

A Sabbath Rest; Hebrews 4:8-15

I. Rest

- A. The idea of rest is very important to God
- B. Genesis 2:1–3 (ESV); ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
- C. The Mosaic Law of keeping the Sabbath comes from this idea
- D. Exodus 20:10–11 (ESV); ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- E. Jesus often went to rest during His ministry
- F. Luke 5:15–16 (NASB95); But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.
- G. The Hebrew writer connects God's rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath from the Mosaic Law and a Sabbath rest for Christians

II. Canaan

- A. The Hebrew writer is appealing to Hebrew Christians to remain faithful
 1. At this time many are leaving their faith in Jesus to return to the Mosaic Law
 2. The writer uses many illustrations to point out that the Law is inferior to Christ
 3. The Sabbath is one of them (by comparing their disobedience that led to them wandering in the desert for 40 years — and finally achieving rest in Canaan)
 4. Hebrews 4:8 (ESV); For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.
- B. The writer goes on to tell us that we have a Sabbath rest waiting on us
- C. Hebrews 4:9–10 (ESV); So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.
 1. The writer is telling the Hebrews who are leaving Christianity that the Christian's Sabbath is so much better than the Sabbath of the Mosaic Law
 2. Something much better than even the rest of Canaan
 3. Just as God rested when He finished his work we have a rest when we finish our work
 4. Our work is finished when this body gives out and our soul goes to be with the Father, Son, and Spirit
 5. Our Sabbath rest is Heaven

III. Strive

- A. Hebrews 4:11 (ESV); Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
- B. I imagine the plea something like this, “don't leave an eternal Sabbath in the presence of God for one day a week without Him”
 1. The writer connects their fall (spiritual death — likened to the fall of those in the wilderness during their 40 year wandering) with their disobedience
 2. Numbers 14:11–12 (ESV); ¹¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹² I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”
 3. Numbers 14:28–30 (ESV); ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this

wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

4. The people's disobedience to God caused their spiritual death
5. Strive — to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort ¹
6. Is this the description we would give to our Christianity?

C. A Two-Edged Sword

1. Hebrews 4:12–13 (ESV); 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 of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ 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.
2. We usually quote this in reference to the Scriptures — and I don't think there is anything wrong with that
3. But I want us to notice verse 13 — “no creature is hidden from HIS sight”
4. Just as John calls Jesus the Word in John 1, so does the writer of Hebrews
5. The Word of God (Jesus) is living and active
6. He is working in our lives to complete us, to make us effective Christian men and women
7. We must be obedient to Him — He will know if we are not
8. If we think we are fooling God by behaving one way when we are around other Christians and another when we are not, we are really only fooling ourselves
9. God knows your (our) very thoughts and intentions
10. I have often said that I cannot know someones intent — the reason why they behave a certain way
11. We are often tempted to judge people harshly (or wrongly) because we have tried to figure out their intent — but we cannot
12. Only God can look into our very soul and know why we behave the way we do
13. Listen to A.B. Davidson talking about the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, specifically the burnt offering
 - a) “To the state in which the sacrifices called burnt offerings were laid on the altar. They were stripped of their skins, their breasts were ripped open, their bowels were taken out, and their backbone was cleft.
 - b) This is the import of the original word. Then they were divided into quarters; so that outwardly and inwardly they were fully exposed to the eye of the priest, in order to a thorough examination (Leviticus 1:5,6); and, being found without blemish, they were laid in their natural order upon the altar and burnt.” ²
 - c) Could you imagine being laid on the altar and God inspecting you in such a manner? — This is idea behind Hebrews 4:12-13
14. 1 John 1:6–7 (ESV); ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
15. 1 John 2:4–5 (ESV); ⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 939.

² A. B. Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, Scotland 1882), p. 96.

16. 1 John 2:9–11 (ESV); ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

17. While we may be able to fool other people, we cannot fool God!

D. Striving to enter that rest means a close examination of ourselves

1. Our motives

2. Our behavior

3. Our thoughts

4. Do we love Christ more than even our mother, father, brother, or sister?

5. Luke 14:26–27 (ESV); ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

IV. Our Sabbath

A. He has given us an eternal rest with Him in heaven

B. He knows our hearts, our intentions

C. We are laid bare before the Almighty God

D. So strive to enter that rest in which God sacrificed his only (unique) Son so we could have access