

A question that people will sometimes ask you is, have you been saved? And of course, what they mean by that question is, are you a Christian? But I think it's a really interesting question because there's a way in which you can answer quite seriously both yes and no. Because the Bible speaks of salvation in three different ways. Sometimes the Bible says that we have been saved, that salvation is something that happened in the past. We see this, for example, in Ephesians 2 when it says, by grace you have been saved. And sometimes the Bible speaks of salvation as something that is happening right now, something that's happening in the present. We see an example of this in 1 Corinthians where it says, 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. And sometimes the Bible speaks of salvation as something in the future, something still yet to come. We get an example in Romans 13 when it says, for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. So yes, it is both yes and no. As a Christian, I have been saved, yes. But also as a Christian, I have not yet been saved, no. Both of these things are true.

And both of them are true Christians because as our epistle reading from Hebrews chapter four shows us, we are still waiting for God's promised rest. As Christians, we have been saved. Yes, we've been forgiven in this life. That is true. But we have also not yet been saved because we are waiting for what is still to come. We are waiting for what to be set free from the power of sin. We are waiting for the promised rest of God. And as long as we're in this tension, as long as we're still in this body, waiting for what is to come. We must be on guard so that we do not take God's grace for granted and end up missing his promised rest. That is the very heart of our Epistle reading for today.

Because Israel in the wilderness way back in the days of the Old Testament certainly had all of the promises of God. They even saw the mighty works of God. Israel saw God at work in Egypt. Israel saw God at work in the Red Sea. They had everything you could ever ask for and more besides. They should have believed. but they didn't listen. They turned from God and they perished in the wilderness so that they did not enter into the rest that God has promised to them and to us. And their failure, Christians, serves as a warning for us. Let us take care that we do not become like them.

That's why our reading begins the way that it does starting in verse one. Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear. Thus, any of you should have seemed to have failed to reach it for good news came to us justice to them. But the message they heard did not benefit them because they were not united by faith with those who listen. Their failure doesn't mean that God's promise is broken, of course. God still brings that promise to us. His promise of entering into His rest still stands good. But if we hear and refuse to listen, just like Israel did so long ago, then we will become like them and not enter into the rest of God. Because hearing the gospel and believing the gospel are not the same thing.

And Christians, I think that this is a danger that so many people fall into, to confuse hearing the gospel with faith, to think that they are one and the same thing. But they're not. Because we might end up thinking that as long as I know something about Jesus, as long as I think I know something about Jesus, that therefore I am saved. As long as I say that I am a Christian, for example, as long as I have my names on the membership role somewhere, I'm going to end up in heaven because that is good enough. Even if I've never done or said a Christian thing in my life, I'm going to have a Christian funeral in a Christian church someday. Even though I haven't been in church for 40 years. Hearing the gospel is not faith, Christians. Hearing leads to faith. And faith shows itself in what we say and do. Being a hearer only is not going to save anyone. Israel and the wilderness heard and yet they perished. We must hear and believe or to put it a little bit

differently, we must listen, listen to God and lay hold of his promises so that we walk in his ways also today. And when we do that, we will enter into his rest tomorrow.

What is that rest? What is Hebrews talking about? Well, we'll go on in the next part of the reading starting in verse 3. For we who have believed enter that rest as he has said as I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest although his works were finished from the foundation of the world for he has spoken somewhere of the seventh day in this way. And God rested on the seventh day from all his works. And again, in this passage, he said, they shall not enter my rest. Now I'll admit that these three verses are extremely dense. And so we need to unpack them a little bit so that we can see the point of what this is trying to say. So it starts out by saying that we who believe, who actually listen and believe, will enter into the promised rest. Which implies of course, on the other hand, that those who do not believe, those who do not listen will not enter into that rest. And that's why it goes on to quote Psalm 95, which is talking about those who perished in the wilderness. They did not enter God's rest because they refused to listen. That's the point of the first part of this passage.

But then it focuses on that word rest. What is that rest? And more specifically, where else do we see rest in the Bible? Well, in Genesis chapter two, where it says that God rested from his works on the seventh day. That is the rest that we're talking about here. This is the rest that Israel did not enter. And this is the rest which waits for those who believe in God because God's rest is not just an earthly rest. It's not just sitting around doing nothing the way that we might do when we're God's rest is his glory and he entered into that rest on the seventh day from the foundation of the world and God's rest continues forever, so that all who believe in him will enter into that rest too. We will become like him and enter into his glory that is ours through Jesus Christ.

And this promise of a coming rest Christians is made to all who believe even now. It's not just something for way back when something that came to an end a long time ago, because notice how Genesis speaks of the creation. It says that something happens on a day and then that day comes to an end, right? On the first day, God created the light, separated the darkness. There was evening, there was morning the first day. On the second day, God created the expanse, separated waters from waters. There was evening, there was morning, the second day and so on and so forth. But it doesn't say that for the seventh day. It doesn't say, and God rested from all his works and there was evening and there was morning the seventh day. It doesn't say that at all because God's rest has not come to an end. God's rest will never come to an end.

And that promise that he makes to all who believe is for all time because it is a rest which is eternal. This is why Hebrews goes on to say starting in verse six, 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 afterwards. And the words already quoted today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts for if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. The point here is that David wrote Psalm 95 and David lived a long time after the creation. Even lived a very long time after the days of Israel in the wilderness. So when he says today, if you hear your hear his voice, he's not talking about something a long time ago, something before his time. He's talking about a promise that is true today, that was true for his generation. That was true for the generations after him. That was true for our generation and for every generation to come. It is a promise that God has made for all time calling on us to listen to him today.

Because we should not leave these things for tomorrow, Christians. You may not have a tomorrow and mercy is something that will come to an end. Someday there will be no more mercy. Mercy does not belong to tomorrow. Mercy belongs to today. Today is the day of

forgiveness. Today is the day of promise. Today is the day of life. So listen to his voice. Believe in Jesus Christ while it is still today.

And those who enter in those who listen today will enter into God's rest tomorrow. It says starting in verse nine, so then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. So we who believe them, are still waiting to be saved. Mercy belongs to today. Yes, mercy is something that we should lay hold of now. In that sense, I am already a Christian, but the rest that has been promised to me belongs to tomorrow. As long as I am still in this flesh, the great Sabbath rest has not yet come. It is still something in the future.

Now it is true, God gives me a little taste of this rest even now. Whenever we gather together here in church on Sunday morning, we are given a small experience of that rest that will be ours in eternity. The weekly Sabbath of receiving God's word and receiving the sacraments is a small foretaste of what will be. But then Monday morning always comes. The weekly Sabbath comes to an end. And so we are still waiting for the full rest. We are waiting for the glory that is still to be. And those who listen will enter into that rest. They will enter into the glory of God.

Christians, let us therefore strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. Let us never take the grace of God for granted. Let us seek the Lord while he may be found. Let us call on him while he is near. Let us turn away from evil while it is still today and let us listen to his voice when he calls because all who turn to him and listen to his voice believing on him through Jesus Christ, his son will be saved and will enter into the promised Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Let us pray.

Lord God who has promised rest to all those who believe in Jesus Christ, lead us in the way of righteousness so that we may see you face to face. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.