

Strive to Enter God's Rest

So far through in this section of Hebrews, we have learned that there were those who, because of unbelief, could not enter into God's rest. Because of unbelief there are religious people of every generation that have not and will not know God's rest. This is an eternal rest, one that is a symbolic reference to heaven. The writer of Hebrews wants the church, which includes all of us, to be aware of the danger that exists in coming up short; those who know who God is but have not surrendered their life to Him in believing faith will not know God's rest. Only true Christians will enter into God's rest. A true Christian, as described in Scripture, is one who knows and believes in Jesus Christ of the Bible as God and as their Lord and Savior. Because they have saving faith, they are indwelt with God the Holy Spirit and they live out their belief and obey His Word. One's knowing and belief is proven by the living of one's life in obedience to His Word. The natural result of one who truly believes is as Paul instructed, they ¹⁶ "... walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... ²² the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 22-25) The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of God changing a person from the inside out into His children that live for His honor and glory.

Jesus spoke of people with saving faith and those who thought they were saved, but were not. Those who thought they were right with God but the reality of

their beliefs and lives as they were lost. Jesus told parables to demonstrate to people this very problem; the parables of the sower (Mt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:1-20; and Lk 8:4-15), the dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50), the unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:21-35), the wedding garments (Mt. 22:1-10; Lk. 14:16-24), the wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-13), the narrow door (Lk. 13:22-30) and the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25:31-46). The danger of believing in a false Christ or believing a false doctrine or thinking you can earn your salvation by your own efforts is a real problem and it is important we take a look at it today. Why? Because the Holy Spirit believes it to be important, so He instructed the writer of Hebrews to address it, so we should consider it.

Here is a primary truth found throughout the Bible and dealt with in Hebrews chapter 4; *God's Word searches and reveals the belief of our hearts. Failure to listen, believe and act on what is revealed in God's Word will result in judgment because it shows a lack of true faith.*

Pray

Enter By Faith and Action (v. 11)

Here at the beginning, in verse 11 we are reminded that we must be very careful not to reject God's promises. "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience." As we continue the theme that has run through the last few weeks, Israel rejected God's promises and died in their unbelief. We are reminded that we must take care so we do not fall into the same trap. The writer is making sure we see that rejecting God's promises might be easier than we think. We can reject them outright and we can reject them by neglect.

In order to better understand what the writer means by “strive to enter”, we should look at another text as an illustration. Please move forward in your Bible to 2 Peter chapter 1. I will begin reading at verse 3, “**His Jesus divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue**, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸**For if these qualities are yours and are increasing**, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for **if you practice these qualities you will never fall**. ¹¹For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here Peter lays a foundation of faithfulness built upon Jesus providing everything one needs to grow in godliness. God’s promises are great and have and will continue to come to pass for His people. These assurances are true and are a blessing to God’s children, but at the same time, we are instructed we **must** “**make every effort to supplement your faith with**” virtues and actions that cause one to grow spiritually. Returning to verse 8 this is made clear, ⁸**For if these qualities are yours and are increasing**, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore,

brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for **if you practice these qualities you will never fall.** ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

In striving to add all these godly characteristics to our faith, we are making our calling and election sure and one sees the fruit of the Spirit lived out. Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have the foundation of these qualities and by His power we seek to grow spiritually making this calling even more sure. Our assurance grows and becomes observable when we are striving in godliness. As believers, our growing faith and bearing more of the fruit of righteousness we can have assurance that our salvation is genuine. This is the difference in knowing Jesus and knowing God and knowing Scripture - and the believing in one's heart and soul the things of God and from this belief there is an outpouring of the fruit of the Spirit in one's life.

What is even more remarkable about verse 11 is when seen in context, it is teaching us, as the church, that we together should not allow anyone to fall without the church's interceding for them. This we do in prayer and in exhortation and if needed in discipline. That is why it is so important that we have a proper understanding of the church's role in the salvation of each member. Christ's church, we as a community, working together with the Holy Spirit helps with the growth in sanctification of its members.

That is why I am asking **Dale** to now read our **church covenant**. That was short and simple, but it is a great challenge to each of us and to us as a community. Let me ask, are you up to the challenge God is putting before your life? Each person and family committing to this covenant will enable us to grow into the

church God wants us to be. This commitment and this covenant is step one in someone coming under the protection of the church. Membership is for folks who wish to have the church's help in caring for their soul. Our church needs to be a refuge from the corruption of the world; Canyon Bible needs to be a safe place, with the atmosphere of love, grace and mercy. Being a person of love and grace and mercy means you open yourself up to be hurt at times, but the goal is we care for each other, we pray for each other, we cry together, laugh together, mourn together, celebrate together and feed each other with the Word of God to strengthen each other to not just survive in the corruption of the world, but to shine the light of Jesus Christ into the darkness and show people the path to salvation. So, let me ask, how are we doing? I would say we fall short of what Jesus wants His church, this church, to be; and that shortcoming begins with me. I can be more patient, loving, kind, uplifting, supporting, caring of those of my biological family and those of you here that are my spiritual family. So, even though we may be short of the goal, the writer says we are to strive to enter God's rest and as we do so, we are striving to become the children He wants us to be and the church community Jesus wants us to be. How about it – my beloved, are you ready to strive to love others more than yourself? Are you willing to be open and expose your heart, even at the risk of being hurt? This is what it will take for us to grow into a more loving and doctrinally sound community? Are you willing to confront each other in love when you are hurt so there can be repentance and reconciliation – is this not the goal? What say you?

As you can see, sanctification is both an individual and community goal, and both are needed and necessary. America as it has journeyed away from Christianity and family as its foundation and America no longer sees the importance of the local church as key to community, America is suffering and many churches have

followed society and have lost their way. Many churches have followed these society trends and no longer hold fast to the Word of God as the guide to life. But the truth of the matter is and the Scriptures teach, my sanctification depends a lot on you and yours on me and together, as the body of Christ, we must hold fast to God's Word.

So, the “**strive to enter that rest**”, and God's rest is two-fold; individual and community. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 10 speaks to the individual's need to strive or hold-fast to their faith. Reading beginning at verse 19, “**Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,** ²⁰ **by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,** ²¹ **and since we have a great priest over the house of God,** ²² **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.** ²³ **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.**” We must cling to Jesus with every ounce of strength we have to withstand the evil of this world. The writer continues in verse 24 with our responsibility as a community and the benefit of community. ²⁴“**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,** ²⁵ **not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**” We are in this journey and battle together and we have a responsibility towards each other. Are you and are we willing to step up and strive to honor Christ by making Canyon Bible a community of sacrificial love to God first and then for others?

My beloved, consider these questions. What is the means by which we as individuals and as a community grow in faith and stand up against the world? If we want to make progress in godliness, what should we do? Peter's 2nd epistle, we just

examined, tells us we have everything we need for godliness. What is it exactly that promotes godliness in our lives? Let's continue and discover what God wants us to learn about entering His rest.

Enter Through God's Word (v. 12-13)

The writer now explains how it is that we enter the rest of God. Reading at 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 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." Please take notice of 3 important words found within these 2 verses; the Word of God is "**living**", "**active**" and "**exposed**". We are going to explore these 3 words. I believe the writer builds verses 12 and 13 on verse 2, "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." What the writer is communicating to us is that God's Word cannot be taken lightly and everyone will give an account. God does not tolerate neglect or indifference to His Word by individuals or churches. If we do not listen and are not united in faith built upon God's Word there is no eternal benefit.

The Word Is Living

The Word of God was not just written by men who are dead and gone and what they wrote does not relate to us here in the 21st Century. It is written by God Himself; it is God who gave the words and thoughts for these men to write. The Holy Spirit moved on the writers and they wrote what He wanted them to write. The Holy Spirit is alive and well today. The Triune God is the only Living God and that is why the Word is called the Living Word. This is why the Word of

God is not confined to any period of history but lives eternal. Peter inspired by God taught, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth (Word of God) for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” (1 Peter 1:22-23) God is “imperishable” and that makes those who believe and are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, their souls are “imperishable” by and “through the living and abiding word of God.”

The Word Is Active

God’s Word is powerful and effective to accomplish what God wants. God’s plan for the universe, for this world, for all people of all times will happen as He has decreed. As the prophet Isaiah wrote the words of God, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ ‘For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout’ (Ps. 148:8), giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:9-11)

The Word of God is like an angel, in the sense, that it speeds along to accomplish its mission. Every time the Word is read, heard, preached or sung it accomplishes God’s purpose and we benefit. It will accomplish His purpose without us, but when we are faithful His Word strengthens our souls to eternity. One of God’s purposes, which I freely admit I do not fully understand, is His Word hardens the hearts of some and it make other’s hearts into hearts of flesh that love and seek God, but in both cases I have no doubt that His Word is accomplishing His purposes. As Paul reminded the early church in Corinth, “For the word of the

cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18) To deny the Word of God is to rebel against the very power that saves us. Those who say they can enter into God’s presence based on their good works forfeit all possibilities for doing this because they deny the very thing that has the power to change them. Again, Paul clarifies, ⁸“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) The Word cuts us open and exposes the reality of our hearts. For those who fell in the desert, the Word revealed their unbelief. They perished, for those who are being saved, the Word reveals faith.

The Word Exposes Truth

When I was a kid, I loved rocks and enjoyed turning over rocks. Sometimes you would turn over a rock and see nothing. Other times you would see worms, spiders and bugs – which my mom did not appreciate when I brought them into the house to show her. God sees all the bugs, He sees everything, including the hearts of people. Verse 13 reads, “no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Sometimes we might think sin is hidden from God, like the hidden bugs you cannot see under the rock. God’s Word exposes our innermost hidden thoughts and sins. It is like the Word turns over the rock we are trying to hide our sin under and it becomes open for God to see. The Word of God also exposes our hearts to our self.

There are times when we like to hide our sin from ourself. We have a high opinion of our own righteousness. Sometimes we deceive ourselves in thinking we are a whole lot better than we really are. God’s Word exposes the reality of our spiritual condition and our spouses see us more clearly than we see ourselves. The

church is to help each member recognized and deal with sin, to repent and reconcile with God and people.

The Word of God probes our inmost being. It cuts and pierces into the depths of the heart. Calvin and some of the early church fathers used to call our hearts “labyrinths” because they can be a maze and we struggle to find the right path. Even when you look at them, you cannot quite figure them out. You cannot quite figure out the complex of motives that led you to do certain things. No matter how long you think about it. The heart is a mysterious labyrinth. You cannot figure it out but God’s Word can sort it out. It can penetrate and understand and analyze. It cuts and pierces the depths of our hearts and it unravels mystery. The word of God is sharp, it is able to penetrate, analyze and discern. Again, this exposes the need for Christ’s church as the writer of Hebrews wrote in chapter 3, ¹² “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.” (Hebrews 3:12-14)

For the religious lost, the Word of God is what is held up as the minimum requirement that they must line up with perfectly. They will be judged accordingly. In the Old Testament, the Hebrews who failed to believe were all judged in the wilderness and destroyed. For believers today, we also fail to line up perfectly to God’s Word. We miss the mark as well. So, why are we not destroyed? Because of our believing faith in Christ. We can stand before God because of the work of Christ on our behalf. He keeps God’s Word perfectly and we are accepted into God’s family because of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We celebrate our standing before God through the work of Christ as we partake together of the Lord's Supper. Part of the Lord's Supper is accountability as a member of the Body of Christ. We must take of it in a worthy manner, again this expressed the need for every Christian to be part of a church. This is one reason I asked Dale to read our covenant today. I hope it sparked in your mind and heart the question these questions. What is it the Lord wants our church to be? What it is the Lord wants from you to help make Canyon bible the church He wants it to be? How can you exhibit more love and grace and compassion and kindness towards those of this church?

Let me close with a couple of thoughts and statements I want you to think on this week.

The Word's Light Exposes Darkness

The world since the fall has been corrupt and often in societies throughout history the corruption begins in secret and hides in darkness. As the corruption grows it becomes prideful and forces itself onto society and grows in its openness and evil and corruption. Once the corruption has infected the majority of society it begins the death process of that society. History has shown us this cycle over and over. The evil one and those under his influence make 2 critical mistakes. First, they either think God is dead or He will not act. God's patience only goes so far and even all this mounting evil that has sweep across society like a tsunami God's plans and purposes will not fail. Secondly, as these evil corrupt leaders work to gain control of society, they think they can destroy God's Church. They do corrupt those church that fail to hold onto the Word of God, but the Remnant Church's light shines al the brighter into the darkness. So, it should take us by surprise of the

growing corruption of our government and society. God has us here for this time to be His light to the world. Individually, we may not be strong enough.

So, this is another reason as we have explored this morning for the church. God says we are to live in community and in community we are stronger. My beloved, I hear people talk about moving to get away from the corruption of Governor Lujan and her government. Where would one go? The corruption is growing everywhere. God is telling us, as a church, as a community to prepare for battle, here and now! Ephesian chapter 6 speak of this, hear the call of God to each of us and to us as a church, ¹⁰ “**Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.** ¹¹ **Put on the whole armor of God,** that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up **the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,** and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the **belt of truth,** and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness,** ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the **gospel of peace.** ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith,** with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the **helmet of salvation,** and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,** ¹⁸ **praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance,** making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth **boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.**” (Ephesians 6:10-19) My beloved, the battle is upon us – may we prove to be faithful to God and each other. Amen!