

Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

Lesson 5: Rest Through the Cross

Key Verse: *So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...~Hebrews 4.9*

The Paralympics hosted by Los Angeles in 2028 will include the inaugural rock-climbing competition. Jeff Dufton is planning to compete alongside his wife, Molly. Jeff climbs arduous and formidable rocks using only the instructions given by his wife! As a blind climber, he displays an unfathomable trust, dependence, confidence, and comfort in his wife's voice¹. Every Christ-follower can empathize with Jeff's extraordinary trust, dependence, confidence, and comfort upon a singular voice to keep us and guide us on earthly journey: **Kol Yahweh (the Great Voice of God)**. After a death-defying climb, Molly and Jeff can be found resting on top of a massive rock. She takes in the view while he experiences the breezes, sounds, and smells. In the same way, we rest in accordance with our Father's **Sabbath** rest. No matter the interpersonal grit required to see another day's end, nor the doldrum of household chores, nor rote employment, Christ-followers' souls remain at rest with God, "hold[ing] our original confidence firm to the end." (Hebrews 3.14)

Speak to me, Kol Yahweh! Keep my heart from rebelling and refusing Your rest. Keep me from acts of disobedience against Your commands. Keep me united with my sister and brother Christ-followers as members of the house You are building through Your Church. Give me ears to hear Your call, "Today!", exposing any unbelief in my heart. Keep me brave to listen in this lesson, willing to allow Your word to pierce into my sin so that my Sabbath rest in You keeps me holding fast to Christ, my hope and confidence, firmly grasped to the end.

Hebrews 3.1-4.13 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)

⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. ⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

CH 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. 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.

³ 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. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." ⁵ And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." ⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ 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."

¹ <https://jessedufton.com/>

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹² 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. 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 account.

Diamonds: Paul would have been a great high school history teacher. Using the people's history with God and God's history with His people, Paul expounds on his final proof of Jesus' superiority: Jesus as greater than Moses.

To the original readers of this letter, Moses was the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time). Surprisingly though, even as Moses was the greatest of all prophets, we learn in Leviticus that he was not permitted to enter God's Presence through the tabernacle. Though Moses met with God "face-to-face" on more than one occasion (Exodus 19, 20, and 33), this unique privilege ended with the inception of the sacrifices².

1. Using the illustration of a design+build process in custom home building, Paul explains the superiority of Christ (builder) over Moses (resident of the home), with God Himself being the designer/general contractor of the glorious home being built (3.1-6). What unique responsibilities in this illustration did Moses and Jesus have?

Through the design+build illustration, Paul is exhorting these struggling Christ-followers to embrace the radical truth that through Christ, God has redeemed His people so that "we might be His own dwelling place" (Revelation 21.3)!³ Or, put another way, "...old covenant Israel is the bud of which the new covenant Church is the flower."⁴

2. However, the conditional clause with the word "if" in V 6 reminds us that some might foreclose on God's dwelling place when their faith is tested. From V 6, how does one know that they are *not* abandoning their faith in God even when circumstances put our faith in crisis? What two prayer-filled reminders (still in V 6) must we preach to ourselves when our circumstances bring us to our knees?

Having blown the minds of his readers by illustrating Christ as *truly* the GOAT rather than Moses, Paul encourages his readers to consider the consequences of an "unbelieving heart": abandoning "the living God" (3.12). An "evil, unbelieving heart" was not a new risk for God's people. Becoming a high school history teacher, Paul reminds these faithful Jews turned Christ-followers of a history lesson familiar to them from Exodus 13-17. Through Moses' leadership, God delivered His people from Egypt, after 400 years of hard, oppressive slavery, to freedom in a desert where God provided their daily food and sustenance. Despite their first-hand experience of God's plagues against the Egyptian pharaoh and his people, including escaping death of their firstborn sons,

² Moses didn't literally see the face of God (Exodus 33.19-20), but he spoke with God as a man spoke with a friend. Moses' request to see God's glory (Exodus 33.18) meant he had not yet seen God literally "face to face," and he wanted to do so.

³ Phillips, p. 87

⁴ Phillips, p. 88

these rescued and delivered people of God rebel against God and Moses (Exodus 17.2-4).

3. From Hebrews 3.11, what does Paul remind these Christ-followers is the consequence of a rebellious heart against God?

4. What instruction does Paul provide using another conditional clause (“if”) to prevent Christ-followers from a rebellious heart against God (3.12-15)? If you have had a fellow Christ-follower help guard you from a rebellious heart against God, please share what they did (over the exact details of the circumstance or story) that kept your confidence and hope in God firm?

Using the history lesson of Israel’s shocking revolt against God’s direct instructions found in Numbers 14, Paul closes out his teaching by identifying the role of being united by faith has in preventing God’s people from disunity that leads to unbelief and disobedience (Hebrews 4.1-7).

5. To help crystallize Paul’s cautions and his exhortations, make two contrasting lists below using Hebrews 3.1-4.7. In one list, identify the root causes of people abandoning their faith in God (for example, disunity within the church community from Hebrews 4.2). In the second list, identify the antidotes. Feel free to imply an antidote based on Paul’s caution (for example, unity in Christ prioritized within the church community).

Deity: Kol Yahweh/qol YHWH~ (Hebrews 3.10-11) Hebrew for “great voice”, specifically referencing “the voice of God”. Put together, Kol Yahweh is the Great Voice of God. From creation (Genesis 1) to declaring the greatest promises within the new creation (Revelation 21) God is not silent!

6. Choose two of the following sections of scripture to describe the message and/or distinct character of Kol Yahweh (it may be interesting and informative to read your selecting using additional translations⁵):
 - a. Genesis 1.3-31 and Genesis 2.18-22
 - b. Exodus 19.3-6 and Exodus 16-20
 - c. Exodus 20.18-21
 - d. Exodus 33.7-11 and Exodus 17-22
 - e. John 3.22-30
 - f. Matthew 17.1-8

⁵ We recommend using an app such as [BibleGateway.com: A searchable online Bible in over 150 versions ...](http://BibleGateway.com) to explore different translation of Biblical text

g. Revelation 21.1-8

7. Share the most interesting characteristic of God that you discovered in your two selections. Using what was most interesting, how would you help a stranger in a waiting room begin to understand Kol Yahweh?

Doctrine: Sabbath⁶ (Hebrews 4.8-12) means “seventh” and refers to the day of the week where God rested from His work of creation (Genesis 2.1-3). “By hallowing [the seventh day], God set the seventh day apart. He consecrated it as holy. Proper observance of the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20.8-11). It is important to remember that its institution was an integral part of the creation covenant. In the Old Testament, violation of the Sabbath was a capital offense.”

The early church moved the Sabbath to align with Christ’s resurrection: from Saturday to Sunday (the first day of the week). “The principle of Sabbath, one of seven, remains intact. The weekly Sabbath has been in perpetual effect since Creation and was observed by the apostles” (Acts 20.7; 1 Corinthians 16.1-2).

The Sabbath is “a special time of rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection and in the hope of our Sabbath rest in heaven.” It requires “cessation from regular labor (except necessary labor) and the assembly of the saints in corporate worship.” Different sects of Christianity disagree over “the propriety of recreation and the necessity of works of mercy on the Sabbath” (Isaiah 58.13-14).

It is not inconsequential that Paul’s history lesson includes God’s inaugural institution of His Sabbath day from Genesis 2.1-3 (Hebrews 4.9-11). Paul intentionally brings to the reader’s mind the act of creation, including the result of the entrance of sin, when he describes the reality that “no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (4.13).” In doing so, Paul is not emphasizing the creation of humanity as the primary function of creation, but rather humanity’s unique ability to engage in fellowship and communion with God.⁷

8. How does the piercing nature of God’s Word (4.12) commemorate God’s unique relationship with humanity?

“...the primary blessing of being created in God’s image is in order to have fellowship with the Creator in a way the other creatures cannot...Humanity, nevertheless, is not the culmination of creation, but rather humanity in Sabbath day community with God...The Sabbath thus becomes *the* day for humanity to enjoy its privileged status of being created in God’s image. As later Sabbath legislation would indicate (Exodus 20.8-11), the *image of God* is for the sake of the *imitation of God* (i.e., keeping the Sabbath day holy) and the imitation of God is for the sake of Sabbath *union with God*.”⁸

9. Using your list from Question 5, what practical action(s) are you taking to encourage fellow Christ-followers to embrace and experience “fellowship and communion with God”? How does doing this help

⁶ Sproul, pp. 249-250

⁷ Morales, p. 46

⁸ Morales, pp. 46-48

you also embrace and experience the Sabbath rest God has called for you (Hebrews 4.9)?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: True Sabbath rest is found in union with God.

- I. Rest-LESS Rebellion (Hebrews 3.1-19) TR1: Sabbath rest found in union with God is a present and eternal reality for believers.
 - a. Which sin or sins are keeping you from resting in the Lord?
 - b. How might your unbelief or disobedience be interfering with the true Sabbath rest God intends for you to experience?
- II. Rest-FULL Relationship (Hebrews 4.1-13) TR2: Sabbath rest found in union with God is His highest goal for believers.
 - a. Where are you about to give up on God and fall away from your faith in Him?
 - b. How might your fear, doubt, anger, dissatisfaction, or suffering be causing you to harden your heart against the Living God?
 - c. What is causing you to miss the Sabbath rest that is God's highest goal for your life?

Hughes, R. Kent, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pp. 91-126
Phillips, Richard D., *Hebrews*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) pp. 83-143