

Rest in God

by Paul van Engelenhoven

This sermon delves into the significance of entering God's eternal rest, drawing from Psalms 95 and Hebrews 3-4. It explores the failures of Moses and Joshua in leading the people to rest, highlighting the victory of Christ on the cross as the ultimate solution. The call to enter God's Sabbath rest is emphasized, urging believers not to neglect the great salvation offered through Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalms 95:6, Hebrews 3:12, Matthew 11:28, John 1:17, Hebrews 3:5, Hebrews 4:8, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 14:13, Hebrews 2:1

Topics: "Eternal Rest", "The Victory of Christ"

Description

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Transcript

We're going to read quite a bit of text from scripture tonight. I'm going to read Psalm 95 verses 6 to 11 first, and then we'll go to Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12 to 4, verse 11. So we're going to look multiple times at our scriptures tonight, so if you have a Bible, keep it open.

You don't need to close it and lay next to you, but keep it open on your lap, and we'll refer to it a number of times through our study in our sermon tonight. Let's begin with Psalm 95, verses 6 to 11. The reason why we read this is because in Hebrews 3 and 4, this passage is quoted multiple times, and it's, I'll highlight, it's especially verse 11 that is focused on.

Psalm 95 is part of the living word of our living God. O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Father, or before the Lord, our maker.

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as it was at Meribah, as on the days at Massa in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For 40 years I loathed that generation, and said, they are a people who go astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways.

Therefore, I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. Let us now go to the interpretation of Scripture itself in Hebrews chapter 3. We'll read from verse 12 to chapter 4, verse 11. Hebrews 3 from verse 12 reads the following.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's cold today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

As it's said, here's the quotation, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest? But to those who were disobedient. So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear if any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 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. For we who have believed entered at rest as it has said, 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 something of somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way and God rested on the seventh day from all his works. That's in Genesis.

And again in this passage he said, they shall not enter my rest. Since therefore it remains for some to enter it and for those who formerly received the good news fail to enter because of disobedience. Again he appoints a day, a certain day today, saying though David so long afterwards, through David so long afterwards, in 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. 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.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest so that no one may fail by the same sword of disobedience. Thus far the reading of God's holy word. Let us pray that he would reveal these words to our hearts.

Heavenly Father we pray as we have read your word and have stood in your counsel. Now that we're seated to hear you reveal these words to us, we pray that there'll be no hindrance in our hearts or in my mind or words that keeps you from revealing your truth. Father we long to be fed by you tonight.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Dearly beloved, we'll be looking at the fourth commandment today of the ten commandments.

Now in his catechism class Ben has already dealt with the first half of the catechism's answer and so today I will be looking at the second half. So let me read to you question one of the three from Lord's day 36. What is God's... 38 sorry.

What is God's will for us in the fourth commandment? First that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained and that especially on the festive day of rest I regularly attend the assembly of God's people to

learn what God's word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray to God publicly and to bring Christian offerings for the poor. And I will be focusing on the second part. Second that every day of my life I rest for my evil ways.

Let the Lord work in me through his spirit and so begin already in this life the eternal sabbath. I want to look with you tonight to the second part the eternal sabbath that we enjoy and it's sometimes called eternal life or it's part of that eternal life that Jesus promises so often in his time on earth and especially in the gospel of John. And this eternal sabbath is really most clearly explained in our category in our book tonight Hebrews chapter three and four and I think that we're a little it might be a little bit of a difficult text because we're not as familiar with Psalm 95 and suddenly he's quoting that and explaining of Joshua and Moses and all these things together.

So what we're going to do tonight is have a bit of a study sermon if you will and I think you benefit the most if you have your bible in front of you so that I'm not placing other words in your mind but those that are clearly written in the text of God's word. So let us look and see how the author of Hebrews which is the Holy Spirit himself brings this picture of the eternal rest to us. And so I want to look at four points the first is the the failure of Moses and the desert people secondly we're going to look at the failure of Joshua and the people of the conquest then we're going to look at the victory of Christ or the better Joshua on the cross and then we're going to present a call that our text brings to enter in to this Sabbath rest.

Now before we go to Moses we should remember when our rest was lost you remember that in the beginning when God created mankind mankind was in perfect rest with God. Adam and Eve walked with God in his presence were in that eternal rest or in that rest of God's presence until they sinned and then the rest was disturbed. They were placed outside the garden of Eden and ever since we've been at war within ourselves but especially at war with God.

So that is where the the background that the book of Hebrews picks up if you remember he refers to Genesis chapter one and two already. So let's begin with this first point the failure of Moses and the desert people. The people of the Bible tells us that Moses failed to enter in to that Sabbath rest.

They were in the desert they sent some spies to spy out the wonderful land they saw how full it was with fruits and a wonderful land they came back they said these people are really big these enemies were like grasshoppers in their sight if we try to take this land we're going to be crushed and destroyed and so they held back and did not enter into the rest of the promised land. They became afraid and so they failed and God was angry with their unbelief and they were in the desert for 40 years. Well the book of Hebrew picks this up from Psalm 95 with two key phrases.

Look in Hebrews 3 verses 7 and 8 it says this today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion that's the time when the people of Moses failed to enter they rebelled in their hearts and then 3:11 as I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest. In other words Psalm 95 connects rebellion with not entering the rest that God promises his people. The time of the rebellion refers to the time when the people rebelled against God and so they could not enter in to that rest they had to stay in the wilderness.

The author of Hebrew points to this failure of the generation of Moses and he says that their failure was to believe in God it wasn't merely that they did not enter it was their failure to trust in God and that's the key phrase here they failed to trust the promises of God and so they held back that's the whole argument of the book of Hebrews are you going to trust the promises of God in Jesus Christ or are you going to hold back and stay in the desert and die in the desert outside the rest of God so that's the idea we need to keep

in the back of our minds because that's going to be developed and the question to you and me as we're in the same position is this are we going to trust God and enter into that rest or are we going to rebel and say we're not going to go to Christ we're going to stay at a distance because this seems to be too much or I can't trust this or I'm not going to enter in to the promises of God I want to live my own life and I'm not going to repent and turn to Jesus Christ and so the failure that keeps you out of this rest is a failure to believe in Jesus now the author writes to the Jewish people the Hebrews people and they were kind of lingering between they could stay in the pharisaical system the Jewish system of the time or they could come to Christ now they were interested in the promises of Christ and seemed to be going that way but at the same time it would give them great cost to leave behind where they were and so they're lingering between two in a in the beginning of Hebrews there's a picture of a boat that is coming towards a harbor but is then doubting to enter into that harbor and to dock at the harbor or to sail on and find another harbor that's the background here that this author is speaking to and you and me can be of the same kind isn't it we can choose to stay in religion in some sense to be the externals and to not be in any pain and not to lose anything or trust Jesus Christ and he takes over our life and it can be a dangerous and challenging life and so for us the question is do we trust God or do we try to linger between a way that is safe and the way of trusting Jesus Christ completely and so he says in effect do not be like the people of Moses time if you see the gospel approaching and standing before you and you wonder well if I truly trust trust in Jesus Christ I don't know what he's going to do with me my life might be in trouble the author of Hebrews says come and step in completely trust that God knows what is best for you trust the promises of Jesus Christ and step into faith and follow Jesus Christ because you will not be disappointed you will enter into that rest that God has already promised to your ears now let it come in and saturate your heart which brings us to our second point our failure the failure of Joshua now you can almost hear the argument of the readers isn't it well of course Moses didn't enter into the promised land Joshua did so why do you talk about that we need to enter into that rest just read through follow after Deuteronomy go read Joshua and you find that Joshua enters into the promised land so what are you talking to us about entering into that rest our ancestors have already entered into that rest and the author responds in verse 8 you see that Hebrews verse 8 and it's interesting if you read in the King James and I know some of you still read the King James which is great in this case because it will say Jesus right you will see Jesus and Joshua in Hebrew is Jesus in Hebrew is Joshua and Joshua of the Old Testament in Greek is Jesus so it you should either have both of them Joshua both of them Jesus it's the same name but it's the Joshua from the Old Testament that made it more confusing I'm sorry but I tried to help you with clarity Hebrews 4 8 to 10 says the following for if Joshua had given them rest God would not have spoken of another day later on 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 what he's saying are you following the argument in other words he's saying Moses did not enter the rest it's clear but Joshua went into the land and brought the people into the land but he wasn't able to bring the people into that rest of God and you see this physically because Israel has always been at war throughout the Old Testament and so what the author is saying it says there remains a Sabbath rest a greater rest an eternal rest that a Joshua in the future would bring that's Jesus so in other words Joshua of the Old Testament foreshadows in him bringing this people of Israel into the promised land it's foreshadowing a greater Joshua who will bring a greater people into a greater Sabbath and eternal rest David is saying many generations later they're in the promised land the kingdom of David was bigger than all the other Israelite kingdoms before it had expanded its borders far beyond even what they were promised initially and David says we have not entered into his rest at least the nation at large has not entered in to that rest we still need to enter in to the rest in other words David who is a prophet besides a king by the way we see that in his last words he declares himself a prophet at the end of his life

because God anointed him for that he prophetically sees that the kingdom that he has is foreshadowing it's a picture of a greater Joshua who would bring in a greater kingdom and it would bring his people into a greater eternal rest that's a lot to take in right but if I think if you follow it along you can see the argument right it's Moses couldn't bring them into his rest Joshua seemed to have brought them into that rest but then David much later says we're still not in that rest in other words them in the being in the nation is not the rest that God had initially promised them there would be a greater Joshua leading his people into a greater rest and so in summary Joshua did not lead them into the rest and this was clear in the time of the judges right if you think that Joshua led them into rest and you read the book of judges you realize this rest is very thin they're constantly attacked they're constantly robbed and everything else and under persecution if that is the rest that God had promised initially it's a very thin and slim type of rest it's true that the people entered a promised land but it didn't give them rest for their hearts were still at war their souls were still not at rest and ultimately both Israel and Judah would be exiled into Assyria and Babylon and they'd still not be into this eternal rest and so the book of hebrews says we need to look forward to a greater rest you read the old testament this way that's pretty exciting isn't it it's not just what can I learn from this particular leader but suddenly you see whoa this is speaking this promise here I need to keep that in my memory when I read through the old testament because the author of hebrews is saying this is what's going on you need to be waiting for that rest and you get that word back and you wonder where's this rest pointing to right it's teaching us that's why I say it's a teaching sermon it teaches us not only the truth but it teaches us how to read the old testament we got to remember what we read it's not a daily get up and read it it's a study of God's word and understanding how all these things fit together so that we learn more of God and so the question then is how do we enter into that rest I mean if Moses couldn't do it if Joshua didn't do it and if David himself the greatest king of Israel's history didn't bring Israel into that rest then who can bring Israel into rest that's the big question that brings us to a third point the victory on the cross the whole point of hebrews 3 and 4 and the emphasis in found is found in hebrews 3 5 and 6 look at hebrews 3 verses 5 to 6 and it's this comparison between Moses and a greater one it says now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later in other words Moses was faithful but he was only a servant he was a prophet that pointed forward to things but he didn't bring in the reality he was declaring the truth but he couldn't bring the truth to become reality for six oh and these are words that should be in your bible as words of gold but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son and we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope the whole point of this passage is the comparison between Moses and later Joshua to Jesus Christ Moses was pointing forward to a house that would come a peace that would come a rest that you could enter in and would come but John but Jesus is the one who brings the house who brings the rest who brings the peace to us and therefore the blessing that Jesus Christ brings is far greater than Moses and Joshua and even David together and so we read in John 1 17 to 18 actually I want you to see this so let's go to John chapter 1 verse 17 and 18 John 1 17 to 18 actually let me start from verse 16 I don't want to miss this for from his fullness we have all received grace from grace from the fullness of Jesus Christ in other words he is bringing in the reality not just speaking about it but bringing the grace of God verse 17 for the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the Father's side but he has made him known you see that same comparison Moses to Jesus he's saying Moses gives the written law but Christ brings in the reality Moses says keep the sabbath day but Christ is the one who brings the rest and eternal peace of the sabbath day into our very hearts into our lives so that we walk by the power of the Holy Spirit in other words Moses was not able to bring the Israelites in the true into this true rest he spoke about it but he couldn't do it he could bring the law but not grace he could give direction but not the power but salvation has now come the power has come the

reality that all the prophets were looking forward to has come in our days the light and the life and the power of god has come with the coming of jesus christ moises could never lead them into the rest but everyone who comes to the lord jesus christ will find that rest that peace of the living god flowing into your heart not just around you but into your very naked soul jesus christ is the son of god who brings the rest who can lead people into that sabbath rest of the finished work of god in other words he pulls back the eternal life that new creation that is in the future he brings it into our lives and into our hearts so that we get a foretaste of that eternal rest when all things are made new already into our hearts these are deep things that we're reading about in hebrews 3 and 4 jesus accomplished the work of salvation that brings peace between our souls in god and even between our souls and ourselves that's the rest that's the rest that moises was looking forward to that joshua was depicting but that the greater joshua has brought into reality in our lives now how did jesus christ do this well by being the greater joshua he didn't slay any canaanites he didn't go and push back the amorites of the land of israel no he brought eternal peace well you say who's that enemy from which we truly need rest well it's it's really sin isn't it because what disturbed the rest of adam and eve it was sin and through sin the dominion of satan and the dominion of darkness sin entered into their hearts and brought us at war with god and to enter into that rest that sin must be broken destroyed and then the rest is brought back in other words the enemy that had infiltrated our hearts need to be destroyed and removed so that our heart is free from that darkness and that enemy that seeks to usurp our soul jesus christ defeated that enemy upon the cross he became sin for us and killed and destroyed it i heard a sermon last night from jonathan edwards the excellencies of christ probably for the 10th time or so but in that sermon he says that jesus is like samson you remember samson at the end of his life when he goes and he says one more time oh god help me to defeat my enemies and he goes in his temple and everybody is celebrating they've captured samson and they're celebrating they have finally usurped and put down their foe and then what samson does he pushes the pillars aside and the whole house collapses on top of samson and samson dies with his enemies jonathan edwards says this that's what happened to jesus christ upon the cross the enemies of god thought they were winning satan thought that he had finally gotten the overhand upon christ and the enemies of god were celebrating that they were destroying the messiah that they were putting him on the cross and they brought all this this whole kangaroo court against christ they got him there and he seemed to be hopeless and ashamed hanging there upon the cross but what actually happened is that in the midst of the rejoicing of the enemies of christ he destroyed them completely by his death and resurrection of jesus it is said that in his death he destroyed all the enemies of god's people and so on the cross jesus christ broke the power of sin and set us free to bring us into that true and eternal rest beloved the conquest of joshua was foreshadowing the greater conquest of jesus christ that's what it was it's not simply a land or a place to live and have your own tree and honey and milk flowing no all of those were pictures of what jesus christ has done for you and done for me true rest is not only outside true rest is in your heart oh and if you remember when you tasted the love of god was it not exactly that that your heart was finally beset and conquered by the rest of god that the power of sin had been terminated that the rest of god had now become your rest because the power of sin was gone you were set free and so our catechism states and i was reading the catechism and trying to find a passage that fits but after all of this let me read to you the catechism actually can we put it back on the screen is that possible yes look at the second part that every day of my life i rest from my evil ways evil outrest in let the lord work in me through his spirit and so begin already in this life the eternal sabbath it's the sabbath in the heart the rest in the soul thank you the peace that god has brought and we already begin to enjoy the eternal sabbath if you're in christ if you've been born again by the spirit of god you live in two worlds you live in the present and you have the burdens of the present of day-to-day life in this world that is cursed and yet you already experience the life to come you already

experience the peace and the joy of living with christ even while you're here you're already there but you're not yet there that's the power of the gospel that is why when a person hears the gospel of jesus christ a person that doesn't believe looks at him it says why are you going happy nothing has changed you look the same you have the same burdens people still don't like you you're still not poor and you're still not rich you're still not successful you're still not perfectly healthy and the person goes from being like him or her to rejoicing in the power of the lord why is that it's not just because he got a new idea it's because he has tasted of the eternal sabbath that was foreshadowed in genesis chapter one and that is all the way revealed in revelation and the very last words of god himself that he is coming to bring the peace the holy spirit is coming to bring his final salvation it's all about that rest that is in christ and so our sabbath rightly or sorry our catechism rightly calls it an eternal sabbath for this life of joyful fellowship is with god it's life eternal eternal sabbath doesn't mean the day where you cannot do this and you should do that and eternal sabbath is a life of eternal joy rest and peace with god doesn't mean you're sitting for the rest of eternity it means that you have the joy and the peace of god perfectly in your heart so that you can truly enjoy all of god's gifts that's what happens when somebody comes to christ isn't it suddenly the tree that is on the neighbor in the neighborhood that stands on the corner becomes a gift of christ to your heart everybody drives by and doesn't see the tree but to your heart it's become the gift of god because you see its beauty and the work of your father's hands in every car and every branch and every leaf god is already showing you what true eternal sabbath means it's not drudgery it's life it's joy it's peace in the holy spirit it's living far better than adam and eve lived in the garden of eden because it's living in the direct presence of god forever and so let me come to our last points the call of god to enter into the sabbath rest hebrews 2 1 to 3 refer to this therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it that's that picture of that boat that comes to the harbor that can be drifted away for since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation that's the warning in the book of hebrews you have been given tonight and many times from this pulpit and many times from your morning readings in the scripture of god's of god's word the promises this great salvation and the word great here in the greek means great as it does in english but it's almost hard to define because this word great has no limits in this world whatever you call great has limits isn't it it's a great day but it's only 24 hours it's a great person and yet the person dies and still has mistakes there's limits on our word great but the word great here has no limits and so we could say amazing or awesome or this infinitely great salvation that's the idea so great a salvation that has been brought not just to your house but to your very ears it's not for you to earn it but to not neglect it that's the key not to neglect so great a salvation in other words as the boat is coming to the harbor of salvation are you going to go into the harbor and live in this new land that is called the gospel land or are you drifting away and just heard it but go on with your life most of us have heard the gospel since we were born we can dream it we have studied it we may have even heard or tasted or seen its power but the question is have we neglected so great salvation it's a radical salvation isn't it it's an all-consuming salvation you receive all things but you lose all things you lose all the rights that you think you had you lose all your addictions and your guilty pleasures but you receive the fullness of the rest of christ are we missing all the treasures that are hidden in christ are we casually walking by or have we come to harbor in this salvation have we dropped as another picture in the book of hebrews our anchor into the most holy place has this become our life and our newness of life the world is full of distractions and temptations that will lead you away from the gospel the world seeks to numb your mind by worries and cares or by prides and lust and distractions but god's word tells us do not wait till tomorrow today is the day of salvation today god speaks to your heart today you are entering into the harbor today you must put out your anchor and never go out today you must find your rest in christ oh ask anyone who has

placed their anchor into the most holy place ask anyone who has come and enjoyed that rest of christ you would never lift your anchor you would burn the boat and live in this harbor for all eternity is it not true that you have found christ the sweetness of the honeycomb is but bitter compared to knowing christ this is a life that truly defines the word life with god oh how great a salvation freely to receive the forgiveness of christ under the priesthood of christ freely to be brought into a new relationship and knowing and walking with god himself you know if i ever were to receive an invitation by the white house and would be able to enter in and say a few words or meet with the president whoever the president is it'd be but walking into a supermarket just a a normal room compared to the privilege of coming to christ and walking with him all the people in this world and though we should give honor to whom honor is due are but people that are dressed up differently but are simply just like us they eat they sleep and if they don't eat and sleep for a week they die but we have been brought into the eternal throne room of god who is from everlasting to everlasting this invitation deserves the word invitation because this is a call into something great and oh beloved jesus came to bring that invitation to you and to me tonight to remind us that his words are good for eternity that those who receive the fullness of christ will never come to the end of it but have a foretaste of it now and will rejoice in it in a billion years as though it's just started for one day and so he has proven his love towards us on the cross and i beloved brothers and sisters if you hear this tonight i hope you're reminded a little bit about the gift that is in christ that you rejoice in it again that you find this peace flowing into your heart maybe it's in your mind that's drifted away or the busyness of this world had clouded your view but i pray that the god of heaven and earth has pushed the clouds away and you see the love and the peace of christ again clearly the city of emmanuel's land of which in christ you have already be written into the registry the passports have already come in and the journey is short until we see the gates of the kingdom of emmanuel and so i hope that to all of you who have not entered that tonight would be that night and to all who have entered that you would rejoice in so great salvation amen let us pray to heavenly father thank you lord for christ for the rest that no man could bring for the peace that no creature could establish not even the mightiest angel but that you yourself send your son so that we might enter into that sabbath rest father i pray that you be the light of our lives and the joy of our hearts from this day forth and forevermore for father we pray this in jesus name amen

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