

⁹ *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.* ¹⁰ *For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.* ¹¹ *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.* ¹² *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.* ¹³ *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.*

Text: Hebrews 4:9-13 A 2-23-25 Isaiah 55:10-13 Luke 8:4-15 Psalm 36 Responsive Psalm: 16
Hymns: 444, 446, 605, 616

HOLD ON TO YOUR HOME IN HEAVEN!

Rise! To arms! With prayer employ you, O Christians, lest the Foe destroy you,
For Satan has designed your fall.
Wield God's Word, a weapon glorious! Against each foe you'll be victorious;
Our God will set you over them all.
Is Satan strong and fell? Here is Immanuel. Sing hosanna!
The strong ones yield, with Christ our Shield, And we as conquerors hold the field.

Cast afar this world's vain pleasures, Aye, boldly fight for heavenly treasures,
And steadfast be in Jesus' might.
He will help, whatever betide you, And naught will harm with Christ beside you;
By faith you'll conquer in the fight.
Then shame, thou weary soul! Look forward to the goal: There joy waits thee.
The race, then, run; the combat done, Thy crown of glory will be won. (TLH #444:1-2)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

My mother, who will be ninety-three in a few months, is doing well. She has slowed down, but she still gets around. Her mind is good. She enjoys life, but she's sure looking forward to being in heaven.

Before our text God is talking about the Old Testament Jews who traveled through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. They were not allowed to enter the Promised Land the first time they came to it, we're told, "*because of unbelief*" (3:19). God had them wander around in the wilderness for forty years. During that time everyone twenty years old and older when they left Egypt died. When we read about them in the verses before our text and in Psalm 78, we find out that almost every one of them twenty and older was an unbeliever (esp. Ps. 78:22). Their unbelief kept them from entering the Promised Land. Even worse, their unbelief kept them from going to heaven.

We're told, *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."* God is talking here about heaven. Genesis 2:1-2 says, *"The heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."* God wasn't tired, He was finished. So in that sense God *"rested"* from, that is, God stopped, His work of creation. While we're here on earth God has work for us to do in spreading His kingdom with our efforts and with our prayers. When the work God has given us to do here is done, He will take us to heaven. Then, as we're told, we'll enter God's rest. One of the great blessings of heaven is that we'll have perfect peace forever.

We're told, *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."* *"Disobedience"* in the original is obstinate opposition to God's will, unbelief. God wanted to take all the Old Testament Jews traveling through the wilderness to heaven. But most of them rejected God and didn't go to heaven. God wants to take all of us to heaven. As Paul told Timothy, *"God ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God wants us to learn from the example of those unbelieving Jews and not lose heaven.

We're told that *"the Word of God is living."* *"Living"* is emphasized in the original: *"Living is the Word of God."* Take your hearing and study of God's Word to heart. God is alive, and, so is His Word. The Bible isn't words written long ago that have no meaning for us today. When we hear and read the Bible, God Himself is speaking to us today, right now.

We're told that *"the Word of God is ... powerful."* Since every time we hear or read God's Word God Himself is speaking to us, His Word is *"powerful."* God keeps every one of His beautiful, wonderful promises to us in His Word. No matter what our conscience may be telling us, whatever we may be going through, sometimes in spite of what our experience tells us, God will always do what He says in His Word.

We learn to pray with the psalmist, *"Cleanse me from secret faults"* (Ps. 19:12). We're asking God to look into our heart, see the sins we can't see, and forgive us. Sometimes there are sins in us that we don't want to see, but need to see. Again we pray with the psalmist, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Ps. 139:23-34). Sometimes we act like Adam and Eve and foolishly try to hide what we've done from God. But God sees everything we do. When we do wrong, if we try to hide what we've done from God, or try to ignore it, or blame other people or our circumstances, we may fool ourselves, but we're not fooling God. We need to humble ourselves before God and ask Him to show us if there is any sin in us that we're not seeing.

"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." As we hear it and read it, God's Word

cuts through any self-imposed blindness in us, and excuses we make for ourselves, and shows us the truth. The sins, or perceived sins, of others are not an excuse for my own sins. If I have done or said or thought something wrong, God will show me. And when I tell God I'm sorry, He forgives me and helps me resist the temptation to do that wrong again.

How thankful we are that God's Word doesn't just show us our sins. God's Word also shows us our forgiveness and salvation in Jesus. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"* (Jn. 3:16-17). God loves us all so much that He sent us His Son, Jesus. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Jesus has given us faith in Him. Our sins are forgiven. We are going to heaven.

Jesus says, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (Jn. 14:1-3). Because of our sins we deserve to go to hell. But because of Jesus and what He did for us we are going to heaven. Jesus says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand"* (Jn. 10:27-28). We dare not be like those unbelieving Jews in the wilderness and take ourselves out of God's hand and lose heaven. No, we keep looking to Jesus and trusting in Him, and He will take us to heaven. *"...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (Jn. 3:16)

Jesus calls heaven *"Paradise"* (Lk. 23:43). The more the years go by, the more we long to be with Jesus in Paradise. Hold on to Jesus and heaven, and never let them go. *"'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ...' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors'"* (Rev. 14:13).

Wisely fight, for time is fleeting,
The hours of grace are fast retreating;
Short, short, is this our earthly way.
When the trump the dead is waking
And sinners all with fear are quaking,
With joy the saints will greet that Day.
Bless God, our triumph's sure,
Though long we did endure scorn and trial.
Thou, Son of God, to Thine abode
Wilt lead the way Thyself hast trod.

Jesus, all Thy children cherish
And keep them that they never perish
Whom Thou hast purchased with Thy blood.
Let new life to us be given
That we may look to Thee in heaven
Whenever fearful is our mood.
Thy Spirit on us pour
That we may love Thee more – hearts overflowing;
And thus will we Be true to Thee
In death and life eternally. Amen. (TLH #444:3-4)