

The Rest of God

by Gareth Evans

The sermon emphasizes the importance of entering the rest of God, which is a state of ceasing from our own efforts and relying on God's abilities, and requires us to die to self and consecrate ourselves to God.

Duration: 30:17

Scripture: Numbers 20:8-12, Psalm 95:7-11, Hebrews 3:7-11, Hebrews 3:15, Hebrews 4:1-2

Topics: "Rest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of being effective witnesses for Jesus. He emphasizes that God has come to glorify Jesus in the lives of believers, enabling them to be witnesses in their community and beyond. The speaker then turns to the book of Hebrews, specifically chapter 3, to explore the theme of the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan. He highlights the desire of God for the Israelites to enter the promised land and draws parallels to believers entering into the promises of God. The speaker also references chapter 4 of Hebrews, focusing on the promise of entering God's rest and the warning to not come short of it.

Transcript

Again, lovely that is until you try to start your car in the frost of a Victoria morning like I did on Friday. Couldn't get my car started, so I had to come up by bus. How nice to be able to relax on the bus on the journey up, it's wonderful.

It's good to see you here this morning. I'm gonna continue today for the third week to talk about the entrance of the Children of Israel Intercana. Couple of weeks ago, I took that theme and I took the theme of coming into the promises of God.

The Children of Israel are brought out of Egypt and God's desire is for them to come into the promised land. They failed through disbelief and for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness, as I say, with sand in their mouths and sand in their shoes. After 40 years, some of them finally come into the promises of God.

Two and a half tribes we hear sadly chose not to. Last week, I spoke about abiding in the land. We're called to abide in Christ and the evidence is of a life that's abide in Christ.

I wanna continue the theme this morning of coming to the promised land. One of the greatest promises made through the prophets and reiterated by the Savior was the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon God's

people. Jesus told his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until you receive the Holy Spirit and you shall have power to be my witnesses.

Peter in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost declared to the people that this promise is for you and for your sons and daughters, even to those afar off whom the Lord shall yet call the promises to you and me, of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We're expected as Christians to be overcomers, enabled by the Spirit of God, living in the power of a Spirit-filled life, resting in his abilities and not in our own abilities. How sad that so many of us put off by the excess of Pentecostalism have denied the very work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Torrey says that the most neglected person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. When I was interviewed for my ordination, there were about 16 pastors present. I was interviewed for two hours and when some of the questions started to concentrate on the Holy Spirit.

I'm answering these questions to the best of my ability and one of the pastors present said to me, how good it is, Gareth, to hear you call him he. I said, well, what should I call him, it? The very question bothers me that evidently there are some in the body of Christ who call the Holy Spirit it, as though it's it, an influence, instead of the very vital third person of the Trinity. Scroggie, the great writer, the brethren man writer, said this, it seems to me the great majority of Christians are caught between Easter and Pentecost, but in another way, my way, caught between the Red Sea and the Jordan.

They fail to enter into the promise that is for us and for our children, the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we have excesses, there are excesses in the body of Christ. Excesses is a term of Pentecostalism, but we are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in the empowering of the Spirit of God.

We try to do God's work our own way, we will always fail. He has come to enable us, to empower us, to be his witnesses. You will not be, you will be a witness without him, but it will be a bad witness, to be ineffective witness.

That is why he's come to glorify Jesus in the lives of believers and through glorifying him in our lives to make us the witnesses that we should be in Nanaimo and unto the parts of the world. I'd like to turn with me, please, the book of Hebrews chapter three. Those who attend the adult Bible class, forgive me, I shall be saying a few things.

It's one that I've taught before there when we studied this portion, but I think it's worthy of presentation to the whole congregation. Chapter three, and I'm gonna start looking, well, I'll start with verse one, but I just want to be an introduction. The author to the book of Hebrews is presenting us the supremacy of Jesus Christ, greater than the angels, greater than the prophets, greater than Moses, greater than Abram, greater, greater, greater.

Then he goes on to speak of the supremacy of his ministry as the high priest, supremacy of the gifting or the sacrifice of himself, supremacy over all the Old Testament law and his sacrifices. But in this book, there are four or five parentheses, things that the writer inserts because his mind is coming along, a doctrinal teaching, then he goes down a rabbit trail. Your current speaker is very good at going down rabbit trails, as you know, I've gone down many since I've been here.

And he goes in a rabbit trail right here in chapter three, starting at verse seven, a parenthesis. And he goes on into chapter four, the first couple of verses of chapter four, and it's that parenthesis I want to look at this morning. But let me begin with verse three.

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, he's writing to believers, and I speak to you as friends here in Departure Bay Baptist Church, brethren, brethren, sisters, brethren, is there such a word as sistering? I don't think so. Partakers of a holy calling, you're a called people. We talk about calling a pastor, we talk about people being called, all of us who are children of God are called people.

The word ecclesia that we translate church literally means called out of the world, called out people. You've been called out to be the people of God, called out of Egypt, called out of the world. We're a called out people.

But we're also called in people. We've been called to enter into the spiritual life. We've been called to enter into Canaan.

We're a called people. I'm reminded of that verse in Ephesians where Paul speaks, he speaks in chapter one all about who we are in Christ. The riches of God's inheritance is ours in Christ.

In Him we have redemption. In Him we have forgiveness. In Him we have all the riches of our inheritance, the treasures of God in Christ.

And he ends in chapter one by talking about Jesus in whom we have all his riches. And he says, for God has exalted him and raised him far above all principalities and powers, Jesus. Then we come into chapter two and verse six he says, and you also have been raised in Christ Jesus into heavenly places.

You and I have been called to live this life as men and women seated in heavenly places. So our writing here in Hebrew says, therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partakers of a heavenly calling. People who should be abiding in Christ, sitting in Christ, living this life as those in Christ.

That is our calling. Consider him, the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus. Then he goes on and continues that theme and then comes down to my parenthesis in verse seven.

And let me read these verses for you. He is quoting to us here in verse seven from the Psalms. It's 93 also, verse seven to 11.

Let's see what he says. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried me by testimony and saw my works for 40 years. Therefore, I was angry with this generation and said they always go astray in their heart.

They do not know my ways. I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. There is a rest of God.

David here being quoted by a writer to Hebrews, quotes this in his psalm, says in his psalm, that because they provoked me and tried me. Those are very interesting words. The Hebrew translation in the Septuagint is Meribah and Massah, which are the names of two places that the children of Israel came to in the wilderness.

They're the two places in the wilderness where they complained against God because they had no water to drink. And you remember the story of the first time Moses smites the rock, Meribah, and water comes

forth. The second time is at Massah where he's told to speak to the rock.

And you know that he smote it and however, God, his grace gave water. Two places of contention, of doubt, of speaking against God. And David says, as your fathers did this to me in the wilderness, they disobeyed my calling.

I swore in my wrath that I will not allow them to enter into my rest. And the writer of Hebrews, thousands of years later, quotes this. They're quoted from Psalm 95.

I want to speak this morning about the rest of God. There is a rest for the people of God. I do not mean idleness.

I do not mean sitting in your lazy boy chair with your feet up and saying, this is what Christianity is all about. Wonderful, praise God. However, there is a rest of God.

Chapter three after this quote continues with the perils of those, in this parenthesis, who fail to enter in through unbelief and a challenge for you and me to make sure that we enter our rest in God. There are at least five rests in the Bible. If you try to study, do a study on rests.

There is, of course, creation rest. From the seventh day, we read God rested from his labors. How long did the seventh day last? We're still in the seventh day.

A day where God has rested from his labors. Six days of creation of the seventh day rested. There is the rest of Canaan.

We read here, quoting from David, that God has said they shall not enter into Canaan. My rest. But it's not a rest of idleness.

It is a rest where they are to overcome giants in the land. It's a rest of conquering Jericho. It's a rest of going on with God and seeing God do his work.

And the people resting in the God that they serve. There were giants in the land. The Marykites were there.

The Hittites were there. The Hebrews were there. They were to drive them out to the land.

That doesn't sound like rest, but in God's disposition, that's rest because he is the one gonna drive them out when we rest in him. This is the promise of God. But they failed to enter in through unbelief.

There's the rest of salvation. Jesus said, come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. There is the rest, I think, I would call it of consecration, where we yield up ourselves and the old man dies.

The old man, a dead body, is resting. I've never seen a dead body striving. I've done many funerals with open caskets and every time I've been there, I've seen them just lying there resting.

In the spiritual sense, when the old man dies and we're exhorted throughout all of scripture that the old man needs to die, that the new life might grow up within us, there is a resting of, I call that the rest of consecration. And of course, fifthly, there is the rest of being in heaven. Now, I don't know about you, but I really am not looking forward to playing a harp on Golden Street, I'll be honest.

I don't play very well a harp, or I play a guitar and I get a bit of arthritis. I really, I'm being a little facetious. I think the rest of heaven is gonna be more thrilling and more fulfilling than anything we've ever known.

Don't you? Or do you want to go there and just twiddle your thumbs for eternity? I sure don't expect, I don't think Jesus expects us to be doing that. But there is a rest of finally ceasing from all the toil and the troubles and all the things that hinder us and bother us here. When the children of Israel entered Canaan, they were supposed to enter the promised rest of God.

Such rest was not idleness, as I said, but overcoming enemies. However, it is a rest of ceasing from their own efforts. The word Sabbath literally means cessation, a stopping.

And we are called to cease, so they were called to cease from their own efforts. However, the scriptures here that I want to bring to you and through Hebrews three and four, speaks of another greater rest that is for us. And I'd like to walk with you through this.

Let us begin at chapter four, verse one. This is the argument I present to you from the scriptures this morning. Therefore, chapter four of Hebrews, verse one.

Therefore, let us fear. Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, let us fear if while a promise remains of entering his rest, any of us may seem to come short of it. Chapter four, verse one.

The promise of a rest remains. This is not a promise that has been fulfilled. It remains, says the author to Hebrews.

Chapter four, verse six. Author goes on. He who believed has entered that rest.

Just as he has said, I swore to my wrath, I shall not enter my rest. He's quoting again from Psalm 95. Although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For he said, some were concerned in the seventh day and God rest in the seventh day. Verse five, and again, they shall not enter my rest. Verse six, therefore, since it remains for some to enter it and those who formerly had good news preached and failed to enter it, he says, today, says David.

When the children of Israel came through Jordan and came into their promised rest under Joshua, shortly afterwards, the kingdoms were established led by the prophets. And then after Saul and David and Solomon, they sought for themselves. They had many other kings and the kingdom was established.

It is many, many years later when David comes and David says, today, there remains a rest. So many years after they entered into the promised land, today, says David, there remains a rest. It's a long time after they entered.

So there is still a rest to be gained in David's time. Verse eight, for if Joshua had given him that rest, then David would not have spoken of another day. Evidently, Joshua did not bring them into the rest of God that our author is speaking about.

He brought them out of the wilderness. He brought them into Canaan. But they did not enjoy, evidently, the full rest of God's promise.

Canaan is but a foreshadowing of the great rest that God has for his people. And then in verse nine, our author says these words. Saul, there remains, and by the way, he is writing many centuries after David

wrote.

He's quoting David saying, today. He's saying, Joshua did not bring him into rest. David at this time said, today, and says our writer, the book of Hebrews, in the New Testament era, he said these words.

Therefore, verse eight, verse nine, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. A rest of ceasing from our own efforts for the people of God. I call this the rest of consecration.

It is a rest where I cease from my labors, I lay myself down, and I say before the king, Lord, I am yours. Do your work in me. I do not rely anymore upon my own abilities, my own scholarship, my own efforts.

All of those, as Paul says, are but done in his sight. I come to a place of resting in him and allowing him to do his work. He is sovereign.

We sang songs. Did you mean what you sang earlier? They're all songs where I bow down before you, I cast myself before you. You alone are sovereign God.

He is able to do what he has promised. He who said that he that began a good work in you is able to bring it to completion. Do you believe that? He's able to do.

He who says all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called, heavenly calling, to walk in his will and are called to his purpose. Do you believe that? Is he able to do what he, is he sovereign God? Is he king of kings? Is he Lord of lords? Is this the one you come to worship? This is the one I know. This is the one I worship.

He is able. He is able. And he wants me to know the joy of entering into a cessation of my own efforts, to enter into the rest that's for me.

He will build his church. Marianne sang so well for us last Sunday, build your church, Lord. He is able to build his church.

He does not need your effort or mine to build it. He certainly does not need our shoulder to the door trying to close or push open a door that he's closing or forcing close the door that he's trying to open. What he does need for us to do is to rest in him and to cease all our efforts.

From our own efforts. He simply calls us to be his witnesses. He simply calls us to abide in the fullness of his spirit by whom we are made witnesses.

We need to die to self. When are we going to start hearing that preaching again? It used to be the message of the last century of death to self and the new life in Christ. You don't hear that preached nowadays.

It seems to me we're far more fond of saying, come to Jesus and all will be happy, happy, happy. Maybe I was fortunate when I became a Christian, I came to the Lord of Little Baptist Church in Wales and the first people who ever disciplined me taught me from the very beginning I needed to die. I remember one of the first things I was ever taught, the only right I have as a Christian is the right to lay down my rights.

But my carnal nature for years has fought against that, I demand my rights. The way you discover if a brother or sister has died to self is see how they react when they are put into pain. God, I tell you this, when I get pain coming to me I want to react in your carnal nature.

My words and my actions show it. And I stop and I get aside with God and I confess and I cry and I say, God put me to death, put me to death. However, we do not enter this rest without striving because our authoring goes on with these words.

Verse 11, chapter four. Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest. This is obviously not salvation because you cannot enter salvation by your own efforts, not by works.

Says the scripture very clearly, we are justified by faith alone through grace, not by works, not by works, not by your own effort. You cannot be saved by your own effort, just yielded to the work of the cross. But this rest, we are to exhort it to strive to enter, it does not come easy, it does not come easily put in your nature to death.

But what a joy when the old man dies and we can rest in the glory of God. Just like the children of Israel crossing the Jordan were exhorted to build on the far side a monument. I'm gonna call you again this morning, same message as last week, we need to come through this waters into the promise of God and build ourselves a memorial.

I dedicate, this is what consecration says, I dedicate, I commit, I consecrate myself, oh God to thee. It's not a new year's resolution, it's a state of dying to self. Because when we do that, God himself builds another memorial as Joshua had to in the middle of the waters that was hidden from sight, but in the spiritual realm, God does a sanctifying work in the heart of the man or woman who commits himself in consecration to him.

There is without doubt the need for us has come to a place in our lives, I trust every one of you has, when you say yes to Jesus, the crucified one as the lamb who died for you and to salvation. There are many times in our life later where we will be challenged by circumstances where we have maybe taken into valleys where we have to respond by saying, God, I do not like the pain of this valley, but right now I'm willing for you to do your work. And there are consecrated moments.

And entering into the rest of God has a requirement of a consecration of a man or woman who says, yes, God, I will die to self. Let me die to self. I give you permission, Lord, to keep me buried so that you might live your life through me.

From 1991 to 95, I had the privilege and I had the privilege of being on the Anastasis. The Anastasis is a very large medical ship. It's actually gone out of service this year, been replaced by even larger ones, the largest floating hospital in the world except the American Navy.

And we sailed between West Africa and Europe for four years. And I had a great privilege as pastor on board ship of speaking in many, many churches, missions conferences, doing pastors conferences. Great, great honor I experienced.

It was a wonderful, wonderful time. We saw many miraculous surgeries in West Africa. Our ship was the finest hospital in Sierra Leone, in Guinea, in Côte d'Ivoire, in Senegal, our ship was the finest hospital in the country.

I had the privilege of being pastor there. In 95, we left the ship and we took the opportunity to go to Australia to see our daughter, one of our daughters, and three grandchildren whom at that time I'd never seen. It was to be a once in a lifetime trip.

And so it took six months and paid for by a doctor in England, sent us as a gift that we could go to Australia. We certainly couldn't afford ourselves to go. And I anticipated coming back to Canada and taking up a church once again.

I'd been kept on the books with the Christian Missionary Alliance. Normally when you leave for another ministry, they put you for one year on sabbatical leave and then your name is removed. But they kept me on their books for 10 years for which I was greatly blessed.

I anticipated coming back to Victoria and offering myself to be pastor of a church again. When I got to Australia, I was invited to teach at the summer school in Cape and Ray Bible School near Sydney, Australia. It was one of those miraculous things, unseen, unheard.

The principal took a great risk in inviting me because people paid a lot of money to come to the school. And I taught there the first week, their summer week, of course. It's the first week of January and I taught there for that week.

As a result of that, I got invitations to speak at churches across Australia. And then I attended the conference of the Christian Missionary Alliance as a guest pastor. And after that, I was invited.

So I ended up traveling from Perth to Brisbane to Adelaide, Melbourne. I've seen more of Australia than my Australian son-in-law has seen. I had all these wonderful, wonderful preaching and speaking opportunities that I had not anticipated before going there at all.

I knew of the Cape and Ray, I did not know the others. We're about to leave Australia. The night before I'm due to leave, the president of the Christian Missionary Alliance came to me and said, when are you coming back, Gareth? Now, it had not even crossed my mind to think of going back because our going there was a once in a lifetime trip.

It's a long way to go, Australia. And we never thought we could ever afford to make a trip there more often. So I said, oh, but by now I realized that the honorarium I was getting from churches would cover my fare.

And they're all asking me to come back. So I thought, well, I can come back if all these churches want me to come and speak. I can afford to buy a ticket to come back.

So I said to him, well, maybe in five years' time, thinking in the rational way that I tried to think, and if I took on a church in Canada, I would need to be there at least five years before I could ask for a sabbatical leave to allow me to go back for a couple of months again. He said to me, well, why not come back in two years' time? I said, is that an invitation? Yes, he said, I'd like you to come back and do a conference for my pastors and elders. So I said, well, let me think about it.

Let me pray about it. Then my aunt said to me, she said, this is what you should do, you know. This is where your heart is.

You don't care for the politics of church. Your heart is in teaching and discipling people. This is what you should do.

It's what I've been doing for the last four years in Africa and Europe, an onboard ship. She looked, she said, we can take a student into our home, and then you can go back to, you can travel a bit and go to Australia in two years' time. When we come back from Australia in 1997, we'll take stock and see if God is

showing his favor.

So we decided to take two years out before I applied for a church. I let the Alliance know I was back. I said, but please keep my name in the books.

I'm taking the first two years to see. I was in 1997. In the next two years before I went to Australia, I had invitations to India, to Nepal, to Peru, to Mexico, to Brazil, to Malaysia, to Belgium, not one of which, not one of which did I ever seek or candidate for or telephone or write a letter for.

Not one. And I was utterly amazed how God was opening doors. We went to Australia and we came back.

I've been teaching across Australia. I've now been going back every three years to Australia. I get invitations all over the world.

I've been to Brazil four times. And I'm saying this, please, not saying this, aren't I a good boy? I'm saying this to say what God has done in the last 10 years of my life, I'm utterly and absolutely amazed at the doors that God has opened because I'm thrilled to say I did not push one of them to try to open them. And I have come to understand in the last 10 years the joy of allowing God to be my schedule maker, my timekeeper, my leader.

We have not paid income tax for 10 years. We have not earned enough. This year, thanks to Departure Bay Baptist Church, I will earn enough to pay income tax.

I have not paid income tax. My wife is very, very good at budgeting, mind that's part of the reason. We live fairly frugally.

We live delightedly. We are very happy, both in our marriage and in our home and in our life. We support five missionaries on the field.

Do you hear what I said? We support five missionaries. I've traveled around the world four times in the last five years, and I've not pushed one door. God has opened every single door for me.

I've written no letters of appeal. I've written no letters telling people of my ministry, asking them if they'd like me to come and teach. And I believe I'm experiencing a great, great blessing in knowing what it is to rest in God.

Now, I don't know if God will do that for you as a church or you as an individual, but I do know that my God is a God who cares, who can open doors and shut doors. Anybody here know anybody who's been in a Hebrew school with freedom to speak to all the Jewish students of the gospel? I don't know anybody else. I had that opportunity.

Do you know anybody who's invited to speak to all the pastors of a nation? 200 pastors every week for 11 weeks. I've never even been to seminary, and some of these men, the Bishop of Sierra Leone was there. Many Anglican men with their doctorates were there, and I'm allowed to teach them.

Can you tell me how I could do that by manipulating it? Absolutely impossible. I believe God wants to birth something in your life, individually, and in your church, but he needs you to get out of the way. He needs you to die.

He needs you to cross Jordan into his promised rest. He is far bigger than you or me, and he's perfectly able to build his church without your help, without your hindrance. He calls us as people of Departure Bay, dearly beloved brethren, called of God, partakers of a heavenly calling, there is a rest for you to enter into.

I believe that when we come out of Egypt, the promise of Moses to the children of Israel was this. The taskmasters you have seen today is to see them again, no more forever. I believe as the people of God, we are freed from the guilt and the bondage of sin, and all the things that held us while we walked in darkness in the kingdom of this world.

We've been released into the kingdom of God, into the kingdom of light. But your king wants you to enter into his rest. He does not want you wasting your time in the wilderness.

But it requires an act on your part that says, I will cross, I will build my memorial, I will lay myself to die, that he might be Lord. That is his calling for each one of us. I pray that it might be true of you, and each one of you, that you will know that in the years to come, I might have testimony from many of you.

I'd love it from all of you. Say, oh, Gareth, what God has done in my life, what God has done in my church. I had the joy this week of listening to a brother give me testimony.

I had to confront him a couple of months ago. And he could have reacted to that confrontation, instead of which he took it, and he took it to the cross. He said to me, yes, my life has been so transformed, my marriage has been transformed, simply because his choice was to build a memorial.

And when we do that, God is only too willing to step in and respond with his memorial of consecration to us. May God bless his thoughts to you this morning, amen.

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