



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

Be Diligent to Enter God's Rest Psalm 95; Hebrews 3, 4 Studies on Christ in the Psalms

At one time or other we all long for REST. Near the end of a challenging 60-day session we may look forward to adjournment and the break from all the meetings, sessions, and debates. We may anticipate a vacation and a break from hectic lives to spend time with our families. We may simply long for the end to a busy or challenging day when we can just sit down and REST.

God's Word uses the picture of REST to vividly describe our relationship with God and our walk with Him. Psalm 95 calls us to remember and worship God for who He is and all He has done for us. When we do so, we can enter in to the rest He has provided for us.

Psalm 95

Praise to the Lord, and Warning against Unbelief

*¹O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
²Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
³For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth,
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it,
And His hands formed the dry land.
⁶Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
⁷For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.
Today, if you would hear His voice,
⁸Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
⁹"When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.
¹⁰"For forty years I loathed that generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.
¹¹"Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest."*

This Psalm points us to the events of the people of Israel recorded for us in Numbers 14. They had been delivered from their bondage in Egypt. They had crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and saw the destruction of Pharaoh's armies. They were provided water and manna in the wilderness. Yet nearly every step of the way the people would murmur and complain about their circumstances.

They were given the law, the tabernacle, and the promises of God that they would be His special people, and they made a commitment to be faithful to God to worship and obey Him.

Now the time had come for them to enter the Promise Land of Canaan. The spies were sent out and returned with the report of how wonderful and fruitful the land was but also how formidable were the cities and inhabitants. They grumbled against Moses and in a profound act of unbelief they refused to go into the Promise Land. As a result, God made them to wonder 40 years until all that adult generation died in the wilderness.

These are the events spoken of in Psalm 95. In this Psalm we see an inspiring call to worship and trust in God, and a fearful warning against unbelief and disobedience.

An Inspiring Call to Worship

Verses 1-7 give us an inspiring call to worship and trust in God. As we read these words we are encouraged to remember all that God has done and provided. When we do so, we *sing for joy* and *shout joyfully*. We come to Him with *thanksgiving* and *singing*. We do so because He is our *great God and King*, the *creator of all things*. This call to worship climaxes:

*⁶Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
⁷For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*

When we remember who God is, and all that He has done for us, and recognize He is our Good Shepherd, then we will trust and follow Him. When we don't we fall into unbelief and disobedience. It is this tendency toward lack of faith and obedience to which the Psalmist gives us a fearful warning in verses 7-11.

A Fearful Warning against Unbelief

The Psalmist warns us against hardening our hearts as the people of Israel did. Though they had seen God work mightily they tested Him by their murmuring and complaining. They did not know God's ways and they "erred in their hearts" when they refused to obey God and

enter the Promise Land. As a result, God laid down His harsh but righteous judgment: **“They shall not enter into My rest”**. The land of Canaan had been described as a “resting place” for the people of Israel (Deut. 12:9). The land had been promised to Abraham many years before. Because of their disobedience, that generation could not enter in to the rest that God provided.

A Picture of Christ and Our Salvation

This Psalm provides a vivid picture of all that Christ has done for us and what our response should be to Him.

Psalms give us great descriptions of Christ’s character and His work. (It is Christ who is our Good Shepherd). But many Psalms are specifically pointed out in the New Testament to refer to our Savior and what He did for us. We turn to Hebrews 3 and 4 and find that the rest of the Promise Land in the Old Testament is a picture or shadow that is fulfilled in the rest Christ has provided for us in our salvation. (I would encourage you to take time to read Hebrews 3-4 as you continue this study).

The Book of Hebrews was written to a group made up of mainly Jewish people (“the Hebrews”). In this assembly were some who had genuinely repented and put their faith in Christ. Others had heard and seemed to believe the gospel and made an outward profession of faith. This group was undergoing great persecution and societal pressure to give up the Christian faith and return to Old Testament system of law, priests, sacrifices, and temple worship. The writer of Hebrews explained how all these things were simply pictures and shadows that pointed to Christ, and how Jesus is better than all these. In Hebrews we find warnings to those who are doubting Christ and contemplating turning away from following Him. In Hebrews 3 and 4, like in Psalm 95, we are warned that the result will be NOT entering the rest God has promised and provided.

The writer, speaking to both the genuine and merely professing believers to **“take care that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** (3:12-13). The warnings are against the hardening of our hearts that may come from trials, persecutions, and temptations.

The “rest” spoken of can refer to different aspects of our walk with God. The primary meaning is that of our salvation. Through Christ’s finished work we can rest in the salvation He provided. One preacher describes it like this:

“This rest is accomplished by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfectly accomplished for us as He paid in full the penalty for our sins. Thus, the most important issue of Sabbath rest in the New Testament is that we rest in Christ and we rest from our labors—from all efforts to be saved by our works. We cannot work for our salvation. We may only rest in Christ, and in Christ we find a total rest. We cease from our labors to save ourselves. We rest from our works as God did from His. The concern of the writer of Hebrews is the hardness of our heart, a refusal to hear and to obey, which would become the reason why souls will not enter the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ, and is tied to belief

(Hebrews 3:19). There is the promise of entering this rest, and we are told to rest from our works as God did from His. This is a breathtakingly beautiful portrait of our salvation. We are justified by faith, not by works.” (Mohler, Albert. Words from the Fire. Pp. 86-87. Moody Press. Kindle Edition)

But the rest spoken of here also speaks of our sanctification, the process by which we grow daily to know God better, to trust Him more, and to follow Him more faithfully. So, we see the striking words in 4:11 to **“be diligent to enter that rest”**. Another translation exhorts us to **“labor”** to enter that rest. Yet another to **“strive”** to enter that rest. We can certainly rest in the salvation God has provided. Yet we are exhorted to be diligent, labor, or strive to enter that rest. We struggle as we face the trials, battles, and temptations in life to trust God and to live in light of the rest He has provided. It is a great encouragement for us as believers to know that when it comes to salvation we have already entered God’s rest. We do not have to strive and struggle because Christ has done the work for us.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that when it comes to our sanctification – our living out our faith in a sinful world – we are still in a struggle and our final rest is yet to come.

What is it that will keep us from hardening our hearts? What do we do to be diligent to enter God’s rest? Psalm 95 gives us the answer. We answer the call to worship. We remember who God is and what He was done for us so that we sing for joy and shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. We remember to give Him thanks for what He has done. We remember He is our shepherd who leads and cares for us.

It will help us to remember Christ’s great invitation:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
Matthew 11:28-30

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, August 2

12:00 McManus Conference Room (M252 by House Min. Offices)