

Where are you going to go when you die? According to a recent survey, only seventeen percent of Americans don't believe in life after death. Seven percent believe in a different kind of afterlife such as reincarnation. A whopping 75% of Americans believe in heaven or hell. Where are you going to go when you die?

This is the question that the author of Hebrews addresses in the first few chapters of the Book of Hebrews. However, our text from Hebrews 4 doesn't use the word heaven, but instead talks about entering rest. The author of Hebrews had a pastoral heart which yearned for his hearers to achieve eternal life, and he warns them against falling away.

I as a pastor have the concern for your eternal salvation. I want you to enter heaven. I want you to be resurrected into the life everlasting rather than eternal death in hell. **TODAY WE ENTER THE SABBATH REST BY FAITH IN GOD'S LIVING WORD.**

First, I. We enter the Sabbath rest by faith alone (v. 1–5). The author of Hebrews reflects on a section of the Old Testament, Psalm 95. This Psalm is a Psalm of praise, but then at the end, it takes a left turn and gives a strict warning against falling away. It is this Psalm that is quoted throughout our passage here.

God's people were in slavery in Egypt. The Lord sent Moses to free the people from slavery through a series of miracles. You would think that they would all have believed in the Lord and gotten to heaven. However, the Bible tells us elsewhere, **“Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”** Most of them didn't make it. Many of the Israelites were sent to hell. These are the same people who saw the Ten Plagues. These are the same people who participated in the Passover. These are the same people who walked through the Red Sea as it miraculously split. If they fell away, how can we hope to be saved?

Indeed, this is how our section of Scripture opens, **“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.”** The Bible tells

us that there is a healthy fear in seeking to reach eternal life. It's not something we should take for granted.

Likewise, our text continues, **“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.”** The point is that the Israelites escaping the promised land also had the good news preached to them. They had the opportunity for eternal life in heaven. However, they didn't believe the message. They didn't have the faith to trust the promises of God, and they didn't enter the promised land.

Jesus Himself soberly warned His hearers saying, **“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”** Many people who claim to be Christian will not receive eternal life.

However, that encourages us to trust the Lord by faith alone. You have plenty of opportunities to hear God's Word. Now more than ever can you watch church services, listen to recorded sermons, or Google information on the Bible. The message of the Gospel is easily accessed. Trust this Good News and believe in it for your salvation.

It doesn't require a certain laundry list of good deeds. You don't have to earn your salvation. You are to simply trust this Word, but this trust is a living and active trust that does more than assuming your ticket is punched so you can do whatever you want in this life. This faith follows Jesus where He promises to be.

Second, II. We enter the Sabbath rest today (v. 6–10). Our text continues in verses 6 and 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.”**

We often think eternal life is this thing way out in the future. We think that's something to deal with when we're a bit older and closer to death. Some may cynically think, "Why let church ruin a good life?" How easy it is to push off Sabbath rest to that far off time.

How often I hear as a pastor, "Sorry, pastor, I'm too busy right now to attend church, maybe I'll go next week." "Pastor, I have work on a Sunday morning, I'm not going to fall away from the faith if I just miss worship for a few months." "Pastor, I'd love to go to your Bible study, but I have too much homework." We think Jesus is far away, and that His return or our deaths are years in the future. Sabbath Rest to many is a perpetual tomorrow.

Those who think this are dead wrong. The Lord offers the peace of Sabbath rest today. Today means now, not next week, next month, or tomorrow. Thus, there is an urgency to this message, but the good news is that these gifts of God are for us, right now.

The author of Hebrews contrasts the work of Joshua from the work of Jesus. If you remember correctly, Moses didn't enter the promised land. Instead, Joshua succeeded Moses and led the people to the promised land. **"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,"** If Joshua completed the work for salvation, there would be no need for the second Joshua, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is our second Joshua who has brought us to the promised land. Instead of taking us out of Egypt, He has died to forgive the sins of you and me, and He rose again to proclaim victory over sin, death, and the devil. And just as Jesus rose from the dead, we have the promise of rest even now.

The promise of rest is here right now even as Christ has done all things for you. The promise of peace is here today as you no longer need to earn favor with God. The promise of forgiveness is here today as Jesus invites you to follow Him and have a new start.

Finally, III. God's living Word causes us to enter that Sabbath rest (v. 11–13). Our text concludes with the following: **"Let us**

therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.” Let us not take our salvation for granted. Sometimes a mom will say of her daughter, “I know she doesn’t go to church, but I know she has faith deep down.” I know you may believe that, but wouldn’t you want to know beyond a shadow of a doubt? Don’t you want her to join you in heaven? Pray for her! Have that difficult conversation with her. Ask her why she stopped going to church. Tell her how important Jesus is in your life, and why He should matter to her, also!

And our text ends with a word of encouragement. **“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.”** God’s Word changes lives. Only the Bible reads you as you read it. It cuts to your heart and gives you the peace, comfort, and joy that you need to get from one day to the next.

Our church body follows a set schedule of readings every Sunday. You could look into the future ten years and know what the reading will be for a given Sunday. Nonetheless growing up, there were many Sundays I would attend worship, and find that the reading was exactly what I needed to hear that morning based on the struggle I experienced that week.

How would my life have been different if I just chose to skip worship that Sunday? Likely I would have thought that the Lord wasn’t speaking to me. That couldn’t be further from the truth. The Lord was speaking, but I wouldn’t have been there to listen.

Rejoice dear Christian friend, the Word of God is living and active, and He has a word for you today. **“Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”** This powerful Word reaches out to you today, and He has the power to change lives. Our Heavenly Father wants you to go to Heaven to enter His rest, listen closely, and He’ll take you there!