

## Hebrews 4:11-16

As we jump in today, I want to first start with a correction to my message last week. I had stated God never called the Israelites to send spies into the land before taking it. That is incorrect and wasn't even in my notes. **Num. 13** specifically tells them to go in and spy out the land.

- My mistake did not change the message, but it does prove what I have often said, **if you believe everything I am saying, you are not thinking** (courtesy of Pastor Chuck Smith). **You and I need to check for ourselves what the bible says (Acts 17:11), because even the person with the best intent can get it wrong. As a matter of fact, even the person with the best intent will sometimes get it wrong. But the bible never gets it wrong!** And it's up to each of us to be students of the word (2 Pet. 3:18). That case will be made more clearly today as we finish this chapter, but for a different reason. **So please do forgive me and do know it is my sincere desire to only give you what the bible says.**
- So let's review some of the highlights of the key points we covered last week. **1)** The Old Covenant, delivered to the nation of Israel, provided a day of Sabbath. **2)** The New Covenant in Jesus (to individuals and not a nation) has provided us a Sabbath life (we'll also come back to this today). **3)** Because just as **the work of creation** was finished on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and on the 7<sup>th</sup> God rested (being there was nothing else to do for it to be completely completed), **4)** when Jesus came to perform **the work of our redemption**, when it was finished, there was nothing else for us to do but believe and receive the **rest** He made possible for our souls.
- No works of man can add to the finished work of Jesus. And returning to works to provide your own righteousness will result in neither those works or Jesus providing any benefit to you (Rom. 4:14). So with that, let's continue in what he is saying as we pick back up in **verse 11**.

***Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience*** (that is the disobedience of unbelief [verses 2-3]).

What does he mean about being **diligent** to enter that rest? And what is that **rest**? Because it can almost sound contradictory. But it's not, when you understand what the **rest** is he is speaking of here. **It's the rest that comes, when we receive by faith, what Jesus has done on the cross.** Which, if received, places His righteousness in our account. **Meaning those days in which we tried to earn Gods favor, so we might make it into heaven, are over.** We **rest** from works because God has given us unmerited grace (God's Riches At Christs Expense).

- So why then is there a call to be **diligent** to enter that rest? Because we know there is a war going on to pull you out from under that **rest**. And the way we lose that war is through allowing **unbelief** to begin to creep in. That can happen when we give our mind and beliefs to things, information, education, or the indoctrination of this world. **You are getting input from somewhere all the time**, if you are aware of it or not. In the case of these Jewish believers in Jesus, they were being force fed a diet of an end of hostilities with their families and nation by returning to the Law. **But it can be much more subtle or internal than that.**
- And, as we've already discussed today, it's not enough to let someone else read the bible for you and tell you what it says. Now, we must also acknowledge God has given us leaders for teaching the bible (1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11-12). But those who only listen to what others say about the bible can easily be led into false teaching and apostasy. **You have to be diligent in seeking your own relationship with God. And the foundations of that relationship and conversations are found, initiated, and sustained in your bible.**
- Stay in the word of God to live in a constant state of faith, belief, and rest. Our rest isn't an event, but in a person (Matt. 11:28-30). Stay connected to Him by staying connected to the word of God.

And what (or how far down) is the **fall** spoken of here for those who let themselves move into unbelief? Well, the question about losing one's salvation is often looked into multiple times during a study in this book. So, let's highlight what we have already discussed (based on verses we covered so far and those still to come). **First**, we must remember the group we are hearing about are those of a nation (not individuals) who were under the Old Covenant (which makes me so grateful for the New Covenant). And **2)** the **rest** which we have so far covered concerning them is foremost the rest of God that would come as a result of them entering the promised land- **if they obeyed God.** And this is not a direct picture of entering heaven (although faith in the finished work of Jesus clearly includes eternity with God). **But it's being used by the Holy Spirit here to show a rest from works to try to earn or merit salvation.** And **3)** we know the Old Covenant was conditional, but the new covenant in Jesus is unconditional- **He did everything and we apply faith.** Both initial faith for salvation, and continued faith. **So the arguments (or positions)**

boil down to whether if you do not continue in your trust and faith in Jesus, are you saved or not. And folks, theologians and bible teachers have been battling over this for centuries. And as you can imagine **then comes a question of degrees of faith**. Must you have perfect faith to be saved, and if not, **what percentage is enough?** Then we are back on the scale of works for salvation. And we know that's an impossible approach (Rom. 3:20 & 11:6).

- But we should also go back to the picture the Holy Spirit has provided here, and that is of the generation **1)** miraculously delivered out of Egypt, **2)** who saw Gods works in the wilderness for forty years, **3)** and (as we discussed before) even had times of acts of worship to God. **But in the end, He said of them, they always go astray in their heart (3:10).** Even this creates a tension that I believe God has purposefully placed for us. For example, what is the difference between those who have a pattern of always going astray and those who really have faith in God but who have not arrived at a place of sinlessness (a place no one will get to while in this body upon this earth- and if you think you have, pride is going to be your undoing)?
- Here's the thing, we do not have a black and white answer here. **But the focus is certainly on 1) continuance in the faith, 2) which is made more evident by obedience, 3) which is an act of faith.** So we find that God has left this tension for us. And we know He does nothing by accident.
- So what do we do with all of this? **Be diligent to stay in the faith so there is no need to be concerned about not entering His rest.** Stay in the word of God in a communal way with God. Let Him speak and you listen. Let Him use the word to **1) renew your mind (Rom. 12:2), 2) cultivate your heart (Josh. 1:8), and 3) detect anything in there that is incompatible with spiritual life, so that you can submit it to Him and He will remove it (Psa. 139:23-24).** Don't focus more about the man on the island, or if all dogs go to heaven, **than you do on your submission rest found only in your growing faith in Jesus. Let God be God, and you focus on being His and growing spiritually in Him (Eph. 4:13-15, 1 Pet. 2:2, 2 Pet. 3:18)!**

So, how can being in the word of God help us to continue in **obedience** and in the **faith**? He gives us another piece of the answer now.

*<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

In this study we've been talking about the word of God being **alive** for sometime now, because it is so important to understand. **You and I are not reading an after action report, but are engaging in a current and ongoing conversation with God through the bible.** And there's another stream of life attached to that, and it's that the Holy Spirit of God is living inside of us, if we have received Jesus. **Our God is alive and He is offering us a living relationship,** not a dead and past history lesson!

- And the other component to that is that the word of God is **powerful**. There was a study done between 2009-2012 called "The Power of 4", where over 100,000 people across various countries participated. And what was found was those who read their bibles 1, 2, or even 3 times a week had minimal transformation in their lives. But when they were actively engaged in reading their bibles 4 times a week or more, there was a tipping point where dramatic shifts in **1) spiritual growth, 2) emotional health, 3) moral behavior, 4) and outward faith practices** resulted.
- **Reduced negative behaviors / struggles:** Viewing pornography: ↓ ~59–61%, Getting drunk / alcoholism: ↓ ~57–62%, Sex outside marriage: ↓ ~59%, Gambling: ↓ ~45–74%, Feeling lonely: ↓ ~30%, Anger issues / lashing out: ↓ ~31–32%, Bitterness in relationships / difficulty forgiving: ↓ ~40%, Overeating or other issues: ↓ ~20% in some areas, Overall risk behaviors: Significantly lower odds (e.g., 57% lower for any of several listed habits). **Increased positive behaviors / growth:** Sharing faith / evangelism: ↑ ~200–228% higher odds, Discipling others: ↑ ~230–231% higher odds, Memorizing Scripture: ↑ ~407% higher odds, Giving financially or other proactive faith actions: Significantly higher, overall spiritual vitality, resilience, boldness in faith, and sense of purpose: Much stronger.
- Folks, **the word of God is... powerful.** And when you are diligent to be in it, **it will then be in you.** And it will be cutting through all that is of the old nature in order to bring you into a greater understanding of the spiritual life you have been given, if you have trusted in Jesus.

Please indulge me as I take this a step deeper 😊. When it says it (the word of God) **is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**, it's saying the that when you open your bible to hear from God, **He already knows what you need to hear, and is going to reveal it to you!** It might be a word for **1) healing, 2)**

encouragement, 3) or correction. 4) It might even be about something you don't know about yourself; 5) old wounds that impact how you live today, 6) attitudes that are destructive, 7) lies you have believed, 8) truths you don't believe are true in regard to you.

- But why? Because **He has come that the truth might make you free** (John 8:32). He wants to sever all that old stuff from your new life in Him. **Who else can do that?** Can your therapist? They might be able to help reveal some stuff, 1) but are they even revealing **the right stuff, in the right order, at the right time?** He can and does. 2) Can they heal it? The majority of that work is behavior modification. But apart from spiritual transformation, how long will that last?
- Well, **the Law couldn't provide this kind of transformation either** (Rom. 8:3-4). It could reveal their inability to keep it, but it couldn't cure it (2 Cor. 3:6-18). And what could it do with all the brokenness of our humanity? It provided great instruction for what human behavior towards God and others should be, which can certainly have some effect on spiritual understanding. **But stack that next to a brand new live found in Jesus, and there is no comparison!!!**
- Folks, don't settle for something so significantly lessor that an **active, conversive, transformative relationship with Jesus**. Everything we want is in Him. Our *rest* is in a personal and ongoing relationship with Him. Open the word of God and keep digging in.

*<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. <sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

This is so important. I believe sometimes when we are clearly operating **out** of the will and clear instruction of the word of God, **we pretend He isn't able to see us or isn't watching**. And, as we just discussed, we know He actually sees much further than the outward presentation and actions. He (and only He) sees **the thoughts and intents**. Folks, He sees it all – 100%. There is not some tunnel you can enter to conceal yourself from Him. And that tinfoil hat isn't going to somehow shield you from Him knowing what's going through your mind 😊. You can try to cover it up to everyone else (including yourself- maybe most often from ourselves), but that is a futile effort with God.

- And here is either the greatest part, or the most terrifying piece. Every person who has, or will, ever live (1 Pet. 4:5), will **give an account** to Him for the things done while in this body (2 Cor. 10).
- And 1) if you are letting the word of God search, cleanse, and shape your life, in your relationship with and through Jesus Christ, then that account will lead to **rewards** (after he burns away everything not done for Him [1Cor. 3:12-15]). 2) If you have rejected Jesus, that account will result in eternal separation from God and divine judgement, where you are holding 100% of the tab for every sin you have ever committed against Him. And **all sin is against Him**. 3) **But it's the group who might think they are in between that need to get real here.**
- You can hear him saying here to these Jewish believers, if you retreat from faith and go back to the Law, then what was covered in grace is now on your tab again.

So now he points them to the only obvious win here and **it's to continue to hold fast to their confession of faith placed in the finished work of Jesus**. And he does so in highlighting a reality they were keenly aware of. These Jewish followers of Jesus held a strong historical account of **the high priests of the Levitical system**. And 1) some were so sincere in their service, 2) while others were not so faithful to the position. 3) And around 175-171 BC (under Antiochus), the position of High Priest was sold to those who were not of the lineage God had set over this high honor and responsibility (Particularly Menelaus who was thought to be a Benjamite).

- And even when the person serving as the high priest was a sincere man before God, **just like us, he had to deal with the reality that he was a sinner who needed God to save him**. So when it came to the people knowing they had to give an account before God, **the high priest was in the same position**.
- But in Jesus being our **great High Priest**, 1) not only is He perfect in His **person** (for He is the Son of God, making Him equal with God), 2) He is perfect in **performance** (being He has never sinned or failed us), 3) He is also perfect in **position** to advocate for us because when He ascended, He is seated at the right hand of God to forever make intercession for us. And just like real estate, location truly matters 😊.
- In light of who Jesus is (if you really believe and have placed your faith in who He says He is), to whom else would you pledge your allegiance, or put your faith in?

I don't know about you, but if I was in their position when all this was brought up to them, and I remembered the difference between the high priests taken from among men, compared to Jesus as their Great High Priest, **I wouldn't have needed anything more to snap out of my delusion.** It's a no-brainer.

- But is there something or someone you are putting your faith and eternal future in, on equal or great position than Jesus? If so, let this be your wake-up call. That's simply delusional thinking.

*<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

This is one of those memory verses that so many followers of Jesus return to, or at least quote on a regular basis, as we all well should. Because not only does Jesus have the power and position to advocate for us (or continue to advocate for us), **He has the desire and sympathy to do so.** He knows all the trials, temptations, sorrows, pressures, and difficulties we face. Not just intellectually, but experientially.

- Jesus knows and is sympathetic to *our weaknesses* (Psa. 103:13-14).
- I'm certainly not trying to imply the high priests taken from among men were never sympathetic to the common weaknesses both they and we experience in this life. Just like pastors today, there are many who sincerely love those God has placed under their care. Yet there has never been a priest of the Levitical system or a pastor of a church who has not fallen short of the glory of God. But Jesus (as we have discussed) is perfect in performance, and therefore positionally able to dispense the *mercy and grace* we need to deal with our inability to perform perfectly.
- If that doesn't humble you, you might have missed why we have been invited to boldly enter His throne room. Which is to find mercy and grace to help in time of need. I say this because it is apparent that some have decided what he means is you and I are to *boldly* enter the throne room as though we are the advisor to the King of Kings, and therefore come to make demands and tell Him what He is going to do. And that is just as ridiculous as it sounds.

Folks, how incredible is it that God, who has seen and knows everything we have ever thought, said, or spoken, would invite us to be *anywhere* He is? Yet, **through faith in Jesus, we are the children of God.** And **1)** He is the perfect Father. **2)** He is perfect in righteousness. **3)** And He is perfect in mercy and grace. He knows our frailty, and He therefore sent Jesus to make a way for us to be reconciled to Himself. And it wasn't just a reconciliation to the point of tolerating us. No, **He wants us to come to Him as children so that we might grow up under His care and guidance.**

- **1)** Who else can love u like that? **2)** Who or what else can transform us like He can? **3)** Who else has and can continue to provide the *rest* He can? No one but Him. So go nowhere else than to Him.
- Let Him remove those things which you should have surrendered when you first came to Him, **but were either unaware of, or have picked up again.** Let Him do the cutting away so that you can be free. **He wants to do that for you.**
- Continue to be *diligent* in opening the word of God, that He might do all of this and more. **Don't pull back, press in.**