lifetime.

That's the requirement. They walk around the Kabbalah, the great big rock, and throw mud balls at the devil. That doesn't get you one inch toward glory.

So where can we find rest? Where could the uncommitted in the Hebrew church find rest?

[7 : 50] The only source for such rest is found in the free grace of God provided through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

That's where you find rest. And rest is far-reaching for the Christian. When we enter into God's rest, we enter into an indescribable or almost indescribable peace with God.

Can you imagine being at peace with God? Well, we are. Most people are not. We can be at peace with our sins knowing that God has forgiven them in Christ.

That doesn't mean we have a license to sin. We have the freedom and liberty not to because of what Jesus did. Our guilt has been atoned for.

The forgiveness that God provides His people is total. If any of us has a sin lingering about that is unatoned for, we have not entered into God's rest.

[9 : 15] But in Christ, all our sins are atoned for, cast into the deepest ocean, and now they are as far as the east is from the west.

And that's a long way. Because when you travel from the east to the west, you never exhaust that. You never run out of west. Those are all metaphors used to describe our new creation in Christ.

Am I implying that we are now sinless? Well, not at all. I'm living proof of that. Dr. Sproul said this a few years before his death.

He said, we all live in continual sin. All of us. And we're unable to fulfill for one second the greatest commandment.

Love God with all your heart, mind, soul. We can't do that for one second. We can't even fulfill the second greatest commandment.

[10 : 26] What's that? Love your neighbor as yourself. We do it partially, but not completely. And in the words of Dr. Sproul, we live in continual need for a Savior.

Savior. The rest we have been examining is based upon a person's relationship with God through faith in Christ.

In other words, this is the rest of those who are saved. And by the way, if you're saved, you need to act like it through rest. You're resting in the Lord.

Now, there are two more periods of rest, and we're not going to expand on those tonight, but I think we should identify them. In addition to the rest we presently experience as followers of Christ, we will also experience rest during the millennial reign of Christ following His physical return to the earth where He will rule for a thousand years.

And then one day we will enter the rest in heaven for eternity. The eternity of eternities. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, when I look around this world.

[11 : 49] Dr. MacArthur is always helpful in the study of God's Word. He sometimes steals my stuff, but not often. In our passage this evening, he has identified four truths concerning the rest God provides His children.

The availability of rest, the elements of rest, the nature of rest, and the urgency of rest.

And when I put all four of those in there, I fully intended to cover all four, and that's not going to happen tonight. We're going to have to split this in half, and we'll do so.

But I want to speak first to the availability of rest. 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. Now remember the word therefore, we always have to figure out what it's there for. It refers to what just came before. Well, that was Hebrews 3. That makes sense. We're in Hebrews 4.

[13:03] Hebrews 3 was a warning that we've already discussed tonight. Hebrews 4.1 The word therefore took this Hebrew church back in time when the Israelites escaped Egypt, but through disobedience did not enter into the promised land or God's rest.

They simply did not trust God to fulfill His promises that He had given them concerning the rest that would be provided in the land of milk and honey.

And you remember when you read the Old Testament it talks about how they murmured against Moses, they murmured against God. Anytime they were murmuring against Moses, they were murmuring against God.

They just didn't want to use His name. And they wanted more water, they wanted more food, they wanted more this and that.

So they murmured. They even said at one time, it would be better to go back to Egypt and be slaves. As believers in the 21st century, we should all know that a failure to trust in what God has revealed places us in grave danger.

[14:28] Grave danger. fear. We should fear such a lack of trust as Jesus warned in the Gospel of Matthew 10, 28. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. The fear that we experience is different from the fear that the unbelieving world experiences or should experience.

Our fear is not cringing in the corner of a dark room afraid that God might find us. That's not at all what we're talking about.

Our fear is centered upon trust and reverent awe of the God who has redeemed us and will one day take us home to be with Him.

That is fear or awe born out of trust, honor, and respect for those who God is and what God has done and is doing in our life.

[15:49] For who God is and what He's done and is doing. But the warning we are dealing with in our study of the book of Hebrews is directed at the unsaved in this congregation.

They are at risk if they continue of experiencing eternal separation from God. fear. The sad thing is that lost people rarely experience such fear.

They think they're okay. I'm good. And they come up with a system that they have been good enough to earn heaven. I used to, when I was unsaved, I could visualize a set of scales and I just wanted to tip the good side a little bit.

Not a whole lot because I was having fun as a police officer. I just wanted to tip the scales. That was my theology. But people come up with this system that they've been good enough to enter heaven or they create in their mind a God who does not condemn and would never send someone to hell.

Sadly, just in the time I've spent on this five sentence paragraph, thousands of people have entered into hell worldwide. they die and they go to the judgment.

[17:22] Now, there's good news for the lost in this Hebrew congregation and for the lost in any New Testament congregation. salvation. As long as the promise of entering into God's rest still stands, salvation is still available and possible.

The door is still open and there is still time. But that will not last forever. And no one knows when it will shut down. the best translation for the last part of Hebrews 4.1 is, lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God.

Let me give you a real life example of this. I had never heard this before. Or if I had, I'd forgotten it. I'm going to hazard a guess that most of us in here have never heard of Melvin Ernest Trotter.

He lived from 1870 to 1940. He was the founder of the Grand Rapids Michigan City Rescue Mission which he led for more than 40 years.

He was a leading preacher of the fundamentalist movement in the first four decades of the 20th century. With Trotter it was not always so.

[18 : 53] Trotter's father was a horrible alcoholic and it was not long until Trotter followed him in that lifestyle.

Even when he was a teenager or even earlier. He met a woman and married and they had a number of children.

She obviously didn't do a background but they had several children. She later said she did not realize until their marriage that Trotter was an alcoholic.

He was able to hide that from her. He spent all of his money on alcohol including the money he should have used to feed his children.

children. Now let me just say I have trouble getting through this. I was going to get Mike Dersham to read this but I'm not going to. Both grandfathers and I'm a great grandfather spent all his money on alcohol and not food.

[20 : 04] His first child a little girl died of malnutrition at age four. Literally starved to death in the home.

Neighbors took up a collection and bought her a new dress. First dress she ever owned. And they had the mortician put it on her and they also purchased a casket.

The neighbors did for burial. That night Trotter broke into the funeral home, took the dress off his daughter and sold it on the streets so he could buy one drink.

One drink. Not long after that Trotter stumbled into the Pacific I'm thinking about my granddaughters.

Trotter stumbled in the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago and was radically converted to Christ. He became one of America's great preachers.

[21 : 16] Think God can't do miracles. When he died the pastor that preached his funeral was the great Dr. Harry Ironside of Moody Bible Church.

If there was rest available for Mel Trotter there's a rest available for any of us. Anybody can enter into that rest.

We also have the elements of rest. Hebrews 4 verses 2 and 3. 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.

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he said, as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest, although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

One can make the argument, of course, that salvation is all from God. It is God who elected his children before the universe was created. It is God who wrote their names down in the book of life.

[22 : 36] It is God who draws his children to himself through the cross of Christ. It is Christ Jesus who became the acceptable sacrifice. And what did that do?

It satisfies completely the wrath that God has stored up for those who sin. And that's everybody. we could continue this list until we ran out of paper.

Now, all of this does not mean there's not a human side to salvation. I mentioned this last week through Charles Spurgeon, and that was the great sermon he preached on salvation called God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility.

We are required to believe. We're required to have faith. Same word in the Greek, *pastuo*.

Faith and believe. But even then, we can make a case that that faith that saves us is supplied by God as a grace gift to his children.

[23 : 50] Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Can you imagine the boasting if we got ourselves saved? I have a good friend of mine. I'm not going to mention his name because several of you would know him that are my age. Good guy. Going to see him in heaven. I have no doubt about that. We had a discussion that turned into a debate, but he was challenging what I believed on salvation.

And I said, well, how did you get saved? And he laced this with the personal pronoun I. I did this and then I did that. And I said, when you get to heaven, I said, and you see Jesus, how much credit did you give Jesus for your salvation?

He said, all of it. I said, why? You just spent 30 minutes talking about I did this, I did that, I did that. Jesus ought to thank you. Oh, no, no, that's blasphemous.

[25 : 04] I'll give him all the credit. Well, you need to rethink the use of the pronouns. Another word for faith is trust.

the problem with the ancient Hebrews and the Exodus is that they heard, but they did not trust what God was telling them. They didn't trust.

That is why they did not enter into God's rest, which is a way of saying God's salvation. Even down to our day, there's an important and vital truth that we must come to grips with.

It does no good to hear if we do not believe. Believe the good news. Believe the gospel. Hearing the good news of the gospel must be united by faith.

We must trust what we hear because it's coming from the living God. It's coming from the God through the sacred page of Scripture. That was the failure of the people found in Matthew chapter 7.

[26 : 12] I turn there often. That's just at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7, verse 22 and 23, on that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

that's Jesus talking. Depart from me you workers of lawlessness. These people heard the truth. They understood the truth, but what were they fixing their hope of eternal life on?

Their good works. We prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name. We did many works in your name.

And you hear over and over that personal pronoun we. And as have millions of people around the globe and in many churches, these people were staking their hope for eternal life on a system of works righteousness.

There are entire denominations who teach a works righteousness faith. it's what have you done to get the Lord's attention.

[27 : 47] They were confident that they had done enough human works through self-effort to satisfy the righteous demands of God.

God, I think we could make an argument anyone that's you know tying their rope to that post will receive a greater condemnation.

They will receive a greater condemnation. But Lord, look at all the things I did for you. well, as I suspected, initially I was going to continue with about another 25 to 30 minutes.

But we can't complete our study tonight. And this is the natural break point. I know it's a little early. There's still much to be said. And I intend to complete this study, not the book of Hebrews, this particular study of God's rest next time.

And then we're going to do something that's just going to be gripping. Not because I'm doing it, because it's in the Bible. We're going to get into Hebrews chapter 4, and that is the gateway into the most vitally important study in all the book of Hebrews, and maybe in all the Word of God, we will begin looking at Jesus as our great High Priest.

[29 : 23] And essential. How important is Jesus as our High Priest? Without Jesus as our High Priest, we cannot enter into God's rest.

If we do not have Jesus as our High Priest, and our High Priest, we cannot enter into the presence of God seeking mercy and grace in our time of need.

Can't do it. And when do we have needs? Around the clock. Around the clock.

there's never a time in our sojourn on earth when we are not needful of mercy and grace.

And we obtain that through our High Priest who does a whole lot for us, and I'll give you a hint about one of them, whoever lives to make intercession for us.

[30 : 32] before the fall. Amen.