

Confess and Rest

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[0 : 00] All right. Well, I apologize first that everything I'm about to say here in the next, I don't know how long it's going to take me to say it, I meant to put on a slide for you just so you have a visual to see what I'm saying and talking about.

But you'll understand here in a second, you might want to write it down if you need a reminder on it. And maybe I'll send it out in an email if I remember to. So it's been a few weeks since we've been in the book of Hebrews, and I wanted to give a quick rundown of the text so far.

So in Hebrews chapter one, verses one to three, we see that Jesus Christ is God's superior revelation. Of all the ways that God has used to reveal himself to mankind through history, none is greater than when he took on human flesh and lived among sinful man.

Jesus Christ is God's superior revelation of himself. In Hebrews chapter one, verses four through 14, we see that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels.

Angels were seen as the agents of God who delivered the law to his people and were thus highly revered by the Jewish people. They were highly revered in Hebrew culture.

[1 : 15] However, they still do not measure up to Jesus, who is the creator God, and even receives worship from angels. In Hebrews chapter two, verses one to four, Jesus Christ is the object of a superior message.

The truth of Jesus, who he is and what he accomplished, is laid out for us in the four gospels, of which eyewitnesses of those events gave their lives to spread the message.

So Jesus Christ, the life he lived, what he did and accomplished on this earth, are written in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And then when you get into the book of Acts, you see how eyewitnesses of those events took that message to the other countries and nations and people.

And through church history and tradition, we understand that many of them, most of them, died horrible deaths for carrying this message to the known world.

In Hebrews two, verses five through nine, we get to what the purpose of man is, and that it is our created purpose to exercise dominion over God's creation, and that he created us in his image, and part of that image is ruling over and caring for the things that we have from him.

[2 : 41] In Hebrews two, verses 10 through 18, we see that Jesus Christ is the perfect savior and high priest, that he suffered for our salvation, and he served sacrificially to enable us to do his will and to be sanctified before God and the world.

Us be sanctified. He already is. Hebrews chapter three, verses one through six, we see that Jesus Christ is superior to Moses. Moses was a faithful servant, but because of Christ's position as son and his faithfulness over God's house, we have a faithful savior and a high priest who remains over us as a deliverer and an intercessor.

Hebrews chapter three, verses seven through 19, the author of Hebrews lays out the peril of unbelief. The peril of unbelief as it relates to our belief of Jesus.

Though God punishes mankind by condemning them to hell when they reject his offer of salvation, he did not create man to be doomed to hell. His desire is for us to repent and to be saved, and it is only our unbelief that condemns us.

And then Hebrews chapter four, verses one through 10, the last time we were together, the appeal to not miss out on the rest. Don't miss out on the rest.

[4 : 07] Seeing that our unbelief is what condemns us to hell, the author warns the reader that their opportunity to repent is still present, but not for long. And when this opportunity is missed, there are grave, eternal consequences.

So don't miss out on the rest that God offers. The rest being, as we would understand, heaven and eternity with him. Whew, that was a quick rundown of what we've covered so far, and there's so much more to go.

So let's pick up in Hebrews 4, verses 11 through 16, in a message I've entitled, Confess and Rest, because I didn't really know what to call it.

Sometimes it happens that way. So let's go ahead and read verses 11 through 13, and under this confess and rest, we're going to see in these verses, 11 through 13, that we need to strive to enter that rest.

Strive to enter that rest. Hebrews 4, verses 11 through 13. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest. You can see I'm very creative in my sub points to sermons.

[5 : 18] I just take them right out of the text. Let us strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And no creature is hidden from his sight. But all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

So as we see here in these verses, the writer of Hebrews encouraging us to strive to enter the rest that God offers.

And we need to strive to enter because there has already been an example of disobedience. The peril that follows unbelief has already been established by the author and declared by God.

We see in Hebrews 4, 3, when God says that they shall not enter my rest. So to grasp the context of that section again, he is talking about the Israelites.

[6 : 34] He's talking about the Jewish people in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, which we have and benefits us and is there for us to learn from. And we see that the Hebrews, the Jews, they're not entering the rest took place a couple of times.

I'm going to only mention the two. It took place when they chose not to take the promised land when God instructed them to in Numbers 13 and 14. They listened to the 10 spies who said that it was impossible.

So God brings them out of Egypt, delivers them out of slavery through a miraculous event crossing the Red Sea and leads them to this point here in Numbers 13 and 14 that they come up to the threshold of the promised land and God says, go and take it.

It's yours. And so they send in spies, 12 of them. Spies come back. They're carrying like, you know, great fruit, like huge fruit bundles.

And it's, you know, it's clearly a prosperous land that God is giving to them. And 10 of them said, no, we can't take it. It's going to be impossible. There are giants in the land.

[7 : 44] We're like grasshoppers in their sight. We don't stand a chance. We can't do it. There are two spies who said, you know what? God told us to do it.

Let's do it. He said it's ours. Let's go and take it. He'll give it to us. And people do. What the people do? They say, oh no, 10 to 2.

You guys lose. We're following these 10. And that's when God said, all right, you will now, instead of entering the promised land, you will wander for 40 years until this generation passes.

And I will bring your children into the land. And they thought they could quickly, swiftly change their mind about things. Like, oh no, we didn't understand. You mentioned about our bodies dropping in the wilderness.

We'll go in and take it. And they tried and failed because God was not allowing it to happen at that time because of their disobedience. And so instead of entering the rest that God was giving to them in the promised land, they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness until that generation passed.

[8 : 57] So you think once would be enough. No, no. So it happened again. After they finally entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua, and they still did not enter that rest because they persisted in living in disobedience to the Lord.

And for hundreds of years, God sent people, said, hey, you need to get things right. You need to turn back. And they would a little bit and then for a little bit. And then they'd go back to their ways.

So it was constant back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. So over the course of those few hundred years in which they're in the promised land, he sent two empires, the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire, to take them out of the land.

And ultimately, through the Roman Empire in 70 AD, they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. So they still have not entered that rest that God had given to them because of their disobedience.

So there's already been, in Hebrews 4.11, where we're told to strive to enter the rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

[10 : 07] There's already been examples of disobedience to God and punishment brought about because of that disobedience. And the author is saying, stop disobeying.

Start living in obedience. Strive to enter the rest. What we have now is God commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Acts 17.30 and 31. The message given to us through the resurrection of Jesus is the assurance that God will judge the world in righteousness and he's going to use the very individual that he raised from the dead.

The very individual that his disciples and apostles lost their lives talking about and sharing about. So what's the expectation now?

We don't have a promised land to enter, right? It's not God's not telling us, all right, go into the promised land. I'm giving it to you. That was for his people. That was a time. Now thousands of years ago.

[11 : 30] What's the expectation now? To repent. To repent. That is to be changed and transformed in mind as it relates to the life of disobedience that you live to God.

It is expected of us how Paul speaks of the believers in Thessalonica where he says in 1 Thessalonians 1, 9 and 10 where he's speaking of them and he says, Hey, you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead.

Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. There's promised wrath and punishment for disobedience to God. And we're told in other passages in scripture that, you know, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and that we're dead in our trespasses and sins.

We need to be made alive. We need to be delivered from that. Because until we do, until we come to faith in Jesus who is the one that delivers us from the wrath to come, we can expect that through our disobedience, we will incur God's wrath.

So we need to repent. We need to change our mind about our lives that we're living that is in disobedience to God and turn from that, change our mind about it, be transformed in mind about it, and follow Jesus.

[13 : 01] So let us strive to enter because we are laid bare and must give an account. This is a passage of scripture that I think is, can be very tough to deal with, this section that we've already read.

because it's making it crystal clear that we're going to be before God in judgment. And it says that we, that no creature hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

As we stand before God in judgment, his word will rightly diagnose the condition of our hearts. It pierces. That's what it says, right? The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intention of the heart.

The word of God is going to rightly diagnose our condition as we are before him. There will be no hiding it. So we can go through this world, we can fool people around us.

No, we can know the right answers to give at the right time and not truly believe any of them. I know I encounter this as a pastor of a Baptist church.

[14 : 19] There are people who know kind of where I'm coming from. They know kind of the right answers to say, the right things to say. I have family who knows the right things to say, you know, and kind of give the, you know, acknowledgement to God, but, you know, it makes it seem like they kind of believe, but I also know them because they're family.

And I know, in fact, where they stand on things. I have this with family. I have this with friends. I have this with, you know, people that I interact with generally. You know, when people know you're a pastor, they act differently around you.

They can fool me. I'm a gullible person. I want to think, you know, the best of people, right? I want to give them the benefit of the doubt. All right? You don't have to put it.

The mask doesn't have to be great to fool me. Okay? But it doesn't do anybody any good to fool me. Right? Because people go through this world, and they're fooling people all the time.

And they're fooling, you know, the Christians all the time. Well, I know the right things to say. I'm going to talk a little bit about Jesus and heaven and praying and, I don't know, whatever it is they think. Fool us.

[15 : 31] Okay? Okay? It's not us that you need to get by, you know? So when we stand before God, the sham and hypocrisy will be revealed and no profession of faith, no matter how orthodox, and no list of good works, no matter how sacrificial, will count for anything before Him.

He sees right through it. His word cuts deep, goes beyond all that stuff that I see and you see, and we can be fooled by. His word cuts deeper than that.

To the division of soul and spirit. Anyone know where their soul is? Anybody know what their spirit is? Can you identify where in the body that is?

Nope. As a biology teacher, I can tell you I never taught that. And I never learned about it in biology. You know, it's not something, we have no idea.

We're talking, here, the writer of Hebrews is talking about things we can't even see or find or define. And he's saying the word of God cuts that. It divides that.

[16 : 38] Of joints and marrow. Okay, we kind of get something there, right? We understand our joints, we understand the bone marrow, but even that is very fine. And like, holy smokes, the marrow comes out of the bones.

Like, it divides even to that point. That's impressive. That's impressive. And it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

There it is. The thoughts and intentions of your heart. The things that you can hide from everybody, everybody, are not hidden for God.

And as the word of God is searching each individual, bring blessing to those who receive it in faith and it will pronounce judgment on those who disregard it. We're laid bare and we must give an account.

So let's strive to enter the rest that God offers. Verses 14 through 16. Since then we have a great high priest who's passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

[17 : 47] Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

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. Let us hold fast our confession, the writer says, because Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses.

Here's a little list for you concerning Jesus. I actually put it on a slide this time. So because Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses, he is the object of our faith.

He is the one we read about and seek to follow and learn from in Scripture. What do we know about Jesus? I only put four points. Don't hyperventilate, so you know this could go on for hours.

So Jesus, the object of our faith, he is God who took on flesh to dwell among his people. John 1, verse 14, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[19 : 05] The Word taken on flesh. That is Jesus. We know that he lived a sinless life.

1 Peter 2, verse 22. He committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth.

He committed no sin. Let's define that three-letter word, sin. I like to say to my children, it's naughtiness. It's disobedience. It's not following the rules or doing as you're told.

So he committed none of that. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. He was not deceptive in what he spoke, in his testimony.

He didn't try to get off the hook. He didn't try to avoid the cross. He was honest. Jesus has been tempted in every way we have been, yet without sin.

[20 : 12] I can't help but emphasize that one enough. That was what we just read here in Hebrews 4, 15. We don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. No, no. He can. He's been tempted in every way we have.

There is nothing that we endure and encounter on a daily basis that he has not been tempted by to some degree. Now, it doesn't mean it looks exactly the same.

Right? We're talking about somebody who lived 2,000 years ago. He didn't have a smartphone or the internet, all this stuff. No, no. But the temptation is the same.

Lust. The temptation for greed. To steal. Lie. Whatever. He had those temptations himself, but yet never gave into it.

How many of us can say that? Be honest. How many of us have told a lie? How many of us have stolen?

[21 : 18] You get the idea. He lived life without giving into any of that. And finally, he was made to become sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5, verse 21. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Left to our own efforts, we are incapable of living perfectly before God.

That failure has been exemplified time and again. You look at it in the Old Testament, you've got guys like Adam and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David. I mean, I can just read through the Old Testament.

Whatever name is there, there's an individual who's failed and fallen. But we don't have to look at the Old Testament because it's made intimate to us through our own attempts and failures in life.

In this very room, and I don't have to know you intimately, all right, to know that you fall in one of these categories, and I do too, probably more than one.

[22 : 22] In this very room, we are guilty of lying, stealing, blaspheming, committing adultery, unrighteous anger, boasting, and then I stop there, I'm just like, et cetera.

In this room. Because Romans 3.23 says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Everybody is naughty and disobedient towards God. No exceptions. Not me, not you, not the Pope, from any seat that he sits in.

We're all sinners. And since Jesus has lived among this creation and he's perfectly endured the same trials and temptations that we endure, we can draw near to the throne of grace.

This is awesome. This is like, everything up to this point has been like me just completely dampening the mood and, you know, making you depressed and sad and whatever. This is awesome.

[23 : 33] All right? Because there's a lot of awesome here. So we can draw near. Verse 16. 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.

This is awesome because think about this. Most ancient rulers were unapproachable by common people. All right? And some would not even allow their highest ranking officials to come to them without permission.

Think about the book of Esther. Esther was a queen and she took her life in her hands by entering the presence of her husband without his permission.

Yet any repentant person, no matter how sinful, no matter how undeserving, may approach God's throne at any time for forgiveness and salvation with confidence that he will be received with mercy and grace.

Think about that. God, creator God, ruler over the universe, sent his son to die on the cross for forgiveness of our sins. Says, hey, you want to enter the throne room anytime with confidence, knowing that you will receive mercy and grace when you do so.

[24 : 50] how cool is that? It's amazing. And because of Jesus' great sacrifice for us, God's throne of judgment has been turned into a throne of grace for those who trust in him.

The throne of God, it's a mercy seat to which we have free access and from which we may receive all the grace and power required in the hour of trial and crisis, especially when it comes to the forgiveness of our sin.

He gives us exactly what we need when we need it. So as the book of Hebrews continues to establish the superiority of Jesus in all areas of our spiritual lives, we get the sense from chapter 4 here that he's superior to Joshua who led the children of Israel into the promised land but could not lead them into God's rest because their disobedience to God and his covenant with him ultimately led to their punishment of not being allowed to enter his rest in the Lord.

Yet Jesus is able to lead us into God's rest and allow us into his throne room because he has perfectly obeyed him fulfilling the law's requirements.

And through his obedience and his taking the wrath of God on the cross on our behalf, we have all that that is necessary to enter into God's rest without the fear of losing it.

[26 : 22] Jesus offers us a rest that only he has earned. So let us strive to enter the rest by holding fast our confession of faith in Jesus and confidently approaching the throne of grace to receive the forgiveness of sin that we all need.

So if you're here today, you've never taken that step of faith. You've never put your confidence in what Jesus has done for you as the payment necessary for the forgiveness of sin and disobedience and naughtiness or whatever you want to call it.

I urge you not to let this opportunity to be passed up. See, the peril of unbelief is real. Someone has to pay the penalty for sin.

I put it this way to somebody the other day. Somebody has to pay the piper. And either you choose to put your faith in what Jesus has done on the cross to pay that penalty or you choose to pay the penalty yourself in a place called hell for eternity.

It's what God has put in his word. It is what he has revealed to us. It is not about whether we think that is fair or not. It's what he has done and what he offers and what he has made clear to us.

[27 : 43] God has granted you this opportunity to come to saving faith in Christ. And the brevity of our time on this earth does not guarantee another one. I'll ask you this question.

Barbara Guerin lived 102 years on this earth. How many people, you don't have to show me or raise your hands by the way, how many people here think your time was too short with her?

Yeah. 102 years is a good long time but it's still short. We're not guaranteed another moment beyond this. We're not guaranteed another breath beyond the one we just took.

So if you want to discuss this matter further, I'd love to sit and chat with you after the service. But take seriously this message which is throughout this whole book. The message of sin, disobedience, and our separation from God, and the fact that he loved us, he gave his son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this time. Lord, I thank you for this service. I thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to encourage and build each other up. I thank you for the people you put in our lives that encourage us and show us your love and mercy and grace.

[29 : 07] We thank you for Jesus whose life was lived perfectly. Who, through his life and through his death on the cross and his enduring of your wrath, provides us the opportunity for forgiveness of sin.

Provides us the opportunity to enter your rest in your presence for eternity. that, Lord, we don't have to incur your wrath, but we do have to make a choice.

We do have to have faith and confidence in Jesus. Help our unbelief, Lord. Bring us to you.

Help us to confidently live knowing that Jesus has forgiven our sins and we can be forgiven through him. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.