

Hebrews 4:11

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Hebrews chapter 4, and I want us to look at that section from verse 11 to the end.

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 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. Since then we have a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold faster 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.

If somebody was to ask somebody who may be a wee bit uncertain about the Christian faith, and they would say, right, what are key elements? Give me one key element regarding the Christian faith.

While there are various things that we could home in, without a shadow of doubt, one of the key factors is the word belief. Without belief, there is no salvation. Without belief, a person cannot be a Christian. The great command is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

Now, while we know that, all of us here today know that, how essential that belief is, and while that's not what we're looking at today, there's different levels of belief, we're also very conscious that side by side with belief is the great enemy of unbelief. And I don't believe that there's any believer here today who says, you know, I am never, ever, ever troubled by unbelief. Since I've become a Christian, my life has been one of progress every single day. I have total and absolute belief. I am never, ever in the slightest troubled by any unbelief in any shape or form. Now, there is no virtue.

[2 : 54] Let us be quite clear on that. There's no virtue in being plagued by unbelief or in claiming and or talking about our unbelief. But it's, I think we can all identify with a man who stood before Jesus, who said, Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief. And it's part of the struggle of the Christian life. However, we've also got to see that unbelief, of course, is a massive hindrance to blessing and unbelief in its root form and unbelief when it remains unchecked. And when unbelief governs a person's life, rather than belief, it is such that it will keep them from inheriting the blessing of God.

Now, the apostle here has been talking about the Christian's rest. And he used two examples here about the Christian rest. One, of course, was the Lord's own rest of the Sabbath day, where at the end of his creation of this world in six days, that he then rested on the seventh day. And he set it apart. He sanctified it. And there are people who say that there is now no Sabbath, that it was something that was confined to the days of the ceremonial law, and that we are now freed from these things. Well, I cannot understand how anybody can come to that conclusion, because the fourth commandment is part of it. There are ten commandments. And if we are released from one, we're released from them all. And we're not, because we are still under the moral law. And as we know, the Sabbath is as old as the foundation of this world. It is tied into the very creation order itself. And of course, we now know that today we have the Christian Sabbath. It is that day which has been set apart for us. It's a day that was wonderfully where Jesus rose from the dead. It is a day where the early church, the apostolic church, met together. So it is still this day that is given to us primarily for the worship of God and for our rest and for our well-being. The second rest, of course, that is spoken about here was the rest of

Canaan, the rest of the promised land. We know that a generation did enter that rest. But the actual generation that left Egypt, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, failed to enter that rest because of that unbelief. They died in the wilderness. They were a generation that absolutely refused to

believe in God. When you go through the book of Exodus, you come again and again and again to their absolute failure. They were always grumbling and complaining against Moses and against God. And it reached a point where God was long-suffering and patient with them. It reached the point when they were at the borders of the promised land that they refused to accept to go. When the report of the spies came back, they said, that's it, that's it, we cannot inherit it. We cannot. Unbelief was so great within their heart that they said, it's impossible. You remember how Joshua and Caleb, they tried to stir up the people and say, no, we can.

They were forgetting all the time the God of Egypt, the God who worked wonders in Egypt, the God who delivered them, the God of the Red Sea, the God who had brought water out of the rock, the God who had provided for the manna and the wilderness. He provided at every turn in the face of every danger and all the obstacles. And yet they were always, always, always riddled with this unbelief. So the apostle is warning us against this unbelief, showing the danger of it, but side by side with that, also reminding us that a generation did enter the land of promise, which was again a picture of that rest. Now for us, we're told here, let us therefore strive to enter that rest. Now of course, for the believer, there is a twofold rest. There is first of all, a rest when we become Christians. It's tied into the great invitation of Jesus, come unto me, he said, all you who labor, and I will give you rest.

And may I reiterate that great invitation today to anybody in here who's striving and struggling throughout life. And you're going nowhere. And you're finding that life is not giving you what you thought. You may be going on in years, and life is still, there's something missing. And it doesn't matter what you do. It doesn't matter what you attain. It doesn't matter what you get. It's still missing.

[8 : 23] And there's a burden in life. And Jesus is saying, you come to me, and I will give you rest. Now, one of the things that comes immediately when we have that rest in Jesus is there's a twofold, there is peace. And it's a twofold peace. First of all, there is peace with God. You see, when we come to rest, part of the, I would say, the result of this rest is peace. Or it could be worked the other way around.

First of all, there's peace with God. And secondly, there is the peace of God. These are two different things, and yet they're still tied together. Peace with God. Because prior to becoming a Christian, we are not at peace with God. We're at enmity with God. We're rebels. We're on the run. Just as Adam ran in the Garden of Eden, we've run all our lives. And we keep running until God meets with us, and deals with us, and draws us to himself. Then we stop running. Not we turn from running away from God. We start to God. And that's why we're at peace with God. The enmity is broken. The rebellious spirit has been crushed. We are now for God. We now want to be with him. So that's the peace. That's we're at peace with God. But as we say, there's also the peace of God. We're told about that. The peace of God that passeth all understanding. Where God gives of himself to us through Jesus, through the ministry of the Spirit. So that part of the fruit of the Spirit is this peace of God. Peace with God and peace of God. So the first rest that is spoken about in the Bible for the Christian is the rest that we have when we come to accept Jesus as Savior.

And in our Christian life, we enjoy an element of rest. But it's not a complete rest. It's a rest to a certain extent, and it's a foretaste of the second rest, the great rest, which is the rest that every believer will enjoy. You here today, if you have enjoyed the rest of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, one day you will enjoy a complete and total and fulfilling rest forever. But in the meantime, yes, there is a rest, yes, there is a rest, but it is not a complete rest. Because we live in this world of sin, and we have all the struggles and the battles and the toils of this life, and all the things that bring us down and exasperate us and hurt us and tempt us and bring us into despondency and sometimes into even despair. There will come a day when all these things will be eradicated and removed, and there will not be any enemy around or about or within anywhere to threaten or disturb forever and ever and ever the rest that the Christian will enjoy. So there's this twofold rest that is spoken of within the word of God. And we're told here, let us therefore strive to enter that rest. So in other words, we must labor to enter into it, we must strive, you see. And again, to a certain extent it's true, you don't enjoy real rest unless you worked for it. There's something incredibly satisfying after hard labor, or hard work, or working hard for over a period to be able to have a rest. And it is then that the rest is so satisfying. It is so fulfilling. Whereas if it's a rest where there has to be no toil and no labor, then we don't maybe appreciate or understand just how wonderful the rest really is.

So we're to strive to enter that rest, striving against sin, striving to put to death ourselves, dying daily to self and such like. But then it says, it goes on in verse 12, which is tied into this verse, for, and always when we have the word for, it links us to what has gone before, and that's striving to enter for the word of God. You see, we are to strive to enter the rest. And we are to strive to enter the rest by adhering and laying hold upon the word of God, because God has revealed himself to us. We have a declaration of who God is and of what he requires of us in the word of God.

[13:41] This is the revealed will of God to us and for us. And so that's what the apostle is talking about here. And he tells us about this word, that it is living and active.

Now, my words just now, as I stand here, in a sense, are that they're living words, because I'm, I am alive and I'm, that's because I'm speaking these words, but in and of themselves, they don't, they can't achieve that much. But our words, as we speak to one another, they're living words.

But God's word is always a living word in the sense that generation after generation after generation, it is still the same. The invitation, we just mentioned it a little ago, 2,000 years ago, when Jesus walked this world, he said, come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Here we are 2,000 years later, and these words are still living.

They are still spoken to us with the same authority, with the same necessity. They're still spoken to us by way of invitation to all who will hear. So they're living words, and they're active words.

They're words that bring life. That's what, that's the wonderful thing about, about these words.

Words that are doing something, they are the source of life. And we've got to remember that, that God's word, God's word is a powerful word. God's word is a creative word. That's how it began at the very beginning.

[15:29] God said, let there be. You go to Genesis 1, Genesis 2. God said, by his word, he brought into being.

It's a creative word. It's also a sustaining word. We're told by that, that all things, that he sustains all things by the word of his power. This universe, sometimes people are afraid, what if we spiral out of control?

What if something, nothing is going to happen but by his permission, by his authority and by his command? He, until such time as he dictates and changes otherwise, until this world will pass away and the elements will melt with a fervent heat, and as we know this, well, that's going to happen, but it will be at his command and according to his will.

In the meantime, he is sustaining everything by the word of his power. And he has set into motion all these different laws that are governing and keeping everything, but behind it all, he is a sustaining power.

It's also a word that brings life in the sense of regenerating life. Just as in the very beginning, God said, let there be light in the creation of this world, he is also saying it as well to people. I hope and pray that even today, in here, that God is speaking to someone in their heart, and that the word is, let there be light.

[17:16] That into the darkness, maybe you walked into this church today in spiritual darkness, you've heard often enough, you know, you have an element of belief, but not a saving belief.

I would love that at this moment, that these words, let there be light, would be spoken into your heart, so that for the first time you would be able to see, and see Jesus, and see and be able to understand, and begin to say, ah, now I'm beginning to grasp, now I'm beginning to see things. Well, this is what this word is, it's living, and it's active, and that's one of the great things about coming to church, is that every time we come under the word, we come under a word that is living, and it is active, and we're told that it is sharper, it's a powerful word, because it's sharper than any two-edged sword.

In other words, it never fails to cut. That's what a two-edged sword does, it never fails to cut. And this word will either push for life, or for death.

You know, that's a solemn thought. That under the, you know, the word of God is doing one of two things today. It's either melting a heart, softening a heart, preparing a heart, or else it's hardening a heart.

[18:47] And I hope there's nobody here today who is hardening under the word. So that, as you look back over your life, you say to yourself, ah, do you know, there were days, I remember some years ago, you're saying to yourself, and when I would come to church, I'd be moved, and I would say, I want to be a Christian.

I haven't felt like that for years. It's just, it drifts by, it's not affecting me. Well, it is. You're hardening under it.

But you know you needn't. You ask the Lord, and that's what man's responsibility is. You ask the Lord that this word would push like the arrow into the heart of the king, that the king's arrow would push into your heart.

That that hardness would be broken, and that you would see the king in his beauty. And that no longer would the word be, as it's sometimes spoken of, as a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, that it will not be death in your experience, but that it will be life, and that you will thrive under this.

And so we find that it's saying here, For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, puttering to the division of soul and spirit of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[20 : 17] God's word works like nothing else. Surgeons have their scalpels, and they can cut in and go right into the body and see things. And there are scans today that can figure out what's going on, and you have no idea yourself, and you go for a scan, and say, Oh, there's this, there's that.

Hidden things, hidden from the human eye. But what we can't enter into, is into the motive behind why people do what they do.

It would be an amazing thing, be a frightening thing, if there was a scan that we could work out our every thought, and what we think about people, and about issues, and about life, and be able to scan the motive behind everything that we do.

Why are we doing what we're doing? Well, that's how God is, because it tells us this very thing. In verse 13, No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Isn't that extraordinary? Here we have this picture given to us of the Lord who is able to see right into the very depth of our being.

[21 : 43] There's nothing hidden. Nothing about your life, or about my life, that is in any way hidden at all. And the awful thing that we read about here is that we have to give an account to him.

And that's why it's so important that we are honest with the Lord. Part of the problem as sinners is that we want to cover our sin. You know, the most important thing for us is to be honest before God and say, Lord, this is what I am.

I know that you know me far better than I know myself, but Lord, I come to you again today as a sinner. Forgive me, please, all my sins.

And remember what it tells us about the Lord is that he is our Lord who delights in mercy. One of my favorite verses in the Bible.

He's a God who delights in mercy. He loves to display mercy. It gives so much pleasure and satisfaction to the heart of God in displaying mercy.

[22 : 55] He delights in it. So you go to him. It doesn't matter how troubled you may feel. It doesn't matter what you think your past is. He knows it. But the best thing to do, and it's here, you know, one of the most difficult things for people to carry around with him in life is guilt.

It's something that troubles people. The guilt of the past. Well, the Lord is able, this is part of why Jesus died, is to deliver us from our sin.

And that includes the guilt of our sin. So it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, you go to him.

Who is the Lord, remember, who delights in mercy, is plenteous in redemption, and is able to forgive all our sins.

That's the wonder of it. But it reminds us that we have to give an account to him. And as we all appear before the judgment seat, remember that a sentence will be given.

[24 : 09] A sentence of acquittal if we have an advocate. It's a wonderful thing to go to the courtroom and have an advocate who is there to plead for us. And Jesus Christ is his name.

And if you today are trusting Jesus as Savior, he is both judge and advocate. It's an amazing thing. And he will openly acknowledge and acquit and say, yeah, this man, this woman, he is mine, she is mine.

And there will be an open display before all. But the other side of it is that there will be a sentence. It's a twofold sentence. It's a life imprisonment sentence.

And it's also a death sentence. It's forever. It's an awful thought. But then the apostle, we're just moving through this very quickly, tells us, and time is going to move very quickly.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. Just in a word, I believe that as the apostle is writing to Jewish believers, he's bringing them back to the, because there's so much of the, as you go through this letter, it is so full of the Old Testament and full of the whole Aaronic priesthood and all that was fulfilled in Jesus that we have beautiful pictures given to us.

[25 : 39] And I think that the idea here of Jesus as a great high priest passing through the heavens would have to take us back into the day of atonement where the high priest passed through the veil into the most holy place to make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because one of the accusations that the unbelieving Jews would make to the converted Jews is you've got no altar, you've got no sacrifice, you've got no high priest, you have nothing.

And he's saying here, look, we have, we have a great high priest. And it's not just in the, in the human temple into behind the veil, but he is because, remember, when he died on the cross, the veil was torn in two.

That was the end. There was no more. But he is a complete sacrifice for sin. On that great day of atonement, we remember there was a public work where there was the actual sacrifice before all. But there was that hidden work that went on in the Holy of Holies where the high priest would sprinkle the blood. And similarly on the cross, there was the public work of the slaying of the Son of God who was great high priest and the sacrifice.

[27 : 02] But there was also the hidden work where Jesus on the cross was making atonement for our sin with the Father.

So, in light of all these things, the apostle is saying, let us hold fast our confession. And when we're told there to hold fast, it would obviously mean here's something that's, if you hold something fast, it means it's precious.

If something doesn't mean much to you, you're not too concerned about it. But if it's really important to you, you're always checking that you have it. It's there. I need to have this.

Let's hold fast. Again, the idea of holding fast would almost indicate that there are forces or enemies that would want to rip it away from you. And this is all tied into the striving that we see the Christian is somebody who is striving.

I don't mean that we're striving every single moment. And again, if you're honest with yourself, you will look over your Christian life and you will see periods, yes, you were striving, but other periods, maybe you weren't.

[28 : 14] But it's a big picture. It is where you, where are you, where are you today? Is it, are you somebody who, and you say, Lord, I'm not what I would want to be.

But I am, there's nothing else that I want but to have you and to be with you. And you're asking the Lord to help you in order that you would strive properly.

But then it says in verse 15, 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.

And that's wonderful to know. It doesn't matter where you are today. It doesn't matter how much you're hurting. And there are people in here today who are hurting.

The high priest, this Jesus, is able to sympathize with you. That is to come alongside you. And he's saying to you, I know, I know who you are.

[29 : 20] When you've been through an experience, a particular experience, and somebody else has been through a similar experience, you know that they know. Even although other people might not be able to understand, you know that they can understand.

Well, that's the kind of high priest we have. He knows because he's been there. Gone through all the injustices, the misrepresentations, the false accusations.

He's gone through all the temptations. Remember, there is no temptation. Jesus has been tempted in all points, like as we are yet without sin. And we've often said that temptation does not equal sin.

There is a fine line going from temptation to sin. But temptation in and of itself doesn't equal sin.

Jesus has been tempted in all points. Because maybe you're saying to yourself, Oh, I have temptations nobody knows about.

He was tempted in all points, like as we are. It's an amazing thing. One who, every respect, has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[30 : 34] And then it says, In light of all this, let us approach or let us draw near to the throne of grace. And we're to come in confidence. And this idea here is that we are to have the courage to come to someone who is of a higher rank than we are.

It's like if we were to go to the queen. And if you were to go to the queen and you were to ask her anything, there would be an element of trepidation and uncertainty and saying, I wonder, can I really ask her that?

Well, that's what this word really means. That we have the courage to go to somebody who is higher ranking than we are and to ask us. And that's what we're able to do today.

To go to Jesus. To a throne of grace. And to, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

I hope, my friends, that we are all familiar with this throne. And that daily, we're going to it finding grace and mercy in our time of need.

[31 : 48] Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the fact that we come to a merciful and a gracious God. One who does not deal with us according to our deserving.

For we are told that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. And we give thanks, O Lord, that we are able to lay a hold upon one that is mighty.

We ask, O Lord, to do us good. Bless us, we pray, and part us. We ask with thy blessing. Shield us and shelter us and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Our concluding psalm is from Sing Psalm, Psalm number 34. And we'll sing from verse 15 to the end. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. See? Amen. Amen.■■■