

Sermon GUIDE

Hebrews: Striving, the Word, and Giving an Account

Hebrews 4:11-13



SERMON NOTES

I. Striving & Rest

vs 11 -- Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Rest was the theme of vs 1-10. We want to enter into the rest of God. The Israelites in the wilderness forfeited that rest. Their disobedience and unbelief caused them to miss it. He turns from telling us that there is rest available to the people of God to telling them what they must do: strive to enter that rest. And the warning is that they should strive so no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience their fathers did in the wilderness. So the goal is not to fall from disobedience, but to enter the rest of God by striving.

Doesn't this seem like an oxymoron: enter the rest by striving? It's like saying, "take a break by going for a run." But we need to understand the reality of how this rest is attained. It is received by faith and it is demonstrated, enjoyed, and kept, through striving. We trust in the grace of God to save us. We believe by faith in what Christ has already done, and His works are counted to us as righteousness. But those in Christ strive in our daily life to grow in faith, to know Him more, to put sin to death, to enter that rest. Striving is active. Striving implies action in our lives.

We do not strive for His love or acceptance. We strive from His love and acceptance. We do not strive for salvation. We strive from our salvation.

Philippians 2:12-13. Notice that Paul says we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He's not talking about working to save ourselves. He's talking about the life of a believer that strives and works toward holiness and obedience, recognizing that it is God who is doing the work for His good pleasure.

What this means practically for us is we recognize that God is in the business of making us more and more into what He has saved us to be. In salvation, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, we are declared holy before God. We are children of God. But now the life of the believer is one of becoming practically what we've been declared to be positionally. This happens as we strive. We study God's Word (for the transforming of our minds). We link ourselves in Christian community (the church for growth and discipleship). We commune with God through prayer. All these are forms of striving. And believers do this FROM God's acceptance and love, not FOR it.

II. The Word of God

vs 12 -- For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Verse 12 is giving a reason or a support or a ground for the call to diligence in verse 11. Verse 11 says in essence: Be sure that you know and trust the word of God referred to in verse 2—the good news of God's promises and forgiveness. Then verse 12 says: Yes, and one reason to do this is because this word (the good news referred to in verse 2) is living and active, etc. So today's text is an argument for why we should be so diligent to enter God's rest by hearing and believing God's Word.

God's Word, His revelation to us, is called "living and active." This means it is not static. It's not a dead word. It's not what God said "back then." What God speaks is still speaking. This is how you can read something God spoke to David and it still speaks to you today. And the reason it can still speak to you today is because it is sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts us open. It penetrates to our core. It pierces us and speaks to our souls. The Word sifts us. It seeks us out. It discerns our thoughts and intentions of the heart. God's revelation has power and is transformative.

Illustration: Have you ever used a knife or handled a knife that someone said, "Be careful it is REALLY sharp"? Those kinds of knives don't require much and you can cut yourself. God's Word is sharper. It engages us and lays us open.

For the last 20+ years of my life, I have read God's Word each day. 95% of those days it is the first thing I do. I want to begin my day with God's Word. It challenges me. It convicts me. It comforts me. It reveals God to me. It reveals myself to me. But it may be more accurate to say, "God challenges me, convicts me, comforts me, reveals Himself to me, and reveals myself to me THROUGH His Word." When I spend time in the Word, I am spending time with God. Not because the Word is God, but because God reveals Himself through His Word. He has vested His power and authority in His Word.

Why does this matter? Because this is how we mature and grow in our faith. This is how our minds are transformed.

The way we resist conformity to the world and its ideologies. The way we are transformed and renewed in our minds so that we can test and discern God's will...is through the Word. Not our opinions, but God's Word. The importance of God's Word is attested throughout all of Scripture. One of the best chapters of Scripture is Psalm 119. It is the longest chapter in all the Bible. It's about the value, worth, treasure, and greatness of God's Word.

Neglect of God's Word has all sorts of negative downstream effects. Conformity to the world. Self-guided conceptions of God. Bad theology. Lack of discernment and wisdom.

This passage is a very descriptive passage of the importance and power of God's Word.

III. Standing Before the God Who Sees

vs 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 an account.

Notice that the Hebrew writer goes from talking about how the Word of God cuts through us and discerns/judges our thoughts and intentions. This leads to his conclusion in vs 13 that this is why no

creature is hidden from God's sight. Nobody can escape from the all-seeing eyes of God. We are naked and exposed before the eyes of the One to whom we must give an account.

There are some really important things for us to see here. We cannot fly under the radar. God sees everything.

Story: in bootcamp I worked hard to stay unknown to the Drill Sgts. If they knew who you were, especially in the early weeks, it usually wasn't a good thing. It wasn't until we were 3-4 weeks into bootcamp and I won highest marksman in my platoon that the Drill Sgt. said, "Reed, who are you? You've been in this platoon the whole time?" I was able to stay hidden for a season.

There is no doing this with God. You can't blend in with the crowd. The Lord sees all.

Psalm 139:7-12 -- ⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

**⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,**

**¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.**

**¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"**

**¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.**

Not only can the Lord see all things, but the key we must understand, that the Hebrew writer stresses, is that we will give an account to the God who sees. We must not walk in unbelief or harden our hearts like our fathers in the wilderness. Instead, we must strive to enter that rest given to those in Christ. The Word of God will not only aid and help us in that striving, but it will cut us open to see our hearts. When we stand before God to give an account for our lives, there will be no claiming that we were something different than what we were.

The overwhelming conclusion of Scripture is that each of us will stand before God in judgment. We will all give an account for our lives. On that Day, there will be no deception or hiding. Everything will be laid bare before the God who sees. And we will give an account.

Close: What confidence or hope do you have to stand before God? What do you think God will see when you stand before Him? Who can stand before Him? Seriously think about that question...does anyone here think they can stand before God purely on the basis of their lives?

I was texting with a friend this week. We were discussing frustrating scenarios we experience in everyday life and our responses to them. My friend said, "It's hard to be Christian in those moments. Not going to lie." And I said something back, agreeing with him. Then he said, "I have a feeling that God is gonna sit me down for a good, long while to review tapes of me in traffic and the grocery store

before they ever think about letting me through those gates." How many can resonate with that sentiment?

Here's the great news for the Christian this morning: It is not your works that will get you into Heaven; it is the works of Christ on your behalf. You will be saved by works, it just won't be your own. So if you are in Christ, you're not going to pace in front of the gates of Heaven before being ushered in. You're in Christ.

As the list of our sins and debts are placed before God Almighty, the verdict will be read: not guilty. We will give an account, but praise be to God, there was One who already gave an account for us.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?



- **REVIEW:**
 - Read **Hebrews 4:11-13** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - Philippians 2:12-13
 - Romans 12:2
 - Psalm 139:7-12
 - 2 Corinthians 5:10
 - Acts 17:31
 - Ecclesiastes 12:14
 - Hebrews 9:27
 - Matthew 12:36
 - Romans 2:16
 - Romans 14:10-12
- **REFLECT:**
 - How do we strive towards rest?
 - What does it mean that the Bible is living and active?

- What does it mean that the Bible is sharper than a two-edged sword?
- If we are saved by grace, then why must we give an account for ourselves?
- **RESPOND:**
 - What are ways you can hold fast to your original confidence?
 - How does this understanding of unbelief change your view of sin?
- **MEDITATE:**
 - Hebrews 4:12 - For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- **MEMORIZE:**
 - Psalm 8:4-5 - What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.



- **FOLLOW:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **FISH:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Shepherding Elder - **Nick Judd**
 - Ministry - **Kids Pastor**
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - London Team departing June 30
 - Asian Pacific Rim Team #2 departing August 16
 - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
 - **Pray for the lost.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>