

# The Promised Rest

△ Hebrews 4:1-13

## Background

Before we can understand this passage fully, we need to understand the context in Scripture

There are two sections in this reading

Ch 4:1-11 builds upon Ch 4:7-16

Which Val preached on last week

Ch 4:12-13 seems to be a different topic, as it talks about the authority of God's Word

We'll touch upon that at the end

## Stepping stones

In order to understand 4:1-11, we need to look briefly back at Ch3, especially v7b-11

This is a reference to Psalm 95

With the key phrases of

Hardening of hearts

and They will not enter my rest

The author refers to the story of the Israelites refusing to go into

## the Israelites refusing to go into the promised land

### Numbers 13-14

Where God has led the people of Israel to the promised land

Sending spies, which incl Joshua and Caleb

Spies reported that the land was good, but the inhabitants are fearful

And it would be too dangerous to go in

Except Joshua and Caleb, who said that they should trust God

He will give them the land

And deal with the fearful inhabitants

But the Israelites rebelled against God and refused to enter the Promised Land

So God ordered the people to wander through the desert for 40 years, until the generation that had not trusted God had passed away

And 40 years later, Joshua leads the people of Israel into the Promised Land

## Going into their rest

There is another OT reference we need to look at: Deut 12:8-9

<sup>8</sup> You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit, <sup>9</sup> since you have not yet reached

the **resting place** and the inheritance  
the Lord your God is giving you. <sup>10</sup> But  
you will cross the Jordan and settle in  
the land the Lord your God is giving  
you as an inheritance, and **he will give  
you rest** from all your enemies around  
you so that you will live in safety

^ Deut 12:8-9

Septuagint "resting place" = "rest"

So here the Lord relates the Promised  
Land with resting place or rest

And this is phrase is then used in Ps  
95:1

Therefore in my anger I swore, 'They shall  
not enter my rest'

Bringing Ps 95, Num 13-14 and Deut 12  
together

As in my anger I swore, They shall not  
enter my rest, it the Promised Land

## The Sabbath

Now that we understand the  
reference to the Rest, going all the  
way via Ps 95 to Numbers 13-14

The author makes another leap in  
understanding - this time about  
the concept of the Sabbath

The Sabbath is the day in the week,  
that the Lord had given to the Jewish  
people as a day of rest

But the Author states that the Sabbath  
- or rest is not only a day in the week

But that this is also a place or a state,  
where we live in harmony with God

And that this Sabbath and Rest are one  
and the same thing

God has made this at the same time as  
Creation

His works were finished at the foundation of  
the world

^ v3c

For somewhere he has spoken about the  
seventh day in these words: "On the  
seventh day God rested from all his works.

^ 4

So then a sabbath rest still remains for the  
people of God

So to us we could translate this  
Sabbath rest as Eternal Life, or  
Heaven, or the Promised Land

Which is what Jesus has promised us  
and for which he died, so that we can  
all have eternal life

But the Author is not as specific as that

For him it is the full relationship with the  
Father, the Son and the Spirit

For him Paradise is not a place, but a  
state of living in full harmony with God

And we can enter that place today!

## The Exhortation

Take care you do not fail to reach this state of Rest

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

<sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

These two readings bracket this whole section

The author indicates that the readers, e.g. we, have a choice

We should be careful not to fall short of entering this rest

And we should make every effort to enter that rest

All the logic in between is about the Israelites refusing to enter the rest and the Sabbath

It is an example of how we should not respond to the Gospel

The people in Exodus did not believe that God would lead them into the Promised Land

And they refused to obey God

Therefore that generation never saw  
the Promised Land

## And now we have the same choice

The author urges his readers to  
continue to have faith in Jesus and his  
Gospel

For him this is not a one time event that you  
believe in Jesus Christ

It is an ongoing live-choice to continue to  
have faith in Jesus

But it also means that in response to the  
saving grace of Jesus Christ

We do our utmost to live according to his  
will and be obedient to him!

As we are in danger of missing the  
mark and therefore miss the going into  
the rest

## The race

Paul often refers to the Christian faith,  
as something he has to work hard at in  
order to win - win salvation?

Here the author of Hebrews indicates  
the same

We need to continue to believe in  
Jesus saving grace

And like the Israelites that has to have  
an effect in our lives

They believed in God

But they rebelled against what God wanted

them to do

And therefore they missed the Promised Land

## The Challenge therefore remains

We demonstrate our faith to God by  
showing obedience to God

In everything we do

## The Word of God

The Author ends this section with  
a description of the Word of God

There are two ways we could  
interpret the Word of God

As Scripture

And as the actual words that God  
speaks / has spoken

For the author there is no difference

In v7 we already read: Therefore, **as the Holy Spirit says**,

And then he quotes Ps 95:7b-11

First of all, this is a Psalm of David, but for  
Hebrews the author is the Holy Spirit

Secondly, Ps 95 was written many centuries  
before Hebrews was written, and still the  
author writes: The Holy Spirit **says**.

**In present tense, not past tense**

In effect in the New Testament  
Christian mind there is no  
difference between God and the  
Word of God

And now he eludes not only the importance, but also the power of the Word of God

Living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword

It is precise

Piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow

It is discerning

**both physical and spiritual things in our being**

Judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart

The Word of God sees through what we present to what we really believe, think, do and are

No one is hidden from the Word of God

and when we have to give an account of our lives to God, everything that we have thought, desired, felt is all visible to him

This is the reality of our God

He sees who we really are, even better than we can see ourselves

How then can be saved?

Hebrews argument is not finished!

The next section will be about our new High Priest Jesus Christ

So that instead of paying for our own wrongs, he has paid the price

But that is next week

Also we can use Scripture to examine our own thoughts, motivations and behaviour

Are we in line with what the Word of God says?

## The promised rest

What can we take from this passage then?

It is a clear challenge to the readers and to us

Are we taking our faith in Jesus Christ serious?

Are we fully committed to believe in him

Not only for our salvation

But for every aspect in our lives

But there is a promised rest for us all!

And we can make it to that rest

By believing in the one who saved us

By believing and committing ourselves to live our lives according to his will

How do we know what his will for us is?

Read your bibles!

It is the current Word of the Living God

And it will help us to live a life  
honouring Him

Amen