

**NBC Devotional**  
**October 13, 2021**  
**“Rest In God's Rest”**

The most well-known scripture in the passage from Hebrews 4:12-16 is verse 12: “. . . the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (NASB)

The verse affirms what we all know to be true: God speaks through His written Word in ways that are clear and to the point. The Scriptures introduce us the God of Creation, the Word made flesh, and the Spirit of God. The Scriptures tell us about the God who intervenes and intercedes on our behalf.

As you would expect, the Church of the Nazarene agrees and supports that understanding. The Church says as much, in its fourth Article of Faith:

We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

All in favor, raise your hand. Raise both hands!

I thought we'd all agree. I was ready to say for us to review our praises and prayer requests, pray, say “Amen,” and get back to our work.

However, . . . there's a word in verse 12 that gets in the way of our having one of the shortest chapels on record. The word that gets in the way is the word “for.” Verse 12 begins with the word “for.” “For the word of God is living and active . . .”

Why is the word “For” there? What does it mean when the verse begins that way?

It means that verse 12 is not the start of a new thought like it appears to be in most translations. It is not a stand-alone text that testifies to the authority of Scripture. Instead, verse 12 is a part of a continuing discussion that takes up all of Hebrews chapter 4. The author includes the comments in verse 12 to support his overall argument that God means what God says.

So, what is the topic of the Hebrews 4? What is it that God is saying to those first-century Christians and to us? We can get the gist of the discussion, if we read a few verses starting with verse 9:

“Consequently, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore, let's make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all

things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.” (Hebrews 4:9-13 NASB)

Did you hear it? The point of the passage is this: “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”

God has provided a rest for those who belong to Him. That rest is: “the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells, and of which he has promised to make persevering believers in Christ partakers after the toils and trials of life on earth are ended.” (Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament)

The rest is described in Jesus’ invitation: “Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you . . . rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Now, I ask you again. All those in favor and in agreement, raise your hand. Raise both hands!

The author then says, “Therefore let’s make every effort to enter that rest.” (Hebrews 4:11)

Evidently, there were some folks who were forgetting that the rest was available to them. Or they were ignoring that option and spending their time on other things. Or they were getting tired of waiting for the Lord to return and started looking elsewhere. The writer says some were “. . . following the same example of disobedience.”

Whatever the case, they were trading the rest promised by God for something else. So, the author includes verse 12 to remind them that God means what He says, that there is no fooling God, and that God can “. . . discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) God knows who is and who isn’t in right relationship with God to enter into and experience that rest. Verse 12 is an invitation and a warning, an encouragement and a caution, for Christians to believe, trust, and rest in the Sabbath rest of God.

Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, paraphrased verses 8-11 this way:

“And so, this is still a live promise. It wasn’t canceled at the time of Joshua; otherwise, God wouldn’t keep renewing the appointment for “today.” The promise of “arrival” and “rest” is still there for God’s people. God himself is at rest. And at the end of the journey we’ll surely rest with God. So, let’s keep at it and eventually arrive at the place of rest, not drop out through some sort of disobedience.”

Listen to that last sentence again: “So let’s keep at it and eventually arrive at the place of rest, not drop out through some sort of disobedience.”

So, the word for us today is to press on. Stay faithful. Trust in God. Reuben Welch titled his book on the Letter to the Hebrews, “When You Run Out of Fantastic – Persevere!” That applies here.

Let’s rest in His rest today, tomorrow, and forever.

Dr. Alan Lyke, NBC Vice President of Academic Affairs