

Sermon Transcript
08.03.2025
Hebrews 4:1-11

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- Good morning! Please open to Hebrews 4. We'll be considering vss. 1-11 this morning.
- As we begin, I want you to think of your fears. Let's see what we're scared of. So be honest, I'm going to mention a few common fears and if you struggle with that phobia, raise your hand.
- Let's start with some of the most common:
 - Arachnophobia: fear of spiders
 - Ophidiophobia: snakes
 - Glossophobia: public speaking
 - Thanatophobia: fear of Thanos...not really, fear of Thanatos which is Greek for death
 - Claustrophobia: enclosed spaces
 - Acrophobia: heights
 - Aerophobia: flying
 - Trypanophobia: needles or injections
 - Fear itself: any fans of FDR out there. | Phobophobia: fear of developing a phobia.
- Okay. Those are all pretty common and at least somewhat rational, but now I'm going to mention a few sillier ones. You're welcome to raise your hand if you suffer from these, but since I'm kinda making fun of you, no pressure.
 - Lachanophobia: vegetables
 - Omphalophobia: belly buttons
 - Koumpounophobia: buttons in general (koom-poo-noh)
 - Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia: (hip-po-po-to-mon-stro-ses-kwiped-a-li-o) long words
 - Globophobia: (glo-buh) balloons (my dog has that)
 - Eisoptrophobia: (eye-sop-troh) mirrors (vampires)
- When it comes to fear. There are obviously both rational and irrational fears. There are things we should fear and things we shouldn't. We can't just naively say that all fear is bad or all fear is good. It makes sense to have a certain fear of danger. God has given fear as an instinctual response to a post-fall world so that we might fight or flee toward refuge.
- If you have no fear in any sense, then you'll end up doing something brash and foolish.
- So fear can be good. But some fears are irrational. That's why we say that someone has a disorder if they're afraid of mirrors or social situations or vegetables or the color yellow. There are certain things we should fear and certain things we shouldn't.

- And so we take that and apply that principle to the witness of Scripture.
- On one hand, we see that Scripture commands us to not fear. Do not fear is a constant refrain of the OT. And in the NT, Christ regularly employs the same language and the apostle John tells us that there is no fear in love and that perfect love drives out fear.
- That's true. There is a type of fear that the gospel should drive out. And yet, the Bible also commands fear. God demands that we fear Him. Just as often as we see the prohibition of fear, we see it prescribed in the sense that we are to fear the LORD God. In fact, its the fact that we ARE to fear that LORD that justifies the fact that we ARE NOT to fear otherwise.
- So its far too simplistic to say fear is bad or fear is good. As we'll see in our passage today, fear is commanded. If you don't fear, then you don't obey.
- God commands that we fear falling short of the promises of His promises. So let's pray and we'll dive in.
- Self, others, me

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. (Hebrews 4:1)

- If you've been with us for the past few months, you've heard us talk about the overarching context of the book well over a dozen times.
- The first century audience is facing persecution and are thus tempted to give up and give in, to leave the substance of Christianity and go back to the shadows of OT Judaism, to trade the superiority of the new covenant fulfilled in Christ for the lesser and weaker previous covenants.
- Christ is better is the theme of the book. Better than the angels in chapter 1 and 2. Better than Moses in chapter 3. And better than Joshua as we'll see in today's passage.
- Our text this morning picks up right where we left off last week as we can see from the word therefore. Chapter 3 ended by reminding us that Israel on the cusp of the promised land was unable to enter because of unbelief.
- And so in light of that, we too need to fear lest that same fate befall us.
- Notice the command. Let us fear. Some translations like the NIV render this be careful or take care, but I think that's a bit too anemic. In Greek the verb is phobeo, which, as you might guess, is the same root word that gives us the English phobia.
- There is some overlap between taking care and being fearful, but I think that the idea of fear carries a more severe responsibility.
- If my son is emptying the dishwasher, I tell him to be careful with the plates, but if one breaks, its not the end of the world. But if I'm teaching him gun safety, I don't just want him to be careful, I want him have a healthy fear and reverence of the gun because the consequences are so severe.
- I think that gravity and severity is what the author is suggesting here. Remember the image we talked about last time of Israel's dead bodies strewn about the wilderness. As we've mentioned a number of times, the greater promises of the new covenant carry a greater responsibility.

- If those who rejected the Mosaic Covenant were punished severely, how much more severe will be the punishment for rejecting Christ?
- Remember how chapter 2 began:
 - *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?... (Hebrews 2:1–3)*
- And when we think about fear, we should think about what response fear produces. We're all familiar with the idea of a deer caught in the headlights. There is a type of fear that paralyzes. That's not the type of fear that it commended. Or, think of Adam and Eve in the garden. Their fear causes them to move, but that movement was away from God. They hid in their fear.
- That's not the type of fear that is commanded here. It doesn't paralyze us or drive us away, it compels and draws us in.
- As we'll read in vs. 16, as a consequence of this type of fear
 - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*
- This fear that is commended doesn't lead us to flee or hide, but rather beckons us to come.
- As Calvin says:
 - "the fear which is here recommended is not that which shakes the confidence of faith, but such as fills us with such concern that we grow not torpid with indifference." (John Calvin)
 - Torpid, btw, means lethargic, apathetic, or sluggish.
 - Or, as Luther noted, there's a categorical difference between servile fear and filial fear. The servant fears the master's whip and the son fears the father's belt, but the fear is different. One is rooted in anxiety, the other in love and trust.
- As was said of Aslan, the lion is good, but not safe. The same can be said of God.
- Think of how they always you shouldn't don't run from lions or tiger or bears. Oh my. Running from them only triggers their predatory response. Well, in a similar way, running from God is the most dangerous thing we can do.
- Consider Jonah's story. He runs and ends up in the midst of the sea and the belly of the fish and even after all of that, he still has to go to the very place he tried to avoid. Running from God is never wise or good. If your so-called fear of the Lord leads you away from the gospel, away from community, away from grace, away from confession, then it isn't actually new covenant fear.
- So what's your response when you sin? Do you run from or toward God? You can tell quite a bit about someone's grasp of the gospel by how they respond to their sin, whether it leads them toward or away from grace.
- We see a bit of this distinction in Proverbs 28:14 which says:
 - *Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity. (Proverbs 28:14)*

- Notice how fearing the Lord is contrasted with hardening the heart which corresponds to the language of hardening we've seen in Hebrews 3.
- So there is a good gospel fear that leads us to confession, to community, to worship, to faith, to repentance, and so forth.
- And here in Hebrews, the fear is that any of us should fail to reach God's rest.
- Rest will be a huge theme in this chapter so let's talk about that.
- Rest is one of those words like peace or shalom in Scripture that are much bigger than their English counterparts. When we think about peace, we generally think about the absence of war, but shalom in biblical terminology is much bigger and broader than that. It involves harmony and prosperity and flourishing.
- Likewise with rest. Its much more holistic in Scripture. Rest is a metaphor we see throughout Scripture for the all-inclusive entirety of God's gift of salvation. Its both a state and a place. Its a state in that it symbolizes man's fellowship with God. As Augustine writes in his Confessions:
 - "Because you have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee." (Augustine, Confessions)
 - So the good news promises rest to the poor, hungry and afflicted. Or, as Christ calls out,
 - *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* (Matthew 11:28–30)
- So rest is a state of being, but its also a location. Like a base in baseball or home in a game of tag or your own bed, so there are places in scripture that are said to represent rest. The temple for example, was identified as God's resting place. And the promised land is portrayed as rest in the Exodus account.
- And that imagery continues on even in Hebrews. Consider how the author portrays our ultimate rest, our eschatological rest: in chapter 11, he speaks of the city that has foundations and a heavenly homeland. In chapter 12 he references the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God and the kingdom that cannot be shaken. In chapter 13, its the city to come.
- So there is a sense in which rest is a state that we enter, but also a location to which we journey.
- And so we'll see an already, but not yet dimension to rest as we move through the book. There is a sense in which we already have rest in Christ, but another sense in which we're still waiting for God's eternal rest to come to us.
- And the reason we are talking about rest is because of the quotation of Psalm 95 which we saw back in chapter 3 which ended by saying "as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest."
- So rest becomes a metaphor for all of God's promises. We'll see that developed further as we move through the passage.
- One more note. Notice the shift from first person let us and second person you. I think this is another little hint to the corporate responsibility. He isn't merely saying, watch

yourself...but also watch each other similar to what we read in 3:13 about our responsibility to look out for each other, there is this communal dimension to the application of the text that permeates the book.

- The ethic of Hebrews isn't just you do you and I'll do me, but rather, we are to watch each other's backs knowing that the enemy is a prowling lion looking for someone to devour, and its typically the one who wanders from the herd.
- I have a responsibility to make sure you don't falter and fall along the way and you have that responsibility toward me. That's one of the tragedies of our modern consumeristic culture where people so quickly abandon their community for the sake of preferences and opinions. The presupposition we see throughout Scripture is that community is rich and thick and deep and meaningful. There is no true life and joy to be found on the fringes.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 2.

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 4:2)

- Here we see the analogy between Israel and the church and to make the analogy, the author plays with the idea of good news. In Greek, this is the same root as in the word for gospel.
- Depending on the context, the word gospel can have a very broad or more technical meaning. At times, the word gospel is just the general word for all of God's redemptive work. In that sense the gospel is the kingdom and the kingdom is the gospel. At other times, the word applies in a more specific sense to the particular events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- And the author is playing on the flexibility of the word here. There is a sense in which Israel had the gospel preached to them. We see that idea in places like Galatians 3:8 which says:
 - *the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."* (Galatians 3:8)
 - Gospel in this OT sense is a shorthand way of talking more generally about the grace and promises of God.
- Here in context, the good news preached to Israel was probably the good report brought by Joshua and Caleb. We read about it in Numbers 14:7-8 where they tear their clothes and cry out:
 - *...The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.* (Numbers 14:7-8)
- But the vast majority of Israel didn't believe this gospel. Why not? Well, because there was always a spiritual Israel which was distinct from physical Israel. All physical Israel saw the works and heard the words of God, but not all Israel had eyes to see and ears to hear because that takes a particular work of grace.

- All Israel heard in one sense, but didn't hear in another sense because, as Christ says, only His sheep actually hear His voice.
- In other words, there is a type of hearing that is only possible with faith. All of Israel heard God's promises, but hearing alone didn't benefit them because the vast majority wasn't united to Joshua and Caleb by a common faith.
- That word united is interesting in that the Greek only occurs one other time in the NT and that's 1 Corinthians 12 where it talks about God composing the body with multiple members. So, again, there is a corporate communal intent in view. God's goal isn't just to save a person, but to create a people, a congregation, an assembly of children, united to Christ and thus to each other.
- As Joshua and Caleb implored the rest of the congregation of Israel to repent and believe, so we have a responsibility to exhort one another to live in light of the gospel and to threaten and warn and encourage when others are falling short in that regard. That's not judgmentalism, that's love, that's grace.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 3.

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,' " although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:3)

- In vs 2 we saw that unbelief was ultimately what kept Israel out of the promised land. And, as we talked about last week, Caleb and Joshua were commended for faith. Faith was the condition for entering the promised land.
- And the same principle extends to the new covenant. The author writes, we who have believed enter that rest. We're seeing here an interesting sort of already, but not yet aspect to God's rest. Remember that rest is a metaphor for the entirety of God's redemptive work. So, there is a sense in which we have entered that rest...we've been justified...there is a sense in which we are entering that rest...we're being sanctified...& a sense in which we will enter...we will be glorified.
- So there is an already, but not yet nature to the promised rest.
- Then the author quotes Psalm 95. I think he does so in order to show that God's rest was prepared and waiting for Israel.
- Imagine showing up to check-in to a hotel and they say, you're room isn't quite ready yet so you have to wander around the lobby or grab a bite to eat in the restaurant for a bit. Well, that wasn't why Israel had to wander. It wasn't that the land wasn't prepared, it was that the people weren't prepared. It wasn't that the Canaanites were too big or that the task was too difficult. The problem wasn't the rest or the land, but rather disbelief.
- And the author sees a connection between the readiness of the land and the rest of creation.
- Notice, that his works were finished from the foundation of the world. The author is here alluding to Genesis, which we'll see again in the next verse. And in Genesis 1, we see a distinct pattern. Look at Genesis 1:5

- *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Genesis 1:5)*
- *And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. (Genesis 1:8)*
- *And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. (Genesis 1:13)*
- We see the same pattern with the 4th day (19), 5th (23), 6th (31), but of the 7th look at what it says:
 - *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1-3)*
- Notice that there is no reference to evening and morning. The idea is kinda that the seventh day is a perpetual rest. The 7th day continues in perpetuity. There's a sense in which that rest continues. Now, I said that there is a sense in which that is true, but that doesn't mean that God is not working in any sense at all. Look at John 5
 - *But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17)*
- So God is still working in upholding the universe that He made and in accomplishing redemption and so forth, but the particular distinct work of creation is complete. That's the idea. That's the sense in which His works have been finished since the foundation of the world.
- We'll see a similar sort of distinction when it comes to the Son. Elsewhere we'll see a huge emphasis on the fact that the Son sat down at the right hand of the Father signifying that His work is done and yet we know that doesn't mean that He just isn't doing anything because we've already seen that He is upholding the universe by the word of His power according to chapter 1. His work of accomplishing atonement is complete and so He rests in that sense, though He is working in another sense. Likewise, in Genesis, God's work of creation is complete though He is working in other senses.
- You'll notice throughout this sermon that I'm saying 'in a sense' quite a bit. That isn't me trying to be obtuse or ambiguous. Rather, that's the nature of the theological task. Good theology attempts to take seriously every aspect and nuance of the text and allow it to speak for itself rather than smoothing out the rough edges and offering up half-truths and platitudes.
- There is a sense in which we fear and a sense in which we don't. There is a sense in which God rests and a sense in which He doesn't. There is a sense in which we work and a sense in which we rest. There is a sense in which we are already saved and a sense in which we will be saved.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 4-5.

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, “They shall not enter my rest.” (Hebrews 4:4–5)

- Last week, I made an offhand comment about a philosopher once saying, “don’t stop believing.” I didn’t specify that the philosopher was Steve Perry, but many of you probably got the reference.
- That’s kinda what the author does here. He doesn’t say, as it says in Genesis. He says, God has somewhere spoken. That’s a general trend we’ll see through Hebrews. He expects his audience to get the reference. Notice also, the implication of inspiration. God is the one who is speaking in Scripture. Whatever Scripture says, God says.
- And what the author is doing here is a form of Jewish interpretation called gezerah shawah which is a verbal analogy. According to this principle, it’s legitimate to associate texts of Scripture that use similar wording. Kinda like a modern concordance will list passages with verbal parallels to draw your attention to a similar passage.
- The author is basically saying that the shared language of rest that we see in Genesis and in Psalm 95 should cause us to see an analogy between the two, especially when we read the phrase my rest. They shall not enter my rest. That leads the author to think most naturally of the place in Scripture where God’s rest is expounded.
- Gezerah shawah means the author is kinda saying...speaking of rest.
- So there is a sense in which the author sees God’s rest as something that God both enjoys in that He has rested from His work and that He provides in that He beckons us to that rest.
- In fact, we could say that our chief end is to rest in God.
- I know that the confession says that man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever and that’s true, but look at how Calvin expositors our chief good:
 - “whatever the philosophers may have ever said of the chief good, it was nothing but cold and vain, for they confined man to himself, while it is necessary for us to go out of ourselves to find happiness. The chief good of man is nothing else but union with God.” (Calvin)
- Or, as Augustine has said, “our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.” (Augustine)
- And again, the idea was that the rest was ready. The land was ready. Which made the wilderness generation’s failure to enter all the more irrational because all sin is irrational, just as it would be irrational for the Hebrews to fall away from the living God and return to the empty rituals of the old covenant or just as it was irrational to carve an idol from wood and then bow down to it or its irrational to fear belly buttons or not fear the living God.
- Let’s keep going. Vss. 6-7.

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,

“Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:6–7)

- What the author is doing here is drawing an implication from Psalm 95 that moves both backward and forward.
- Remember what we said about the importance of intertextuality. If you want to understand Hebrews 3 and 4, you need to understand Psalm 95 and if you want to understand Psalm 95, you need to understand the events of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- When did God swear in His wrath that Israel would not enter His rest?
- Well, that occurred in the days of Moses and Joshua and Caleb. Depending on the way you date those books, sometime in the 15th to 13th century BC.
- But what year did David write Psalm 95? That was 300-500 years later, around 1000 BC.
- Why is that important? Because David takes the warning given to his ancestors & applies it to his own generation. That’s the implication of the word today. Today, if you hear His voice.
- In other words, God is perpetually speaking in His word which means He is still speaking and there is still a sense in which there is an opportunity to enter God’s rest. God’s rest now understood to not merely refer to the promised land, which David and His people inhabited, but rather to a state of communion with God, dwelling with God, by grace through faith.
- And if that same warning & exhortation applied in David’s day, Hebrews says that it applies to us as well. In other words, today is still today. The exodus generation lived in a today, David’s generation lived in a today, the first century Hebrews lived in a today, & we live in a today.
- Some of the details of the way that the text applies change. Entering God’s rest had some connotations for the wilderness generation that it doesn’t necessarily have for us today, but it’s the similarities that are in view. God is still speaking, the rest is still available, the warning of wrath is still threatening, and disobedience is still disbelief.
- In other words, the events in the Old Testament are not just historically interesting, but are of utmost importance for us to understand. They provide lessons for us, examples for us, they function as morals.
- God could simply tell us to believe. He could simply give us propositional truth about His rest, but He also gives us stories which arouse our imaginations and affections. As we talked about last week, a picture is worth a thousand words. So to describe the danger of apostasy, the author paints a picture of corpses in the wilderness to engage not only our minds, but our hearts as well to awaken us to the futility and folly of unbelief and to the need to fear.
- The point is that every single generation has faced a today in which the choice is whether or not to believe God’s promise & to therefore obey or whether to rebel in disbelief & disobedience.
- What exactly God commands has changed and the exact content of our faith has been clarified, but the underlying principle is the exact same.

- And notice that the opportunity still remains. He writes, it remains for some to enter it. As long as it remains today, there is opportunity to enter the rest. One day the gates of the city will be closed. One day the judgment will commence. One day Christ will return and it will be too late. So today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 8-10.

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (Hebrews 4:8-10)

- When I was in high school, I studied Spanish for cuatro anos. And my teacher was named Mrs. Large. She was, by translation, senora grande which doesn't sound like the kinda name most women would choose for their students to call her, but that's what she preferred to keep it real. To that end, she also assigned each kid a Spanish name. So a guy named Paul was Pablo. Charles was Carlos. Andrew was Andres. As you can imagine there was no Spanish equivalent to Geoff so she called me jefe which I loved for reasons that Spanish speakers will understand.
- I mention that because Joshua and Jesus are the same name. Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew Joshua. Well, technically, Jesus is the English version of the Greek while Joshua is the English version of the Hebrew. Regardless, its important to understand that in vs. 8, the name Joshua is spelled the exact same as Jesus. In Greek, iesous. There is no difference between the name you read in vs. 8 & the name you read when referring to Jesus.
- And the author is playing on that. Remember, what did Joshua do? He led the people into the promised land. He was the pioneer. And we've talked about pioneers before back in 2:10
 - *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10)*
- As we said then, the word founder could be translated as pioneer. One who goes before, as Lewis and Clarke or Davy Crockett or something.
- Joshua led the people into the promised land and that is analogous to Yeshua leading His people to rest. As Jesus is the true and better David and the true and better Adam and the true and better Moses, so He is the true and better Joshua.
- Remember the idea of typology that we've talked about a number of times. A type is a God-ordained analogy between persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament and the work of the new covenant. And with the fulfillment of the type, there is typological expansion. So the promised land is a type for God's salvation, but that salvation will cover not just a tiny sliver of land in the middle east, but the promise has expanded to encompass the entire earth.
- So, Jesus is like Moses, but better. Like the temple, but better. Like the Passover lamb, but better. And here he is like Joshua, but better.
- One way that He is better is that He gives better rest, actual eternal rest.

- Notice that the author implies that Joshua didn't give them rest. Now, this is where we need to fight against our tendency to want to read texts in isolation and to smooth out any tension in the text because the Bible says that the people did in fact receive rest.
 - *And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. (Joshua 21:44)*
 - *And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. (Joshua 22:4)*
- So you see that at least in the book of Joshua, there is a sense in which Israel had rest. So what does the author of Hebrew mean by saying that Joshua didn't give them rest?
- Well, think back to Joshua. Did Israel completely drive out the enemies? No. We talked a lot about that when we preached through Judges last year.
- Or as Hebrews 11 will say
 - *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13–16)*
- There is a sense in which the fathers received the things promised and another sense in which they didn't. For example, Abraham lived long enough to see an offspring of promise in Isaac, but not long enough to see the true promised offspring who is Christ.
- So this isn't a contradiction. When we see these tensions in the text, it's lazy and intellectually dishonest to cry contradiction. In reality, the tension helps us better understand the underlying reality which is that the same way that Israel failed to enter God's rest because of unbelief in the days of Moses, so they failed to capitalize on that rest in the days of Joshua because of unbelief. As scholar Bruce Waltke says:
 - [the end of Joshua] "asserts both a successful ending to subduing the land and the beginning of Israel's failed history to retain it." (Bruce Waltke)
- In other words, it's a both/and. There was a sense in which they had entered into the rest and another sense in which they hadn't. God had fulfilled His promise, but there were deeper promises that remained.
- And we might draw a parallel to our own experience as well. There is a sense in which we are saved and a sense in which we are being saved. There is a sense in which we can rest and a sense in which we must strive as we'll read in vs. 11.
- But the point that the author is getting at is that in whatever sense God had fulfilled His promises to Israel, those promises weren't fully exhausted.
- The rest given in the days of Joshua can't be the final rest since David hundreds of years later speaks of another rest.

- In fact, hundreds of years after David, there still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God according to the author. Now, this doesn't mean that Christians are under the law of the Sabbath.
- 7th Day Adventists and many Messianic Jewish congregations would say that Saturday is still sacred and to be set apart as the Sabbath.
- Others would say that the day has changed from Saturday to Sunday, but that the law of the Sabbath is still in place.
- But as it relates to Hebrews 4 in particular and Scripture in general, here are a few reasons that I don't think this is saying that there remains a Sabbath law for Christians.
- 1st the Greek word for Sabbath rest isn't the same word as Sabbath and I think that suggests that the author isn't thinking of the sabbath itself so much as the Sabbath as an analogy. He doesn't write, there remains a sabbath for the people of God, but a sabbath rest which is a different word in Greek than the word for Sabbath. In English we might say a sabbathish rest or a sabbathy rest.
- 2nd the Sabbath seems alien to the overall way that the author is talking about rest. It seems strange to suddenly shift from talking about rest as an eschatological reality to a weekly event.
- But third, and most importantly, the NT elsewhere reveals that our obligation to the Sabbath has changed in light of the new covenant. For example, look at Colossians 2
 - *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16–17)*
 - *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5–6)*
 - Commenting on these passages, Andrew Lincoln says:
 - "That Paul without any qualification can relegate Sabbaths to shadows certainly indicates that he does not see them as binding and makes it extremely unlikely that he could have seen the Christian first day as a continuation of the Sabbath." (Andrew Lincoln)
- I would say that there is an enduring principle of rest, but no longer a binding command to Sabbath. I view this kinda like the question of tithing. In the Mosaic law, a tithe was prescribed. The word tithe is from the word for tenth. Now, once that command is refracted through the prism of the gospel, it changes a bit. We are still under a command to give sacrificially, cheerfully, and generously, but no longer is there a specific percentage or formula. For some of you, it might be 5% for others 25%. We are still commanded to give, but the formula has changed.
- And I think the same applies to the Sabbath. OT sabbath was every 7th day on a Saturday. But we are no longer under the particular regulations of that law. Now, we rest, but it doesn't necessarily have to be one day in 7. I think that's probably still a good example and principle to start, but I don't think you're sinning if you take 1 out of every 6

or 8 days or do it on a Monday or a Friday or whatever. So, if your life has no rhythm of rest, that's at best foolish, if not sinful, but exactly how & what that rest looks is a bit more flexible & fluid in the new covenant.

- So, if the author isn't saying that we are still under the Sabbath, what does he mean by there remains a sabbath rest for the people? Well, he is using the sabbath as an analogy. The same way that Jews rested on the sabbath, so we rest in God's rest.
- In other words, our eternal state is described as one of rest. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that there is no work in heaven. Remember that work is a pre-fall institution. Sin didn't introduce work into the world. Rather, sin corrupted work, made it more laborious.
- So I wouldn't expect redemption to remove work itself, but rather to remove the curse. So I don't think that eternal rest means we don't work.
- As we talked about with Jesus. There is a sense in which His work is complete and another sense in which He is still working. Likewise, I think there is a sense in which our works are complete when we enter into God's rest and another sense in which we keep working. What exactly that entails, I don't know. The Bible doesn't answer all of our questions about the eternal state, but that there is at least some sense in which our work ceases is clear from Rev 14:13 which says:
 - *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"* (Revelation 14:13)
- Let's keep going. Vs. 11.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11)

- Picking up what we read earlier in Revelation 14, do you remember when we are said to rest from our labors? When we die.
- Which means that until then, we work.
- By that, I don't mean works righteousness. We never work in that sense. We don't work for our salvation. But we do work out our salvation as we read back in Philippians earlier this year.
- Look at that word strive. That's an intense word, an emphatic word. Its from the word for hurry as in work quickly, work hard. You could also translate it as act diligently, or make zealous effort, or make something a top priority.
- Consider how prevalent the idea of working hard, training, discipline, effort, and labor is in Scripture. For example,
 - *...make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...* (2 Peter 1:5)
 - *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* (Hebrews 12:14)

- *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* (1 Timothy 4:7–8)
- *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* (Hebrews 5:14)
- *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...* (Philippians 2:12)
- How does that work in light of grace? Look at 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.* (1 Corinthians 15:10)
 - So Paul is working. And working hard! He's not coasting, not slacking, not lounging. He's doing something, but God gets the glory because even that work is grace. As Philippians 2 says we work out our salvation because God has worked in us the willing and the working.
- So there is a paradox of working to rest. What is the work? Well, in the context of Hebrews 3 and 4, the work is faith. We labor to believe. Yes, it's a gift, but its also a responsibility.
- And as disbelief is manifest in disobedience so faith is demonstrated by obedience. So part of the striving that the author is commending here is a striving to obey God. To believe what He says about marriage and children and work and rest and finances and pride and lust and greed and laziness and abortion and divorce and sexuality and gender and on and on. Working to believe that Christ is better and all the millions of implications that flow from that reality.
- That's part of the striving that's in view here.
- There is a sense in which we rest now, but also a sense in which our work is unfinished.
- I want to end with this. Years ago, I was leading a team to Sudan & had a buddy who was a 72 yr old retired federal judge. One day I'm having dinner at his house & towards the end of the meal, I said, you know, I'd love for you to consider coming with me to Sudan. And his face went white. Even whiter than most old guys who haven't tanned since Reagan was in office already are.
- Being a wise man he said, I'll pray about it. I later found out he had very little intention of praying about it. He just knew it wouldn't look good to say absolutely not.
- But that night he couldn't sleep. As he tossed in bed, he kept asking himself this question, have you stopped advancing the kingdom. You've retired from the legal profession, but have you retired from the kingdom. A day or two later, he called me up and said, I'm in.
- He couldn't stand the idea of giving up, retiring from discipleship, retiring from ministry, retiring from striving.
- So let me ask you this question, are you coasting? Are you cruising? Have you taken your foot off the pedal thinking you've prayed enough, studied enough, you're holy enough. Or are you hungry and eager for more?

- My encouragement to you is to strive, to strain...as CS Lewis wrote, further up and further in. As long as it is called today, there are sins to be mortified, truths to be believed, people to be disciplined, souls to be saved, marriages to be healed, lives to be changed, prayers to be prayed, hopes to be hoped. Don't take the promises for God for granted, but rather, allow those promises to fuel your faith and obedience.
- While the promise remains, let us fear the dangers of unbelief.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- As we prepare for communion, I just want to give you a second to reflect.
- In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us to examine ourselves before partaking of the meal. So take a second and do that.
- Think about what lies you are tempted to believe, what truths you are tempted to reject, what footholds sin might have.
- Take a second and confess and repent and trust God in this moment for the grace to walk in the light in that area.
- I'll give you a minute and then we'll partake together.
- On the night...