



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Getting the Right Things Right

February 27, 2022

Hebrews 4:1-13

Clint Pressley

*4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” <sup>5</sup> And again in this passage he said,*

*“They shall not enter my rest.”*

*<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”*

*<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*

*<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.*

(Pastor prays)

If you are at all like me, you have been watching with apprehension all of the unfolding events in Ukraine. Modern technology has made it so we can see in real-time individual acts of bravery on display. From the president to soldiers to citizens sacrificing and fighting to defend their homeland. And, truthfully, it's inspiring. Here and there we see pictures of Christians gathering in small groups to pray or families singing songs like "He Will Hold Me Fast" as mortar rounds are heard in the near distance.

They are Christians living free but facing death and oppression. It's not unlike the people who read this little book for the first time. Beyond nationalism and patriotism, what is it that builds a faith like that and how do you get it? Because I certainly want it. I want the kind of Christianity that is fearless and calm and trusting, the kind of faith that is quietly joyful while even the world I know is at war. It's what we are going to need as the ground continues to shift underneath our feet!

Look across the border at Canada, look west to California, look east to Washington and look down the road at your public school board. Turn on the television and look at the Olympics, and all around us we'll see that we stand on a shrinking island of morality and the temptation will be to *fade*, or *fit in* or *argue*. Man do we like to argue!

And none of these options reflect what Christ does. Our activism is in prayer and not in politics. Our trust is in God and not in a government, and our home is in Heaven and not on earth. Honestly, I think that's why Hebrews is so important for our moment in this time as the preacher calls his flock to stand fast, trust God and live the Gospel. And here in Chapter 4, the preacher once again brings the focus from events out there to the strengthening in here, in our souls. Before we dive off into a culture war, we need to fight a spiritual war with ourselves and let's find out what kind of Christians we are going to be. Because in Christ...

**We Need to Get the *Right* Things *Right***

## We need to fear the right things

In verses 1-2, the preacher has a great fear that people in the church, members, were actually missing the Gospel. He makes a statement in verse 1 and then illustrates it from the Old Testament in verse 2. Let's read verse 1 and discuss it: *4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.* Rest is salvation. It's being in Christ. It's trusting in the finished work of Christ and resting in that. Now read it with that understanding. *4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

While we are still on earth and you still have ears to hear and a heart to believe, there is still an opportunity, and once you have settled that in your heart, that you are resting in the free grace of the Gospel, we must not be complacent with one another. This is a congregation, so more than we are afraid of offending someone or being awkward or being in someone's business, we should be concerned about people in our congregation in our lives who have failed to reach it. When we think about our children, we fear a lot of things because the world is a dangerous place. We want them to be happy, well-adjusted, confident and successful and good at things. So you go to great and sacrificial lengths to combat that fear. And the preacher says, "listen, we are at war. We need to be afraid and concerned about our souls above anything else! So we should go to extraordinary lengths to lovingly press the Gospel into their souls." That's your legacy and inheritance. The same is true for who you're married to or who your church or school friends are, pressing the Gospel making sure that we are carrying one another's burdens and repeatedly taking each other to the cross of Christ.

And in verse 2 the preacher makes his point from the Old Testament and Israel's failing to trust God. *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.* Verse 2 says the "good news," that is the Gospel, came to us. They heard the same message of grace in Exodus 34:6.

<sup>6</sup> *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,* They heard it but didn’t believe it. This tells us several things.

God has always saved *by grace through* faith. The only appropriate response to the Gospel is trust, and simply hearing the Gospel and even saying you believe it isn’t enough. There must be something that *happens*, some sort of *change* in your life. Obviously it is the same good news and the same need for faith.

So here is how we explain the Gospel at Hickory Grove: We know that God is our holy creator who created everything here, including you. And He created men and women in His image. That image of God in us has been disfigured by our own sin. So we are separated from our holy God. That fellowship is broken and we are not only far away from God but we are also dead in sin and in need of new life. God is just and punishes sin, but He is also loving. So He sent Jesus, who lived perfectly and earns righteousness. When He goes to the cross, the “great exchange” happens. He dies for our sins and gives us His righteousness. God raises Him from the dead, He ascends into Heaven and now reigns over us all. And the way you make that your own is that you put your faith in Jesus.

We need to fear the right things.

### **We need to work for the right things**

There are two commands in the passage. The first one is: let us fear. Now go all the way to verse 11. <sup>11</sup> *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.* The first point of order is to make sure we have rest. Verses 3-10 speaks about the disobedience of Israel in the Old Testament, their lack of faith and trust in the finished work and clear pattern God gave from creation. Verse 3 speaks of the finished work of God from the foundation of the world. Verse 4 speaks of the pattern, 6 days God created and then He rested. Verse 8 speaks of Joshua not being able to give the people rest and verse 9 speaks of a holy sabbath rest that remains.

Verse 11 says, “let us as God’s people in Christ enter that rest.” Joshua means “YHWH saves.” Jesus means “YHWH saves.” What the first Joshua couldn’t provide, the true and better Joshua—Jesus— does provide. Genuine rest for our souls. It’s a ceasing of a frenzied striving, clawing, worrying, fretting for the peace of God.

Jesus Himself said, “come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest.” And the amazing thing is that in verse 11 the command is to strive, *spoudazo*. That is a fierce determining, considerable effort. It is a focused intention and a disciplined dogged attitude of doing this no matter what. This is soul work. More than your body needs rest, your soul needs peace and healing, repairing and restoration. You need to claim this rest. This finished work of God found in Christ is rest. It’s to be absolutely satisfied in Christ: His life, His love, His righteousness, His compassion, His empathy, His death on the cross for your forgiveness and rest.

Okay. I see the command. Let’s strive to enter that rest. The next question then is: How? How do I enter that rest? I think verses 12-13 hold the key to striving for this rest. <sup>12</sup> *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.*

**Living and active.** *Zoé* and *energé*. Life and effective power. Jeremiah 23:29 says, *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* The rest for God’s people is found in God’s Word. God’s Word is conviction, comfort, strength, calming, confidence, courage, knowledge, growth, nourishment, change, maturity and depth. Paul told Timothy, it’s the scriptures that will make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ.

**Piercing.** Verse 12 says it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating. And the writer gives a poetic statement about the power of God’s word to get through the hardest heart and the most calloused soul. God’s word can cut through anything. When God wills it, His word will accomplish it.

**Discerning.** *Kritikos* - it's where we get the word "critic." Critic of faults and intentions of the heart, and the author elaborates in verse 13 shifting from the word of God to God Himself to show the intrinsic link between God and scripture. Verse 13 says, *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.* We are naked and exposed before God, there is no place to hide. We are exposed. *Trachelizo*. It's where we get the word "trachea" or "the neck." It's complete vulnerability and dependence on God. The Word shows us the supreme majesty of God, the utter sinfulness of our lives and the amazing grace that is ours at the cross when we run there and rest there.

I'm going to ask you to commit to work hard for the rest. I want the priorities of the Lord's Day to be worship, singing, praying, preaching and fellowship. I want you to have daily washing in God's word. Follow a reading plan, listen to the Dwell app, memorize and meditate on a monthly passage. I want you to be partnering for daily accountability so that we are strong together and find ourselves fully satisfied by Christ.

We need to get the right things right. What do you fear most? Have you received the free grace of God found at the cross? Are you complacent in your Christianity? Who do you need to check on? What are you working hard at? Work hard at the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 6: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. Cultivate a love for God and His people. Hang onto the joy that is in Christ and be ready to ask God to help you.

*(Pastor prays)*