

# The promise of rest still stands

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for 40 years.

Therefore, I was provoked with that generation and said, They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

[ 1 : 1 8 ]     And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. 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.

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. For we have believed, sorry, 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. 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. 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 afterwards, in the words already quoted, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

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.

[ 2 : 5 6 ]     Let us therefore 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 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 whom we must give account. Good morning, everyone.

Can I encourage you to have your Bibles open at Hebrews chapters 3 and 4? I'm about to embark on the sheer madness of trying to teach this entire passage in one talk, a passage which refers to the books of Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Psalms, and it has something to say about each of them.

So I think we're going to need God's help. So how about I'm going to need God's help, and you're going to need God's help to listen. So let's pray and ask for God's help. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can spend this time together meditating on your word, and please give me clarity of thought and expression as I teach it, and may my words be faithful and true.

And we pray that all of us might draw encouragement from this portion of the scriptures today. In Jesus' name, amen. What do you think is the defining feature of our day?

[ 4 : 28 ] Is it computer technology, smartphones, social media, the internet, artificial intelligence? Over the last 50 years, computers and associated technologies have moved from being something marginal to something that pervades every aspect of our lives.

And now that the AI cat is out of the bag, some jobs are disappearing, many other jobs are changing, and the world will never be the same again. Is that the defining feature of our age?

Maybe the defining feature of our day is gender confusion. The ideology of expressive individualism has run roughshod over science, over natural law, over logic, and over common sense, so that now the midwife who makes the plain observation and says it's a girl is guilty of the crime of assigning gender at birth.

Maybe that's the defining feature of our day. Or is the defining feature of our day political polarisation? A hardening of positions, progressive and conservative, left and right, and a decay, a consequent decay of public discourse, a decay of reasonable debate.

Everything's political spin and name-calling and accusations and demonisation and scaremongering. And increasingly, people are locked into online echo chambers where they only hear their own opinions voiced back to them.

[ 6 : 00 ] Maybe that's the defining feature of our day. Or maybe the defining feature of our day is climate change, environmental degradation, the age of the Anthropocene where human activity has become, the impact of human activity on our world has become so great that the natural world is starting to collapse under the weight of it.

No, we live in anxious times. Things fall apart. The centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

That's how William Butler Yeats described the atmosphere in post-World War Europe in 1919. But they're words that could fit our day. The doomsday clock has been set to 89 seconds to midnight.

According to its custodians, this is, the world is the closest it has ever been to catastrophe. We live in a world on the brink.

And yet for all this, the Bible says there is another, much more important defining feature of the present time. Today is the day when the voice of God is heard.

[ 7 : 19 ] Hebrews chapter 3 verse 7. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you hear his voice. The first part of that verse are the words of the author of Hebrews.

The second part of that verse, in the second part of that verse, he begins to quote from Psalm 95. Psalm 95 verses 7 to 11. And Hebrews takes that Old Testament passage, Psalm 95, and applies it directly to the New Testament Christian readers and hearers of this book.

This is what the Holy Spirit says to you today. Down in verse 13, he says, exhort one another every day so long as it is called today.

He picks up that idea of today and says this entire present time is a succession of today's. A sequence of days in which the voice of God is heard.

If you're flying on a plane and sipping a cup of tea and doing a crossword and listening to some music on your earphones and suddenly the captain's voice comes across the speakers, attention, the plane's engines have failed.

[ 8 : 37 ] We're gliding over open sea and we'll crash into it within the next three minutes. Listen carefully and I'll tell you how you can survive. Well, you would first regret that you hadn't paid any attention to the safety briefing at the start of your flight.

And second, give the captain your full attention. Cups of tea and crosswords would be forgotten. The most important feature of today, as long as it's called today, is that we hear the voice of God and give it our full attention.

But the word of God we hear is not a new word. We don't seek God's word in visions and dreams. The word of God we hear is the ancient word indelibly written down, passed down through the centuries and spoken afresh to each generation by the Holy Spirit.

The ancient word is the present word. The Holy Spirit is speaking to us today in the words of the scriptures.

Now, the author of the Hebrews, the author of this book, takes the ancient word of Psalm 95 and applies it to the Christians he's addressing.

[ 10 : 00 ] We can go a step further. We can take this entire passage, Hebrews 3 and 4, as an ancient word addressed in the present to us.

This Hebrews 3 and 4, an ancient word which includes the even more ancient word of Psalm 95. So what is the Holy Spirit saying to us today from Psalm 95 and from Hebrews chapters 3 and 4?

Well, verse 7 again, therefore it begins, therefore. Now, that is what he's going to say in this passage is an implication of what he's just said before. What has he just said before?

Well, earlier in chapter 3, he said in verse 3 that Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses. Won't go into why Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

That would be to repeat the message from last week. But the point is, the one we follow, Jesus, is more glorious than the one the ancient Israelites followed, Moses.

[ 11 : 07 ] The one through whom God has spoken to us, Jesus, is more glorious than the one through whom God spoke to them, Moses. Because Jesus is greater than Moses, therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, verse 7, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for 40 years.

Therefore, I was provoked with that generation and said, they always go astray in their heart. They have not known my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

That's the ancient word that the writer to the Hebrews quotes as a present word for his hearers. We're not going to spend much time on verses 7 to 11 directly here, partly because we've got another 21 verses to get through.

But more importantly, because what the Bible then does is draw out three specific things from that quotation from Psalm 95. This is what Psalm 95 is saying to you today.

But I do want to make one further observation before we get to those three things. And that is, so far I've been glossing over a nuance of the text. Notice verse 7 actually implies two acts of hearing.

[ 12 : 37 ] As the Holy Spirit says, today if you hear his voice. Perhaps we could say two moments of divine speech.

There's an initial moment of divine communication, if you hear his voice. And then there's another moment, as the Holy Spirit says. That is, the Holy Spirit is instructing us in what to do when we hear God's voice.

To put it another way, the words quoted from Psalm 95 are not the complete word of God to us today. Rather, they are a word about how we respond to the word.

The Holy Spirit telling us how to respond to the word of God. But that logically prior word, which Psalm 95 instructs us in about how to respond to, that could in a sense be any word of God.

But in context, it is a specific word. The word which the writer calls in chapter 4, verse 2, the good news. Good news came to us, just as to them.

[ 13 : 49 ] It's the good news of Jesus Christ. That's the voice of God for us today. That's the word that is being proclaimed in this day throughout the whole world.

And it's about that word that the writer to the Hebrews instructs us in terms of how we respond to it from Psalm 95. This word about how to respond to the word.

Okay. So what do we see from this word about how to respond to the word? Well, three things. First, verses 12 to 15, a warning. Then verses 16 to 19, an example.

And then in chapter 4, a promise. And then finally, the writer rounds it out with a meditation, a solemn meditation on the word of God in chapter 4, verses 12 and 13. Well, first, let's think about a warning for us today.

Look at chapter 3, verse 12 with me, a warning for us today. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

[ 14 : 55 ] But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

As it is said today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. Now, this isn't the time to take a deep dive into the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which I fully believe.

But the implication of these verses is that it is impossible, it is possible to make some kind of beginning. And yet to fall away from the living God.

You fall away, or you depart from, a position, a path, a course of action, that you previously occupy.

You fall away from a place you already are. It involves turning away, it involves leaving something behind. That's the sense of this word, wherever it occurs throughout the New Testament.

[ 16 : 03 ] And the word, the words in verse 12 are addressed to brothers. Although brothers, they're used in an inclusive sense, brothers and sisters.

But it's to believe it's believers that this, these words are addressed to brothers, brothers and sisters. A non-believer doesn't fall away from the living God because a non-believer has not come to the living God in the first place.

It is a Christian brother or sister who might. See brothers, sisters, it matters not only how we begin the race, it matters how we complete the race.

Verse 14, we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. Marathon runners train carefully so that they can sustain their race pace from beginning to end.

They start their race conservatively so that they can finish strong. And few marathon runners fail to finish the race because they've been tripped over by a spectator or bitten by a stray dog.

[ 17 : 27 ] When a runner falls short, it's because their own physical or mental stamina fails. Likewise, in the Christian race, the greater threats are internal, not external.

It's not persecution or hardship or difficulties, although these of course may play their part. The real danger though is within. Take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

What we must guard against, verse 13, is that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The battleground is within. It's over the contested territory of the human heart.

And our enemy, sin, does not fight in the open field. It's a Trojan horse. Sin's strategy is to deceive so that we open the gates of our heart to it unawares.

Richard Baxter wrote this, the devil is a greater scholar than you and a nimbler disputant.

[ 18 : 43 ] He can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive. He will get within you and trip up your heels before you are aware. You see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait.

And his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition that he will be sure to find advantages within you and make your own principles and inclinations betray you.

Sin deceives us. See the first step in forsaking God's word may even seem to us like virtue. So one rejects unpopular teachings of the Bible under the guise of compassion and inclusion.

Or on the flip side, another sees himself as a staunch defender of truth and under that banner abandons love and grace and humility as slowly his heart is consumed by self-righteousness.

See, because sin's strategy is to deceive, our defence against sin is to be part of a community committed to speaking the truth to one another.

[ 20 : 08 ] Verse 13, exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Notice a couple of things about this. First, this is everyone's responsibility, not just the pastors. The New Testament is full of one another's.

Now, we're to love one another, be kind to one another, forgive one another. Well, here we are to exhort one another. Dave Bott needs us to exhort him as much as we need him to exhort us.

Pastors are as vulnerable to temptation as anyone. And the fact that sin deceives means that the person being deceived by it is unaware. That's why we need a community, all of us, where we are committed to speaking the truth to one another.

Second thing to notice is that exhorting one another is essentially a verbal activity. The author of Hebrews calls this book, the book of Hebrews, a word of exhortation.

[ 21 : 28 ] Another way you could translate that is encourage one another, a word of encouragement. The purpose is to strengthen, it's to build up. And it's true, we do encourage one another by deeds of love.

But the central idea here is that we exhort one another. We speak the truth to each other so as to expose sin's deceptions and so as to fortify each other in faith.

And we don't fulfil this instruction to exhort one another. We don't fulfil it by being hypercritical. You know, by pulling each other up for every minor fault.

That's not what this is saying. We don't fulfil it by constantly berating ourselves for how awful we all are. In 1893, 18-year-old Winston Churchill qualified to enter the Royal Military College at Sandhurst as a cavalry cadet.

His father was disappointed that he hadn't qualified for the infantry. And so his father sent him this letter. He said, The first extremely discreditable failure of your performance was missing the infantry.

[ 22 : 47 ] for in that failure is demonstrated beyond refutation your slovenly, happy-go-lucky, harem-scare-em style of work for which you've been distinguished at your different schools.

Never have I received a really good report of your conduct in your work from any master or tutor, always behind-hand, never advancing in your class, incessant complaints of total want of application.

Do not think that I'm going to take the trouble of writing you long letters after every failure and folly you commit and undergo because I no longer attach the slightest weight to anything you may say about your own accomplishments and exploits.

Make this position indelibly impressed on your mind that if your conduct and action is similar to what it's been in the other establishments, then my responsibility for you is over.

because I am certain that if you cannot prevent yourself from leading the idle, useless, unprofitable life that you have had during your school days and latter months, you will become a mere social wastrel, one of the hundreds of the public school failures, and you will degenerate into a shabby, unhappy and futile existence.

[ 23 : 53 ] If that is so, you will have to bear all the blame for such misfortune yourself, your affectionate father, Randolph SC. LAUGHTER That is not a word of encouragement.

LAUGHTER Yes, each of us is an incredibly complex mix of good and bad.

Yes, each of us is subject to temptation and prone to weakness. But we exhort one another, not by constantly telling each other how bad we are, we exhort one another by telling each other how good he is, by reminding one another of the goodness of Christ, the beauty of Christ, the one who's better than angels, better than Moses, crowned with glory and honour, our merciful and faithful high priest.

The aim of exhorting one another is, as it's expressed in verse 14, that we hold our original confidence in Christ firm to the end.

And so the chief theme of our exhortation is the goodness and majesty and sufficiency of Christ.

[ 25 : 27 ] After all, it's not being a sinner that means I fall away from the living God. It's rather being an unbelieving sinner, an evil, unbelieving heart.

It's being an unforgiven sinner, a sinner so hardened by sin's deceitfulness that I no longer even realise I am a sinner and that I need a saviour.

The heart of our exhortation is to remind one another of our perfect saviour and say, keep trusting in him.

Well, alongside the warning for today, the words Hebrews quotes from Psalm 95 also give us an example for today. Look at verse 16, chapter 3, verse 16.

For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for 40 years?

[ 26 : 38 ] Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

The example that Psalm 95 draws on is the generation of Israelites who were led by Moses. They'd been, God had brought them under Moses' leadership out of slavery in Egypt.

They'd witnessed the 10 plagues. They passed through the Red Sea. They were led by the pillar of fire and smoke in the wilderness. They drank water from the rock.

They ate manna from heaven. They saw my works, God says. They made a beginning.

They experienced redemption. They came out of Egypt. But that's as far as they got. They did not enter the promised land.

[ 27 : 47 ] Why? Well, Hebrews 3, verses 16 to 19 uses a variety of terms for their apostasy. Verse 16, they heard and yet rebelled. Verse 17, they sinned.

Verse 18, they were disobedient. Verse 19, unbelief. There were a string of instances of Israel's disobedience and unbelief in the wilderness.

But the key moment came in Numbers chapters 13 and 14 where Israel arrived at Kadesh Barnea at the edge of the promised land and instructed by God, they sent out 12 spies to scout out the land.

And the spies returned and they reported that the land was good but they also reported that it was heavily defended. The people were strong.

The cities fortified. The descendants of Anak, giants were among them. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, pleaded with the people, do not rebel against the Lord.

[ 28 : 54 ] But the people were too afraid. They did not trust God. They refused to enter the land. They were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Verse 19 says here. And so God confirmed them in that fate, sentencing them to 40 years of wandering around the wilderness until an entire adult generation had perished.

I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. They were unable to enter and they shall not enter my rest. Well, the word of God drives home the message of this example in chapter 4, likening us Christians to Israel at Kadesh Barnea, poised at the edge of entering the promised land.

Look at chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. 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.

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.

[ 30 : 16 ] The last part of verse 2 there is a little bit difficult, but I think what is meant there because they were not united by faith with those who listened. The they there is Israel, the Israelites, and the those who listened I think are Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who did heed the word of God and said we must enter.

But the rest of Israel would not unite themselves with the faith of Caleb and Joshua and so were sentenced to perish in the wilderness.

But we, like Israel, are promised rest. I will bring you into the land, the Lord had promised Israel.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, the Lord has promised us. two different forms of the one promise, the promise of entering God's rest.

Good news for Old Testament Israel, good news for New Testament disciples of Christ. And the point chapter 4 makes is that the promise of entering God's rest still stands.

[ 31 : 33 ] It's open, it's available. The promise of entering his rest still stands, chapter 4 verse 1.

So let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach us. Notice again that God's word calls us, as in chapter 3 verse 12, God's word calls us to a corporate responsibility for one another.

Let us fear lest any should seem to have failed to reach it. 3 verse 12, take care brothers that there, lest there be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart.

Each one of us is to be concerned not only with our own faith, but all of us are to care for everyone. When I was at Bible college in our year, there were, we had a few classmates who struggled academically, who struggled to learn Greek, or who struggled at writing essays.

And others in our class would get alongside them and assist them and provide tuition and help them with their study. Because as a class, all of us wanted everyone to reach the goal.

[ 32 : 50 ] But we, of course, have a much greater goal before us, don't we? Which is nothing less than the goal of life, the goal of entering God's rest.

In Hebrews 4, verses 3 to 10, the Bible gives us a brief history of rest, and the main point is just to reinforce the point that's already been made, the promise of entering his rest still stands.

I'll fly through it. Quickly, a brief history of rest. In verses 3 and 4, we read of rest established. Rest established.

From halfway through verse 3, God's works were finished from the foundation of the world, for he has spoken of the seventh day in this way, and God rested on the seventh day from all his works.

The point God's word is making here is that from the very beginning, rest has been available. God created things and then he rested.

[ 34 : 00 ] If you look, and if you look at Genesis chapters 1 and 2, you see that the seventh day is the only day in the narrative which doesn't end.

For every other day, we're told there was evening, there was morning, the first day, so on. But the seventh day is open-ended. God created and then rested and he's resting still.

Now, God resting still, of course, doesn't mean that he's sitting back doing nothing. Jesus said, my father's working and I'm working until now.

God is sustaining the world he's made. But with the work of creation completed, he established his rest as the goal to which creation is heading.

The goal for which we were made that we might share in his rest. From the beginning, God rested and that rest has always been available.

[ 35 : 07 ] Rest established. Secondly, in this brief history of rest, we hear of rest rejected. Again, in verse 5, again in the passage, he said, they shall not enter my rest.

And verse 6, those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience. Israel had no one but themselves to blame for their failure to enter.

Rest was available. It was promised to them. But they rejected it. They disbelieved the promise of God.

thirdly, in this brief history of rest, we read of rest promised again. Verse 7, and so again, God 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.

The point the Bible's making here is that in Psalm 95, God is reiterating his promise of rest several hundred years after that generation that fell in the wilderness through David.

[ 36 : 28 ] Now, you might say Psalm 95 sounds a bit more like a warning than a promise. Where's the promise in Psalm 95? It's a stern warning. But let me say a couple of things about that.



Firstly, that the warning actually implies a promise. if you were to go to the zoo and go to an enclosure and there's a sign at the enclosure that says, do not feed the chimpanzees, you would expect to see chimpanzees and feel pretty ripped off if you didn't.

Likewise, the warning of Psalm 95 is don't harden your hearts. It implies the promise. God's promise, God's offer of rest is still available.

Don't harden your hearts so that you don't miss it. But indeed, secondly, if you look at the whole of Psalm 95, the first half is indeed an invitation to come.

The second half, which Hebrews quotes, is a warning not to reject the invitation. So how does Psalm 95 start? Psalm 95, O come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

[ 37 : 41 ] Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise, for the Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods.

Psalm 95 is an invitation to enter God's presence, to share in his joy, and then a warning not to reject the invitation. Rest is promised.

But another might object, hold on, yes, a generation of Israel perished in the wilderness, but what about the next generation? Didn't they enjoy rest?

Didn't Joshua lead them into the promised land and God gave them the land and they enjoy, in fact, even if you look at the book of Joshua, the book of Joshua says, in chapter 21, verse 43 and 44, thus the Lord God gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give their fathers and they took possession of it and they settled there and the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he'd sworn to their fathers.

Didn't they get rest in the land after all? Well, the writer of the Hebrews replies to that potential objection in verse 8.

[ 38 : 58 ] 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.

The reiteration of God's promise through David hundreds of years after Joshua demonstrated that the promise was incomplete. It demonstrated that the good things Israel enjoyed in the land from the time of Joshua onwards didn't exhaust God's promise of rest.

that at most it was a foretaste but not the true rest which God offered his people.

True rest was not temporal and earthly but eternal and heavenly. It's not something that can ever be satisfied by our present fallen broken world world.

Whether in the land of Israel or the land of Australia. No matter how good your long service leave that's not true rest.

[ 40 : 13 ] No matter how good your retirement that's not true rest. true rest. Not even the 12 weeks of holidays a year that school teachers get are true rest as I'm sure they'll testify.

True rest is entering the presence of God with thanksgiving with songs of joy and sharing in his rest.

rest. And that promise remains open. The promise of rest remains. Verse 9 again.

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. So the main point of this brief biblical theology of rest is that the promise remains for us today.

Indeed we who live after Christ enjoy a privileged position because all of history has been building to this point. The goal of life anticipated since creation promised to Israel but constantly slipping out of their grasp.

[ 41 : 34 ] Promised again by David, by God through David. That promise of rest is offered to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Come to me, Jesus said, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. But what a madness it would be to come to the one who gives rest and yet refuse to enter the rest he gives.

So, verse 11, let us therefore strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Consider all that God's rest means in terms of what we leave behind and in terms of what we enter into. we leave behind labour and struggle and hardship.

We leave behind grief and pain and tears and death. we leave behind temptations and stumbling blocks. We leave behind loneliness.

[ 42 : 55 ] We enter into the love of God. We enter into his joy and gladness. We enter into a life of eternal blessedness.

rest. So, let us strive to enter that rest. At a cross-country race in 2013, Kenyan distance runner, Abel Mutai, was in first place approaching the finish line.

But as Mutai approached the finish line, he was confused by the signs and stopped short, a few metres short, thinking he'd finished the race.

Spanish athlete Ivan Fernandez was in second place, right behind Mutai. He could easily have just run past Mutai and finished first.

Instead, realising what had happened, he started shouting at Mutai, keep running. Mutai didn't understand Spanish. So Fernandez came up behind him, speaking, pointing, pushing him, urging him on, so that Mutai could get across the finish line first.

[ 44 : 18 ] There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. So let's push one another towards that goal. And in this day, today, while the voice of God is heard, let's not harden our hearts to it.

Verse 12, 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 marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God's word is living and active.

It's powerful and effective. It will accomplish the purpose for which he sends it. God's word penetrates to the very core of our being, judging the thoughts and attitudes of our heart.

it leaves us utterly exposed. Dave asked the question for us. Are these words hopeful or are they?

[ 45 : 33 ] I can't remember the other word Dave used. Terrifying? Fearful? Fear-inducing? Intimidating? Thanks, Dave. Are these words hopeful or intimidating?

They sound ominous, don't they? But this is exactly the instrument we need for our hearts. Sin may deceive us, but it can't deceive God.

And the word of God is a sharp scalpel. It slices through our pretenses and rationalisations. It reveals the secret workings of our heart.

God cuts away sin's deceptions so that we may hold on to the promise of God. So, brothers and sisters, do you hear the word of God?

Do you hear the word of God's promise drawing us into his rest? Do you hear the word of God's warning?

[ 46 : 43 ] cutting away our doubts and unbelief? Well, let's heed the warning. Let's hold on to the promise and let's exhort one another daily so that all together we might reach that goal.

Will you pray with me? Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the promise of rest that still stands, that all who come to Jesus and trust in him and cling to him our saviour, our Lord, will enter your rest.

We thank you that this promise is certain. We thank you that it doesn't depend on us but on our saviour who went before us.

and so we pray for each and every one of us here that you might guard our hearts from the deceitfulness of sin.

Please keep us trusting in Jesus until the very end and help us as a church to exhort and encourage one another in this so that none of us might stumble and fall.

[ 48 : 28 ] We ask all of this in Jesus name. Amen.