

God Has Spoken
“Standing at the Point of Opportunity”

C. S. Lewis—“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation for that is that I was made for another world.” (Mere Christianity)

Another World

- Believers rarely speak about it
- Not often the subject of sermons
- Infrequently the focus of our thoughts

(ILL)—Children’s Church song:

*“Gonna go to Heaven, can’t wait!
Gonna see Jesus, can’t wait!
And I know I won’t be late, cause I’m going to Heaven and I can’t wait!
I’m going to Heaven and I... can’t wait!”*

- Hebrews makes it clear that C.S. Lewis was right!
- We WERE made for another world!

For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:10 NKJV

But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:16 NKJV

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. 25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. Hebrews 12:22-25 NKJV

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Hebrews 12:28 NKJV

The Metaphor for Heaven—Rest

- “Rest” or “rested” appears nine times in this section.
- It is seen as the promised privilege awaiting God’s people, but a privilege that can be lost or forfeited.

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. Hebrews 3:18-4:1 NKJV

- After describing in Chapter 3 how Israel failed to enter Canaan because of unbelief, he wants believers not to make the same mistake.
- They made it to the border of Canaan, their land of promise, but failed to enter because they refused to trust God.
- It was a tragedy of epic proportion.
- Don’t “come short” of your inheritance.
- The pressure was mounting, the possible persecution was great, and fear was a potential detraction from the possession of Heaven.
- Standing at the point of opportunity—DON’T COME SHORT!
- Us today

Three areas of Truth

I. The Continuity that we as the People of God Share with the Wilderness Generation (4:1-3a)

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" Hebrews 4:1-3a NKJV

- A. Having seen the horrible fate of the wilderness generation, the Hebrew readers are exhorted to “fear” lest any of them come short of it.
 1. Fear=great care and caution
 2. This rest is still available to them (remains—is remaining, is standing)
 3. Therefore, its loss is also still a possibility

B. Both the wilderness generation and the 1st Century believer (and us) have the same promise—Implications

- a. There is a window of opportunity
- b. The promise can be missed or forfeited
- c. The wilderness generation came all the way to the border of the promised land and “fell short”
- d. The opposite of falling short is persevering

NOTE: They are being called to this!

C. Both had the Gospel (good news) provided to them

1. Mt. Sinai promised good news
2. But they did not heed

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. Hebrews 4:2 NIV

3. Didn't join with Joshua/Caleb
4. We too have this great salvation (God spoken in his Son)

IMPORTANT: Their failure was more than just a lack of mental ascent—the failure of forsaking the community of faith.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25 NKJV

D. Their journey is over—ours continues

For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said. Hebrews 4:3a NKJV

“Do enter”— “are entering”—a journey

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. Hebrews 4:1 NKJV

II. The Nature of the Rest we are Currently Pursuing (4:3b-11)

A. This rest that we pursue is God's own place of rest

There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Hebrews 4:9-10 NKJV

1. God entered when His works ceased
2. We enter only after completing our works or earthly struggle (v. 10)

B. The author's argument is five-fold

1. His oath disallowed the wilderness generation to enter

And again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." Hebrews 4:5 NKJV

NOTE: (Their failure)

So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Psalms 95:11 NKJV

Then the Lord said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? Numbers 14:11 NKJV

I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." 13 And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, 14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, are among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 16 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' 17 And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 18 'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' 19 Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." 20 Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; 21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord — 22 because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, 23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. 24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. Numbers 14:12-24 NKJV

2. This rest is eternal rest prepared since creation

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For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works. Hebrews 4:4 NKJV

— Intends for people to join Him

3. Availability of rest is confirmed by the invitation to heed His Word

Again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:7 NKJV

4. This rest was clearly more than earthly Canaan

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. Hebrews 4:8 NKJV

NOTE: David (Psalm 95) was long after Joshua

5. Be diligent to enter that rest

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:11 NKJV

Don't fail as they tragically did!

III. The Standard by which we are Measured as we Pursue this Rest (4:12, 13)

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. 13 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. Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV

A. The Word of God

1. Once spoken by the prophets
2. Now revealed in His Son

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. Hebrews 1:1-2a NKJV

B. Living, powerful, sharp and piercing

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NOTE: Language meant to give us a feeling of the sharp/penetrating quality of God's Word

- C. Exposes human hearts (thoughts/intentions of the heart)
- D. Its indictment is inescapable
 - 1. All things naked—gumnos—outward trappings and disguises that God strips away
 - 2. Open to the eyes of Him (compelled to meet His eyes)—trachelizo (tra-kay-lee-zo)

NOTE: Throat comes from there

- a. Wrestler's word—seize opponent by the throat so he could not move—must see Him face to face
- b. Flaying animals that are hung up (skin taken off-exposed)
- c. Dagger under the chin of prisoner—could not bow head in shame—had to look at judge

Conclusion:

- 1. Verse 13 of Chapter 4 brings to a conclusion this first section.
- 2. A wavering church community in Rome is being challenged by the author to pursue Christ passionately and not to shrink back.
- 3. Persecution may come, being a believer may be dangerous—but His way is the only way.
- 4. God has spoken through His Son (1:1) and His Word alone is the standard by which we will be judged.
- 5. Call not to be like the wilderness generation who stood on the brink of their promise and turned back.
- 6. Don't turn back and miss the promise of eternal rest. (Some think author too harsh)

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Hebrews 10:26 NKJV

- 7. In this context—Must be all in—if you don't serve Him now—you won't when persecution comes.

8. Today—hear His voice.

- a. Let His Word penetrate your heart.
- b. Pursue His eternal rest.
- c. Don't miss out—unbelief/bitterness
- d. As you stand at the Point of Opportunity

Remember:

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation for that is that I was made for another world.” C.S. Lewis—Mere Christianity