

JESUS BRINGS A BETTER REST (PT 2)

(Hebrews 4:1-13)

In California's Yosemite National Park, is El Capitan – truly a sight to behold, at 1 km high.

Last week, Alex Honnold became the first person to climb El Capitan without any ropes or tools whatsoever!

The pictures almost say it all! A *mind-boggling* climb of 4 hours!

However there's one thing Alex said in National Geographic interview worth repeating:

*"I knew I had to KEEP GOING – there was **NO TURNING BACK**".*

It might be difficult – *really* difficult – to keep climbing. But he had to **finish** the climb! To turn back would be to **perish**. Finish or perish – and Alex knew it.

We are in a series on the biblical book of Hebrews, and the author is passionately communicating the same thing – to turn back from Jesus is to **perish**, eternally.

That's the *negative* motivation to keep going, persevering.

The *positive* motivation is that Jesus is Better!

... a Better Messenger, a Better Deliverer, a Better Rest ... and *much more* Better to come!

But in chapters 3 & 4, we are in a section about Jesus bringing a Better **REST**.

Better than Moses, Better than Joshua.

Last week, we only had time for "part 1", chapter 3, so a "Recap" will serve us well.

The main idea for the entire section, from 3:1 – 4:13, is this:

*To Enter God's Rest, **Take Care** to Trust & **Continue** Trusting in Jesus!*

The Christian journey might seem mind-bogglingly difficult, like Alex's climb, but we can & must press on in the faith to the *very end*, to enter the **Better Rest** that Jesus brings . . . just as Christian & Hopeful, in Bunyan's classic book *Pilgrim's Progress*, had to keep going in their trek towards the Celestial City.

Repeatedly in chapter 3, we saw this need to persevere, just one example is v.14

*"we have come to share in Christ, **IF** indeed we hold fast our original confidence firm to the end"*

Persevering does not save us, does not 'make' us Christians.

Just as *Fruit* is produced by the *Root* of a plant . . .

Fruit of perseverance is proof one is connected to the Root of genuine faith/salvation.

So Scripture has "twin truths" that must be kept together:

The doctrine of "eternal security" (aka, "once saved, always saved")

While true in itself, is hazardous by itself.

Eternally security must be "paired" with its biblical 'twin': *persevering* in the faith.

which is key evidence of being truly saved, thus always saved.

The purpose of the author's repeated pleading & warning in Hebrews is both to **motivate** us to *press on* because Jesus Is Better!, and to **differentiate** genuine from counterfeit faith . . . as Jesus said, "you'll know them by their fruits."

Chapter 3 told us Moses' generation did NOT persevere in faith. The consequence?

*"So we see that they were UNABLE TO ENTER because of **UNBELIEF**."*

"Enter" what?...enter God's REST.

Recall the 5 ways God's "Rest" is used in Scripture (in timeline chronology):

- 1] God's Rest on the 7th day of Creation (Genesis)
- 2] The "Sabbath Day" as the 'sign' of God's old covenant with Israel. (Exodus)
- 3] The 'Promised Land', an *earthly* rest for God's old covenant people (Numbers)
- 4] Resting from *our work* & trusting in the *work of Jesus*, who is our Sabbath rest.
- 5] Full & Final Rest with God in the New Heavens & Earth, paradise regained

The rest Moses' generation was unable to enter is the 3rd rest, the Promised Land:

an earthly "Rest" that God had for His people, a step towards returning to **EDEN**:
God's people in God's special presence, safe & secure to worship Him properly, in an abundant land flowing with milk & honey.

But Moses' generation rebelled/disobeyed in a particular way –

not trusting God's *promised provision* of Rest:

*When the Lord sent you from Kadesh-Barnea, He said, "Go up and take possession of the land I have given you," but you **REBELLED** against the word of the Lord your God and did **NOT BELIEVE** Him or obey His voice." (Deut 9:23)*

Chapter 3 was a big warning:

The same generation who Exited Egypt did NOT Enter God's Rest.

Because they not persevere in their faith.

Chapter 3 closed with a Plea from the author of Hebrews for us *not to follow* their path, but to *encourage one another to keep trusting* God. He continues that line in chapter 4

- Chapter 3: ('Yesterday') They Refused to Trust God for **Earthly** Rest thru Moses
- Chapter 4: ('Today') Do Not Fail to Trust God for **Eternal** Rest in Jesus!

Here's what we'll see in chapter 4 – Jesus is Better than Joshua, because the earthly rest that Joshua brought was not God's final rest.

The promised land & the Sabbath day sign were just shadows, foreshadowing God's final, eternal rest that Jesus brings.

The author 'connects the dots' between God's creation rest and our final rest in Jesus.

Here is the Outline of his reasoning

The Promise of Entering God's Rest (4:1-3a)

The Pattern for Entering God's Rest (4:3b-10)

The Plea to Enter God's Rest (4:11-13)

THE PROMISE OF GOD'S REST: (vv. 1-3A)

God is patient & long-suffering with us, Hallelujah!, for verse 1 begins,

*Therefore, while the PROMISE of entering **His Rest** still stands,*

Our generation has opportunity to enter!

But we are not to treat God's patience lightly! The author is concerned, finishing v.1,
"let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it" [God's rest].

And he will wrap up in verses 11-13 with a similarly earnest plea.

The author means business because God means business – the stakes are high!

And so HOW do we enter God's rest? In verses 2 & 3 we are given a compare & contrast:
 Moses' *faithless* generation & our need for *faith* to enter.

*For the **GOOD NEWS** was proclaimed 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** enter that rest. (4:2-3a)*

What brings us IN to this rest? **Faith/Belief** (same root word in Greek)

Believe what? Verse 2 begins, *"For the **good news** was proclaimed . . . "*

Both the Israelites in Moses' day & readers of this letter (us) have received "good news":

- in Moses' generation, the **promise** of the Land plus the sample **produce** of this land "flowing with milk & honey" brought back by the 12 scouts – good news!
- in our case, even better news: the promise of is a greater rest . . . which is *eternal life*, which becomes more clear in the verses to follow.

But the generation of Moses did not believe their good news.

*It says "they were not united **BY FAITH** with those who listened." (Joshua & Caleb 'listened')*

Important: we do **not** enter God's rest based on our merit, because of our good works.

In a world system of merit, of climbing the corporate ladder, of constantly (restlessly!) trying to prove yourself worthy at work, on Facebook, wherever . . . the Bible is really clear about this very counter-cultural idea, that we are saved NOT because of our works, but because of God's **grace**, through **faith** in HIS work, His provision, His gift.

*"By **grace** you have been saved through faith.*

*This is NOT your own doing; it is the **gift** of God,*

NOT a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph 2:8-9)

Since we are saved **by Faith**, since we enter God's rest **by Faith** . . . it's rather important to understand what exactly IS Faith? And what is it NOT?

Biblically speaking, "faith" is NOT:

- **Spiritual Intrigue** ('Miracle Chasers' looking for images of Jesus on a tortilla, etc.)
- Faith is not a "**Gut feeling**", some subjective vibe: *"I'm totally a person of faith, very spiritual – I'm into crystals & meditation, you name it!"*
- Faith is not just about **theological precision**: James writes "the demons **believe** God is 1" – they get their monotheism right, and might get 100% on a theology quiz – but they're not going to heaven! They don't *love* God, they don't *worship* Him.

Heb 11:1 describes what the biblical concept of Faith IS:

"Faith is confidence in what we hope for, the conviction about what we do not see."

The Greek word transl. "conviction" means "a proof/persuasion from evidence".
 So, someone can be "convicted" of a crime due to *evidence against* them.
 Or, positively, someone has convictions due to reasons that *stand up* to the evidence.

So faith being "*conviction about what we do not see*",
 does NOT mean faith is "**blind**"! (faith is *not* the opposite of reason)

Faith is confident regarding a future which is indeed "unseen", BUT
 Faith has crystal clear 20/20 vision of the past: God's **proven Faithfulness**

About to enter the Promised Land, but afraid of what's ahead, God reminded Israel:
 (Deut 7:17-19) *You're saying to yourselves, "These nations are stronger than we are!"
 But do not be afraid of them! REMEMBER what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all
 Egypt. **You saw with your own eyes** the great signs & wonders, the mighty hand with which
 the Lord brought you out. Trust the Lord your God to do the same [as you enter]."*

Biblical Faith is based on God's **proven Faithfulness**. God is the object of our faith!

- Please hear this: unlike common thinking today, Faith is NOT just about "**sincerity**"
 (If a taipan snake just bit you – you can believe with the **utmost sincerity** that the
 medicine you've just taken will stop the lethal effects of the venom.
 But if you were given *cough medicine* instead of proper anti-venom . . . you're dead!

Biblically Faith must have the right object of faith. And that's not us!

Biblical Faith is based on God's *proven Faithfulness*.

And chapter 4 ends with Jesus' proven faithfulness. In summary,

Grace = **God Reaching Down** with undeserved favour & forgiveness in Christ

Faith = **Us Grabbing Hold** of Christ, in *total reliance* on Him alone to save us!

Hallelujah! The Promise of Entering God's Rest Still Stands! Do **you** have saving faith?
 Not just orthodoxy (right belief), but personal, worshipful trust in God's provision.

To enter God's Rest, trust in **God's finished work**, for this has always been . . .

THE PATTERN FOR ENTERING GOD'S REST: (VV. 3B-10)

This section is the most *complex* in the chapter.

Let's start by highlighting the "bookends" of this section, vv. 3b-4 & 10

" . . . God's **works** were **FINISHED** from the foundation of the world.

For He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way:

*'And God **rested** on the seventh day from all His **works**.'*

*. . . for whoever has entered God's rest has also **rested** from his **works** as God did from His."*

Did you notice the subtle *shift* in focus:

from FAITH to enter God's rest (in vv. 1-3a)

To FINISHED Works and entering God's Rest. (vv. 3b-10)

Now the emphasis is less on our faith and more what God has accomplished:
His work and **His** rest. This is the key to understanding this section.

Let's see the reasoning . . .

V. 3 & v. 5 quote the same part of Psalm 95, God saying "*They shall not enter **MY** rest*".

These Psalm 95 quotes "sandwich" a quote from Genesis, expressing a new use of "Rest":
God Himself Resting after Creation (v.4)

This is the *first* use of "Rest" in the list of 5 biblical rests.

This use of "Rest", God's *OWN* rest, is the pattern, the basis for all the other "rests".

We must clearly understand this prototype "rest" of God Himself.

Certainly, God was ***not fatigued*** on the 7th Day!

God does not get tired. Scripture says "*God neither slumbers nor sleeps*" (Ps 121:4)

And "Rest" is certainly ***not inactivity!***

God continues in His active work of *drawing people to Himself & revealing His glory in His Son*. Jesus, *healing* on the Sabbath Day, made this very point in Jn 5:17,

"My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

So what kind of "Rest" is this?...

On each of Days 1 to 5 of Creation, the closing comment is:

*"And God saw what He made was **GOOD**."* (Days 1 to 5)

Things change on Day 6, the high point & completion, creating humanity in His image:

*"God saw **everything** He had made, BEHOLD, it was **VERY good** . . . it was the 6th day."* (1:31)

Things change again on Day 7,

*God had **FINISHED** His work that He'd done, so He **rested** on the seventh day from all His work that he had done.* (Gen 2:2)

Since God does not fatigue, given the language of *good . . . good . . . very good*,

God's Rest seems to be His *enjoyment* of finished work, *satisfaction* in a job well done!

The key for us is that in GENESIS,

God Rested in His FINISHED *creation* work.

To enter God's rest is, therefore, to JOIN HIM is His eternal enjoyment of finished work, His satisfaction in a 'very good' job, **paradise regained!**

Then, vv. 6-7 make it clear that since God's rest started at the foundation of the world, His rest is available to **ALL** generations:

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

*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." (4:6-7)

David lived many centuries **after** Joshua brought them into the land of Canaan.

And in David's day, he's encouraging the readers of his Psalm: Enter God's rest Today!

The author of Hebrews is saying the OT itself points out that *Joshua's rest* was NOT final – the generation after Moses that Joshua did lead into the land of Canaan did not have not full rest either; only *partial* rest, because their disobedience led to divided kingdom, exile.

Joshua's rest was a type, a shadow of a coming rest. He makes this explicit in verse 8,
For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

That day was "Today" in David's day, and it is still "Today" in our day!
– an opportunity for you, for me, to enter God's rest . . . *eternal* rest in Jesus!

Verse 9 is not speaking the old covenant "Sabbath day",
So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

This word is unique, used only here in the NT. It's not the normal word for Sabbath day. Christians (new covenant believers) are not under the *old covenant* sign of the Sabbath day.

The apostle Paul spoke about old covenant ceremonies like this (Colossians, 2:16-17):

*"LET NO ONE JUDGE you regarding food & drink [kosher/clean food laws] nor a Festival [annual] or a new moon [monthly] or a Sabbath day [weekly] — things which are a mere SHADOW of what is to come; but the **SUBSTANCE** is Christ!"*

[We've done entire sermons on the 4th commandment; check those online for more details]

This is where everything ties together. So when we reach the other 'bookend' at v.10,
'for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his/her works, as God did from His'
the author is making 2 points:

1] **Jesus is our Rest, rest from our works.**

In GENESIS,
God Rested in His FINISHED **creation** work.

In JESUS,
We Rest in His FINISHED **saving** work.

Rest from our works is placing our trust in Jesus finished saving work on the cross, where Jesus' last words were "*It is finished*" (Jn 19:30). Jesus paid it all, sat down at God's right hand.

Al Mohler, the president of Southern Seminary puts it so well:

*How do we enter this Sabbath rest?
The whole letter of Hebrews tells us: by believing in Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.¹*

Mohler continues,

*Like John 3:16, Hebrews 4:10 powerfully captures the message of the gospel in a single verse. The gospel is not morality. The gospel is not external religion. Nor a seven-step program for obtaining a better life. The gospel is the message of Christ's accomplishments on our behalf so that we might "**rest**" from our works by trusting in His work.*

Jesus, deliberately teaching & healing on the old covenant Sabbath day of rest, said,
*"Come to **ME** you who are weary & burdened, and I will give you REST . . . REST for your SOULS.*

Today is still "today"! Will you enter Jesus' rest by faith, today?

¹ Al Mohler, *Exalting Christ in Hebrews*.

The 2nd thing we learn from v.10 . . .

2] COMPLETE Rest awaits us (heaven²). OUR FAITH we must be **active** now.

God's *creation* work & God's *saving* work in Jesus are finished, but God is still active!
And so must we be . . . *saved* but *servng* God now, faithfully.

This is also crucial to the author of Hebrews.

Those who do not *continue faithful* in Christ do not Enter God's Heavenly Rest.

We are not saved by our good works, but we are saved FOR good works!

The same passage I referenced about being saved not by our works (Eph 2:8-9),
in the very next verse says we're saved for good works (Eph 2:10):

*"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus FOR good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Ephesians 2:10 is by no means an 'afterthought' to 2:8-9. It's OUR CALLING:

We're 'Saved to Serve'!

This is why Jesus said:

*"Let your light shine before men, **SO THAT** they may see your good works and **GLORIFY** your
Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16)*

God's Saving Grace is a Transforming Grace.

3 Times the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95:

*"Today, if you **HEAR His voice**, do not harden your hearts",*

He not describing some 'audible', charismatic experience. The Hebrew word for "hear /
listen" is "**Shema**"³ & it means more than just receiving soundwaves . . .

It beckons a response. **{Bible Project: "hear" = "obey"}**

So "listen" to God's word is to HEED it, to RESPOND in **faith**, to **trust** in God's promised
provision for rest, in a way that **transforms** our living from the inside out.

Work is a good thing – before the Fall, Adam & Eve were called to **cultivate** the garden,
and **enculturate** society to God's glory as they were fruitful and multiplied.

Good Works are a good thing! – as long as we are not trusting in our works to save us.

The movie *Chariots of Fire* made famous 2 sprinters competing in the 1924 Olympics:

Harold Abrahams , a Jew, said,

"I run because when the gun goes off, I have 10 lonely seconds to JUSTIFY MYSELF. But will I?"

Eric Liddell Christian missionary using his running to evangelise, said the opposite:

"God made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure!"

Not "EARN his pleasure", but feel His pleasure, as he serve the God who gifted him.

They both ran as vigorously as they could.

But Abrams was tortured, insecure, self-justifying . . . *without God's rest.*

² See Revelation 14:13

³ The most famous use is in Deuteronomy 6:4

Eric Liddell – saved by grace, at **rest** in Christ – was free to run with joy to the glory of God!

That is a picture of precisely what the author of Hebrews is putting before us!

A saving faith is a **servi**ng faith, a **strivi**ng faith.

This ties in with the author's "conclusion" of Jesus being a Better Rest, 4:11-13

The Promise of Entering God's Rest: still Stands, entering by Faith! (vv. 1-3a)

The Pattern for Entering God's Rest: faith in *God's Finished Work* (vv. 3b-10)

The Plea to Enter God's Rest: (vv. 11-13)

4:11-13 - THE PLEA TO ENTER GOD'S REST

Verse 11 has this passionate plea:

*"Let us therefore **STRIVE** to enter that rest,
so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."*

To strive is to 'make every effort', like Alex Honnold, finishing the climb up El Capitan. Jesus Himself said, "strive to enter by the narrow gate, for few there are who enter".⁴

Once we enter the race, we must finish it – with the strength God supplies.

The whole "Rest" section is brought to a brief bit vigorous conclusion in verses 12–13, (where the writer provides a **potent** supporting reason for the diligence urged in v 11!)

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.*

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.

This very famous well-known is a very confronting verse, is it not!

There is debate about the meaning of "*the word of God*" which is living & active – is this Jesus, the Word of God *incarnate*?, or Scripture the Word of God *inscripturated*?

I agree with Al Mohler, who writes,

*"The author uses the phrase to point to the entirety of divine revelation — **BOTH** written and incarnate."*

Let's consider both, as we close with some motivation & application.

➤ **Word of God *Inscripturated* – The Bible**

For the word of God is living and active . . .

God's word, like its author, is "living". It's also "active"/"effective":

Because of God's authority, His word possesses the power to effect its own utterance:

God said, "Let there be light" – and there was light! (Gen 1:3)

God's word accomplishes the purpose for which He sent it, not returning void of effect.

⁴ Luke 13:24 and Matthew 7:14.

What is the effect in this context?...

“ . . . sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing**” to our innermost being,

I'll never forget those words of the ophthalmologist, when I had something like a sty in my lower eyelid that needed to be cut out with a scalpel.

My eyelids were clamped back, and as he brought the scalpel *slowly but terrifyingly* close to my eyeball, he said those words: **“Keep still”**

I was thinking, *“Really, you don't say! I was just about to lunge & pierce my eye!”*

But apparently, some people jerk in panic!

Scripture is like a scalpel, a 2-edged sword, and the author of Hebrews is saying,

“Don't panic . . . **allow** God's word to do its Piercing & its Discerning of our motives”

Why? Back to the purpose in v. 11

“ . . . **so that no one may fall** by the same sort of disobedience”

Its piercing purpose is to expose our sin so that our hearts are **NOT HARDENED**, but instead softened, confessing and repent from sin, and be transformed more to Christlikeness.

Scripture untangles the human heart and unearths sin like no other book can.

Ultimately, it is not we who read Scripture, it is ***Scripture that reads us!***

BY WAY OF APPLICATION . . .

In Chapter 3, practically speaking, we saw:

we must expose our lives sincerely to God's **People** (3:12-13)

Today in Chapter 4, we see:

we must expose our lives sincerely to God's **Word** (4:12-13)

We must invite Scripture deep into our lives, not just listening on Sundays.

And not just perfunctory personal reading, “Chapter read: √”

Nor should Bible reading just be about “looking for answers”, though we need answers!

We also need to be reading Scripture **asking Questions**, like:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psa 139:23)

Speaking of asking Questions of Scripture, I was having a chat with one of the ladies from Women's Growth Group talking about her recent transformation in personal Bible reading.

[Unlike most homegroups that *look back* at the sermon, WGG looks *ahead* to the passage that will be preached . . . They read it together, trying to figure out the main idea, asking **lots** of questions of the text, including how the clear things should be applied to life.]

This particular lady was sharing with me how this approach has transformed her daily Bible reading, because it's conditioned her, moved her from simply *reading* Scripture to ***engaging*** Scripture, asking good questions, inviting deep exposure for deep application. Praise God – that's the kind of piercing, discerning work of the Word we need.

Beyond individual/personal exposure to God's piercing word, this verse is also a reminder that as we collectively expose our lives sincerely to God's **People** We must at the same time include exposure to God's **Word** . . . so we are not misguided.

When you encourage people, advise friends . . .

What role does Scripture play in your encouragement & counsel?

And do you ignore/by-pass the 'piercing' portions of Scripture?

Or do let them have their important effect, as they are shared *in love*.

Proverbs says⁵, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*", because *friends wound with the word of God*, to bring about a softening of the heart, in pursuit of Christ-likeness.

God's piercing Word should keep us from insulting, arrogant wielding of the Word!

If we who *wield* God's word are also *pierced* by it, we will be humble in sharing it.

Hear the Word, **Believe** the Word, **Obey** the Word, **Share** the Word.

Verse 13 shifts from the Word of God to God Himself, who inspired the Scriptures.

"no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked & exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

The word translated "exposed" is for the Greek *trachelidzo* (hear the word "**trachea**", wind pipe?). In a wrestling context,⁶ this mean "to grip in a neck-hold," chocking someone until they pass out into *limp helplessness*. Graphic!

If audibly & visibly, the thoughts & intentions of your heart were projected on this wall, **just from this past week** . . . you'd be too ashamed to ever come back here!

The author of Hebrews is saying the Creator sees EVERYTHING in His creatures, the invisible thoughts & intentions of your life, even the ulterior motives behind your "good works".

Anyone who believes he can *hide* from his Creator or when accounting for his life, "spin" a good yarn to his Judge . . . is delusional!

Scripture strips us bare . . . because it exposes us to God's magnificent character.

As John Calvin put it,

"It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked to God, and then descends from contemplating God to scrutinize himself." (Institutes, I.I.2)

The Bible shows us our need for a Saviour, and also identifies that glorious Saviour!

The Word of Incarnate – Jesus . . . In His Kindness & Severity

The 'severity' of Jesus is found by those who reject Him, who'll experience His sword:

*The one who rejects Me and does not receive my words has a judge: the **WORD** that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and His name is the WORD of God . . . From His mouth comes a sharp sword to judge"

⁵ Proverbs 27:6a

⁶ For example, Philo, *On Dreams*, 2.34

We, the unholy, are completely at the mercy of a Holy God;
 the more *desperate* we are before His all-seeing eye,
 the more *wonderful* is His provision for our needs . . .

This is our final motivation: astounding 'KINDNESS' of Jesus found by all who *trust* in Him.

"all are naked and exposed" before God.

You should hear a *loud "echo"* from the Garden of Eden in Genesis. Recall?...

Before their fall into sin, Adam & Eve were ***naked & unashamed*** . . . at rest before each other, at rest with God in the Garden.

After their sin, they were ashamed . . . before each other (covering themselves with fig leaves), & ashamed before God (they hid behind the rocks) . . . until God provided a cover for their shame by the sacrifice of an animal.

Jesus was quite literally *naked* on the cross, and also *ashamed*, as Hebrews 12:2 says,
"He endured the cross, despising the shame" . . . so that our shame could be covered.

"Trachelidzo" used in the context of religious sacrifice, means *stretch out/expose the neck* of the sacrificial lamb to be cut.

With the 'sword' in v.12 preceding,
 And the next verse (v.14) being about Jesus as High Priest (who oversees sacrifices)
 Religious sacrifice seems to be in mind.

Jesus is called 'the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'⁷. Isaiah writes,
He was pierced for our transgressions
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter

Jesus was pierced for us. Jesus was slain for us.
 Jesus was ashamed, "naked & exposed before God" on the cross – for us!

Amazing love, O what Sacrifice, the Son of God, given for me!

To Jesus, we should we turn, and must turn – for Rest . . . Eternal Rest.

The next section, to Jesus & His highly priestly ministry, encourages us to approach God's throne of grace, for Jesus can sympathise with us!

As we wrap up this section on enter God's rest, and JOINING HIM is His eternal enjoyment of His finished work in Creation and in Christ, I'd like us to consider this quotation from C.S. Lewis, which speaks of "the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" on the Day of Reckoning:

*In the end that Face – which is the **delight** or the **terror** of the universe – must be turned upon each of us . . . either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised.*

⁷ John 1:29

I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God . . . it is not! **How God thinks of us** is not only more important, but infinitely more important . . . It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected.

The promise of glory is incredible and **only possible by the work of Christ**, that some of us . . . shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the Divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. **But so it is!**⁸

The Question is: will you be there?

“come to Me you who are weary & and burdened, and I will give you REST . . . REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Trust Jesus: His Rest is ‘better than all the rest’!

SONG:

My Faith Has Found a Resting Place

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – NEXT PAGE

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Macmillan, 1966), 10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Main Idea:

To Enter God's Rest, Take Care to Trust & *Continue* Trusting in Jesus

The Promise of Entering God's Rest (4:1-3a)

1. Per verses 2-3, what is clear about how (on what basis) we can enter God's rest?
2. What exactly is "*faith*" according to the Bible? How would Heb 11:1 help you define it? Is it 'blind'?
3. How can you use this information in sharing the gospel? (especially with, but not only with, sceptics)

The Pattern for Entering God's Rest (4:3b-10)

4. What exactly is God's own "Rest" in Genesis? So what does it mean for us to enter His rest?
5. How do we know – from the Old Testament / Psa 95 – that Joshua's rest was not God's final rest? How does the author of Hebrews add to Psalm 95's reasoning about a rest after Joshua's?
6. How God's is Rest in His finished creation work a *prototype* for Rest in Jesus' finished redemption work?
7. How does the tension of being saved not *by* works but *for* works . . . work?! (Consider "Shema")
8. Discuss Harold Abrahams & Eric Liddell's different *attitudes* towards work & the role *grace* plays. (Why is it so difficult for us to rest from our attempt to merit our own righteousness?)

The Plea to Enter God's Rest (4:11-13)

9. Do you think the "word of God" (v.12) is the *incarnate* word, the *inscripturated* word, or both? Why?

● **The Word *Inscripturated* (the Bible)**

10. How would you respond to someone who says, "I don't need theology or the Bible – just Jesus"?
11. Why is it crucial to allow Scripture to deeply pierce our souls? (To what end[s]? Include verse 11)
12. What are some changes you could make in your *personal* Scripture reading to allow deeper piercing?
- 13a. When you encourage/advise friends, what role does Scripture play in your encouragement & counsel?
 - b. Do you ignore/by-pass the '*piercing*' portions of Scripture? What are you afraid of? And inhibiting?
- 14a. How have you been "wounded with the word" – either in personal reading or by a Christian friend lovingly sharing piercing truths? What was the outcome? Fruit?
 - b. What '*piercing*' is crucial so that the person '*wielding*' the word does so humbly/lovingly?

● **The Word *Incarnate* (Jesus)**

15. What can we learn about "rest" from Adam and Eve and their "hiding" in naked shame?
16. What does the word "exposed" (*trachelizo* [trachea]) means in a sacrificial temple context?
17. How does being ashamed, "naked & exposed" for you motivate you to persevere in the faith?