

rest assured

hebrews 4.1-16

Hebrews chapter 4 this morning. Picking up from last week we're going to get more discussion of God's rest and what He has in store for His people, if we're willing to receive it.

Hebrews 4.1-16 - Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:

“So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’ ”

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”

Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

A homeless man believed to be living on the streets of Bolivia fled police who were bringing him news of a \$6-million inheritance. Tomas Martinez, 67, apparently thought the police were about to arrest him for his alcohol and drug habits. The man disappeared without a trace, causing Bolivian newspapers to speak of him in the year 2000 as a "new millionaire paradoxically not knowing his fortune". The inheritance came to Mr. Martinez from his ex-wife, who inherited the money herself from family members. She evidently did not blame him for leaving her several years ago.

The man has never since been found.

An inheritance is something that you want to know about. Some of you may have been left something in a deceased relation's will. It's kind of an interesting sociological thing. "I knew you, so now that I'm dead, why don't you have my boat!" It's a great gift to be given, but if you don't go to the reading of the will and you never make it down to the harbor, you're not going to realize that there's a free boat out there waiting for you.

God has promised an inheritance to us as His people. We've been talking about it for a chapter or two in this series. In this section of Hebrews the author is reminding us that it's all too easy to miss out on the benefits of our salvation in our daily lives.

There are some Christians or groups or traditions that altogether miss the daily interaction of God in the lives of His people. Salvation becomes all about being saved from hell, and practically speaking, that's it. There's no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there's no gifts given to build up the Church, there's no daily filling and flowing of God's power in your life. They view Christ's work as a future salvation and then live out life as if they've been left alone by God to just try not to sin too much. It's a sad version of Christianity.

Then there are some Christians who don't really take into account God's work in saving us from our past, forgiving those sins we've committed. They give their lives to the Lord, but they're always feeling guilty or condemned as if God may not really be able to overcome the things they did in the past.

For each of those Christians there is a greater understanding of all that God has done and still intends to do in our lives. In Scripture the Lord directly says that we do not need to feel condemnation, that He can make all things new if we're willing to give our lives to Him. It's not that we forget the things we've done in the past, but in Christ there is no condemnation. Our sin and our guilt have been purged forever.

For those struggling with their past and the other believers who see salvation as really only future-oriented, death-oriented, the Bible comes along and explains that there is a purpose and a power and a rest for our lives *today* as we live in this time and this place where God has scattered us. There is an inheritance for us to enjoy today as His people, if we're willing to receive and enter into that inheritance and rest.

What's so wonderful about salvation is that God has dealt with our past, He's taken care of our future, and then He says, "Follow Me *today*, so that we can do something together that will revolutionize this lost and dying world."

What this chapter reminds us of is that failing to follow God into the inheritance He has for us is not only missing out on incredible spiritual blessings, but it's also sin. When we fail to follow after Christ as disciples, carrying out His commandments and taking hold of the yoke He's prepared for us, we're showing the same sinful disobedience that the Israelites did in the wilderness on the edge of Canaan.

God brought them there through the desert and said, "I have this incredible land I want you to inherit. I want you to go in and work there and harvest fruit and build cities and be My special people, representing Me to the world." And the people said, "We'd rather not." And the Lord said to them, "I don't think you understand. I'm not a realtor. I'm not going to show you 4 different Promised Lands in your price range to see which one you like the best."

I think that's how we think of God sometimes. He comes to us and by His Spirit starts leading us somewhere, He pricks our hearts to do a work for Him or a service to Him, and sometimes we say, "Well....what *ELSE* You got, Lord? You're leading me to give, or You're leading me to get involved, but I'm looking for something in a 2-bedroom, Saturday morning from 9 to 10 range."

But you see, God has commanded us to follow Him and go into some land to represent Him and make disciples and He's commanded us to do it *today*. And if we choose not to do that, we're disobeying and we're sinning just like the Israelites did and we're going to fall very short of what God wants for our lives. What He wants is for us to enter His rest, His inheritance, His yoke today because it is not only so much better for us, but for the people around us as well.

We understand that when we read about it. When we read those passages where Jesus invited people to come follow Him and they give their lame excuses, as readers we're so disappointed because we can see what they missed out on. We understand that they were holding onto some worthless, temporal thing compared to the offer of following the Messiah. Guys like the Rich Young Ruler, it breaks our heart when we read that because we look at his decision and think, "Don't choose money over the Lord! Your money is so worthless compared to walking around with Jesus Christ!" But the same command and calling into discipleship has been given to each of us. And since that promise of rest remains, we should fearfully move forward toward the Lord, paying close attention to our lives so that we aren't the Rich Young Ruler ourselves. Today we're supposed to **live out** the Christian life and actually walk in discipleship.

How do we do that?

Well, according to our passage, we do it by exercising faith in what God has said. Meaning we hear God's word and then we **do** God's word. Whatever situations present themselves to me today, whether they're in the form of relationships or decisions or opportunities or struggles, whatever is coming my way, the way I enter into the inheritance God has for my life is to **do the word**.

It is by exercising active faith in what God has said that He is then able to bring heavenly profit and spiritual fruit to my life. That's what He's wanted to do all along and He does not hold those things back. We're the ones that hold ourselves back from God's inheritance.

That was the problem the Israelites had there in the book of Numbers. They heard the word, the Good News of God's Promised Land, along with that a new life to live full of power and help and fruitfulness, but the word they heard did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith by those who heard it.

And so, God said to them and to us as well, if you cannot exercise faith, you cannot enter God's rest. Meaning the fullness of His plan for your life. You'll be out there toiling in some spiritual wilderness under some yoke that is heavy to bear. The Lord wants to bring us into a very special, power-filled life, but without faith it is impossible to please God and without faith we do not find the rest we're looking for.

Faith is simply moving forward in your life today believing what God has said. We've seen what God promises to give His people in His word, but we have to show up as disciples to receive it.

We have to do what Peter and Andrew and James and John did and say, “OK, I’m going to leave my old life behind and allow Christ to dictate not only my future, but my day today.”

William Barclay wrote:

“It is one of the facts of history that wherever men have taken God’s word seriously, things have begun to happen. When people take God seriously they immediately realize that God’s word is not only something to be studied; it is not only something to be read; it is not only something to be written about; it is something to be done. The word of God is penetrating.”

As we read the Bible we should come to the conclusion that God wants to do something through our lives today. This passage certainly says so. We should come to the understanding that God is saying that He wants to take His power and work it through our lives in the sorts of ways that we see Him working through His people in the Scriptures. And if we believe that, we should act like it.

Now, obviously there are different dispensations. We don’t expect our lives to mirror Moses’. Nor do we demand that God do the exact same works in our lives that He did in the apostles’, but when we read the Bible we should understand that for us, as God’s people, nothing is different. God is the same. His power is the same. His plan is the same. The need is the same. If anything, the urgency and necessity for God’s work is greater than ever as the time of His return is sooner than ever.

So this chapter pleads with us to remember that the work God wanted to do in and through the lives of the Israelites and in and through the lives of the first century Christians is the same work God wants to do today. Same power. Same plan. Same rest and inheritance made available to those who are willing to follow. So today we’re asked to pay attention to hear God’s voice and soften our hearts and *respond* by mixing that word with active faith.

Every day there remains more spiritual fruit, more of a heavenly inheritance for us, so we must be diligent to enter that rest. We shouldn’t run from it. We shouldn’t put off the spiritual life in order to live an ordinary life. Our text there at the end says that we can go boldly before God and claim the mercy and the grace and the peace that He has promised to us.

And we do that by living out our Christianity today. Following God’s leading. Not living an affiliated Christianity, but an *active* Christianity, where our thoughts and our opinions and our decisions are motivated and dictated by what God has said in His word. And if we do that, the Holy Spirit says we won’t fall short, but we’ll be living full throttle Christian lives and we’ll enter that rest that’s available to us.

Today is the day. Using the analogy from Sunday’s sermon in Jeremiah: Get in the arena today. Get out there and compete for the Gospel. Leave this place and conquer ground for Christ our King in whatever situations you find yourself.