

According to a Greek legend, in ancient Athens a man noticed the great storyteller Aesop playing childish games with some little boys. He laughed and jeered at Aesop, asking him why he wasted his time in such frivolous activity. Aesop responded by picking up a bow, loosening its string, and placing it on the ground. Then he said to the critical Athenian, “Now, answer the riddle, if you can. Tell us what the unstrung bows implies.” The man looked at it for several moments but had no idea what point Aesop was trying to make. It was then Aesop explained, “If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually; but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use with the bow when you want it.”

While this story is a legend, the truth is we are like a bow too. If we do not slacken the ever present tension within our lives, we will eventually break; but when we do take time to release that strain, we will be in better shape to do what we need and want to do. Now this is a tension that, to differing degrees, we are all experiencing today as *busyness* has become an endemic problem in our modern, fast-paced Western world. We’ve got pleasures we pursue, jobs to earn a living, children to raise, classes to attend, appointments to keep, emails to answer, meetings to go to, errands to run, housework to do, and projects around the house to complete. We tend to be swamped and pressed for time, as we frantically rush from one activity to another. Even when we retire, we seem to be even more busy than when we were working. Being busy simply means having a great deal to do. Defined that way, busyness is not a totally new phenomenon. There have always been those who had a lot of work to do.

But today, as a society, we’ve taken busy to an entirely new level. We’re not just industrious; we’re insanely busy. It’s not only certain segments of society that are working more, but nearly everyone is. We’re not just putting in long work days; we constantly have multiple, even conflicting, demands on our time. Our schedules are chaotic. We feel pulled in too many directions and can’t help but feel frenzied, agitated and stressed. Considering all of our modern conveniences, it’s ironic that we lead such hectic lives. But it’s because technology has allowed us to do our work faster and more efficiently that additional demands have been thrust upon us, as mobile devices allow us to be reached anywhere, anytime, and digital distractions like social media make us feel like we have to keep up with the endless streams of comments and notifications. Adding to that is the overcrowded schedules of families today, as many parents have their children involved in all kinds of extracurricular activities, shuffling kids to games and practices on weeknights and weekends, then trying catching up on errands and housework.

The bow strings of our souls can become too tight for us to be of any good use, and if pushed too far could also cause a brokenness that is beyond repair. That’s why we all need to take time to rest. The truth is, we were created by God to rest. In fact, the Bible tell us that God Himself rested. In Genesis 2:1-3 we read that after God had finished creating the heavens and the earth, *“on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”* The Bible also tells us that as a result of being created in God’s image, we are to rest also. In fact, God reveals the importance of rest in that He made the requirement to rest the fourth of the Ten Commandments: *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy”* (Exodus 20:8-11). The question that is often asked about all of this is: *Why* did God, being fully omnipotent (all powerful) need to rest? Well the answer is God, in being God, didn’t need to rest and doesn’t need to rest, but we do. And so God, as He always does, modeled rest for us, and then, as He also always does, commanded us to do so also. We see this in the life of Jesus as he would often take time away to be with God, away from the pressures and demands of preaching, teaching and healing - and we read Jesus prescribed time off for His wearied disciples after they had returned from a prolonged period of ministry.

The question is also quite often asked: *What is rest?* Rest is the regular rhythm of taking a break from the constant demands and stresses of life. Rest includes all the components of that which is mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical. Long term studies show that a *lack of rest* affects thinking, learning and memory; creates irritability, impatience, and moodiness; breaks down the physical body and causes chronic health problems; negatively affects relationships and social interaction with others. You would think that those things alone would cause us to turn away from busyness and drive us to rest in God – but the character of our sinful nature is that we are prone get our fulfillment, satisfaction and identity from ourselves *in what we do* rather than from God *in what He has done and wants us to do for Him*. What actually drives us to unrest is the *idolatry of self* that is rooted deep down within our hearts. We are prone to sacrifice rest to the gods of affirmation, success, status, self-fulfillment, power, comfort, productivity - and the priorities, passions, preferences and expectations we have for ourselves and others have for us. This pattern can be seen in almost all areas of our lives. The good news is God is not silent about our need for rest, nor has He left us without good reason or motivation for rest. The Bible clearly tells us that humans need for rest and it also tells us rest teaches us something about God.

In Psalm 127:1-2 King Solomon wrote: *“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”* The God-created need for rest built into our being is a gift of God’s grace. As fallen beings who live in a fallen world the anxieties, tensions and busyness of life wear us down to the point of physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue, thus our infinite God has graciously granted within finite humanity the need for rest.

In Psalm 121:1-4 the Psalmist writes: *“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”* Our God-created need for rest reminds us that we are not God. God does not need rest; He neither slumbers or sleeps. But we need sleep, because we are not God. But God is God and He is not only omnipotently all-powerful in not needing rest, He is also omnisciently ever-watchful by sovereignly watching over us when we do rest. This leads us to understanding that our God-created need for rest should cause us to affirm and confess that we are in fact not in control of our lives. Physical rest requires us to relinquish control because even the most powerful people in the world spend a third of their lives asleep, and the world moves on without them. God handles the world quite well while on His own. While He is sovereign over our world while we are awake, He is even more so when we are at rest. John Piper wrote: *“Sleep is like a broken record that comes around with the same message every day ‘Man is not sovereign.’”*

Pastor Eugene Peterson has said that, *“Busyness is an illness of spirit.”* This is true in that we have a healthy spirit when our spirits that are full of God, which causes us to pursue the purposes of God, which would include finding rest in God – but we have an unhealthy spirit, an illness of spirit, when our spirits are full of ourselves, which cause us to pursue affirmation, success, status, self-fulfillment, power, comfort, productivity - and the priorities, passions, preferences and expectations we have for ourselves and others have for us. In our text for today God’s Word calls us pursue a healthy spirit so we would be full of God and enter into the rest of God: *“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”* (Hebrew 4:9-11). The Greek word *“strive”* in the phrase *“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest”* literally means *“earnest labor, to make effort, to do diligently.”* Now the meaning of the Greek word *“strive”* seems somewhat contradictory to what it means to *“rest”* – but the heart of what is being said here is that we are commanded to consciously strive, labour, make effort, work at, force ourselves to enter into the rest of God, which is the very rest we were created for and desperately desire - because we are so naturally inclined to pursue the busyness of our own priorities instead.

In our text for today God's Word will tell us how we can strive to enter the rest of God. We see this in the context of Hebrews, as this letter was written to encourage Christians with a Jewish heritage who had been persecuted and driven out of Palestine sometime before the fall of Jerusalem under the brutal hand of the Roman army. These Hebrew Christians had suffered and were continuing to suffer for their faith in Jesus – and at the outset the author of this letter uses the first two chapters to encourage them, by reminding them of the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Messiah of God's people. He told them that Jesus is greater than all the prophets who had gone before him, as he is the last spokesman for God. And Jesus is also greater than the angels, as angels are merely servants, while Jesus is the Son of God. And Jesus is greatest of the high priests and his priestly ministry is greater than that all of the high priests of the temple. As we enter our text for today, the author continues to speak of Jesus as an apostle as well a high priest, which brings to mind Aaron (the first high priest) and his brother Moses, whom the writer sees as the first apostle.

*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. Hebrews 3:1-2*

The writer here continues to encourage those whom he was writing to by addressing them as “*holy brothers*” who “*share in a heavenly calling*” who also share a common “*confession*” of faith in Jesus Christ who is their “*apostle and high priest*.” Here is where the author of this letter speaks into the lives of his Jewish readers, who would have held Moses to be their most prominent leader, as he exhorts them to “*consider*” not Moses, but “*Jesus*” to be their greatest leader. That Christ is superior to Moses in His person is an obvious fact. Moses was a mere man, called to be a prophet and leader, while Jesus is the Son of God sent by His Father into the world. The word *apostle* means “one sent with a commission.” Moses was commissioned by God to speak for God, but Jesus was *commissioned by God* to be the “last Word” of salvation and redemption. Jesus is not only the greatest apostle, but He is also the greatest High Priest. Moses was a prophet who on occasion served as a priest, but he was never a high priest. That title belonged to his brother Aaron. As the Apostle, Jesus represented God to fallen humanity; and as the High Priest, He now represents salvation for fallen humanity. While Moses taught God's Law, Jesus Christ is the personified messenger of God's grace. After asking his readers to “*consider*” the difference between Jesus and Moses, writer of Hebrews notes that Moses and Jesus Christ were *both* faithful in the work God gave them to do. Moses was not sinless, as was Jesus, but he was faithful and obeyed God's will. This would have been an encouragement to those reading this. In the midst of their suffering, they should *imitate* the faithfulness of Moses in their calling.

*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. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 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. Hebrews 3:3-6*

Here we see that Jesus' ministry was greater than that of Moses. The word “*house*” is used six times in these verses. While the word “*house*” here literally means “a dwelling” – by *implication* it refers to the gathered people of God, not to a material building. We see this same use of the word “*house*” by God Himself in 2 Samuel 7 when David wanted to build a temple for God, a house in which God could dwell, but God told David that He would build David's “*house*” (household, family) by making a covenant with David's descendants. Moses ministered to God's “*house*” (Israel, the people of God under the Old Covenant), but Christ ministers to God's “*house*” today (the body of Christ, the people of God under the New Covenant.) The contrast between Moses and Jesus Christ is clear: Moses was a member of the *household*, but Jesus *built* the “*house*.” And while Moses was a *servant in the “house”*, Jesus Christ is a *Son over the “house.”* As builder and owner of God's house, Jesus is God! “*And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*” Amen? Amen!

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" Hebrews 3:7-11*

The writer ties in these verses to the previous verse by use of the word "therefore." In Hebrews 3:1-6, he exhorted the Jewish Christians to strongly consider the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah of God's people, the greatest Apostle and High Priest, who has built and owns and sovereignly reigns and rules over the house of God, the saved people of God, the body of Christ, the church. The author then quotes from Psalm 95 and attributes it to the Holy Spirit, which affirms that the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The verb "says" here appears in the present tense, which means the Holy Spirit is presently and still speaking through the scriptures. The verses quoted from Psalm 95 recalls scenes in Israel's history in the wilderness when God's people grumbled against God and rebelled against God and did not listen to God's voice. It is significant to note that the psalm recounts scenes from both ends of the Exodus. The writer is using examples from Israel's history, and the psalm that comments on them, as a warning to his contemporaries and to us. He recalls what the "fathers" did (verses 7b through 9) and the Lord's response (verses 10 through 11). The implication, which becomes more clear in the commentary that follows, is that we shouldn't be like "the fathers." The fathers of God's people heard the Lord's voice but hardened their hearts, resisting his words. They rebelled against the Lord and tested him, demanding their own way and proof of his good intentions. Because they resisted him, God became angry with them, noting that they always go astray in their hearts, wandering into self-destruction, not knowing the ways of the Lord, which they have rejected along with him. The Lord, expressing his wrath at the people's perpetual tendency to destroy themselves, gives them what they want. If they don't want to go into the promised land, the place of rest in the presence of the Lord, they don't have to. In fact, they never, ever will enter it.

*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 is called "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 is said, "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 forty 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. Hebrews 3:12-19*

God's Word here is emphasizing the extreme need we face in recognizing the spiritual dangers that exist for all of us. He begins by encouraging us all to "exhort one another" to be faithful to the Lord, as we, as God's people, have a tendency to become distracted, careless and apathetic in our walk with God. Moses, Caleb, and Joshua did try to encourage Israel when the nation refused to enter Canaan, but the people would not listen – and not much has changed for us over the past 3,500 years. Having quoted Psalm 95, the writer of Hebrews now speaks to us about the need for us a family of God to "take care" of one another "lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." This condition describes the root of sin; the heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. Many different terms are used to describe sin in this passage: hardening the heart (verses 8, 13, 15), rebellion against God (verses 8, 15, 16), testing God (verses 8, 9), going astray in the heart (verse 10), not knowing God's ways (verse 10), an evil heart of unbelief (verse 12), falling away from God (verse 12), sinning (verse 17), disobedience (verse 18) and unbelief (verse 19). Most of these are descriptions of actions, but the root of those actions is "an evil heart of unbelief." We don't usually connect evil with unbelief. Evil is more commonly associated with murder, rape, genocide and the like. But murder, rape and genocide stem from unbelief. The root of all evil, then, is the fallen, sinful, evil disposition of the human heart that not to believe God or believe in God.

In context of what the writer of Hebrews has been telling us, it is *the evil disposition of the human heart to not believe in the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ*. For those who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, this evil disposition of unbelief is the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For those of us who do know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, this evil disposition of unbelief is the remaining sin within us that gives rise to wandering from God, testing God, not trusting God, rebelling against God, sinning against others, etc. The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) erred in their hearts (Hebrews 3:10), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They also had evil hearts of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted that God would adequately be powerful enough for the challenge of Canaan. So hard was the heart of Israel that the people even wanted to return to their slavery in Egypt. Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for enslavement. This spoke to the hearts of the readers of this letter because this was their history and they were in currently danger of “going back” to Egypt themselves.

The Bible clearly tells us that God was grieved with Israel during the entire forty years they wandered in the wilderness. The Jews had not been out of Egypt very long when they began to provoke God. He supplied them bread, yet they complained about a lack of water at a place that Moses called “Massah and Meribah” which means “provocation and trial.” These same words are the words for “*provoked*” and “*astray*” in Hebrews 3:10. The sin of Israel is stated in Hebrews 3:12: “*to fall away from the living God.*” Does “*to fall away from the living God*” mean abandoning one’s faith and being condemned forever? Well, the Bible tells us once a person truly belongs to Jesus Christ, they cannot be lost - but at the same time perseverance of faith in Jesus Christ is the evidence that you truly belong to Christ. And so if we fall away, we show that we never truly belonged to God. In the context of Hebrews, Israel departed from the living God by refusing God’s will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go back to Egypt. But God did not permit them to go back. Rather He disciplined them in the wilderness. God did not allow His people to return to bondage. Does that mean those who died in the wilderness were eternally lost? The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Saviour who constantly intercedes for them. But the writer is also careful to point out that this confidence is no excuse for sin. God disciplines His children. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer’s present spiritual inheritance in Christ. For those of us who are truly in Christ, we will not miss heaven for the times we doubted God’s Word and rebelled against God - but we will miss out on the blessings of our inheritance today, and we will suffer the chastening of God.

*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. 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 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.* Hebrews 4:1-3

The word “*therefore,*” in verse 1 concludes the writer’s exhortation based on Israel’s failure to enter the promised land. Rest, we read, is available to us as it was to them, although a different kind of rest, but it is also possible for us to come short of it, as they did. We are to “*fear*” so that we don’t miss it - or, that someone among us doesn’t miss it. In Hebrews 2:15 we read that Jesus delivered us from “*fear*” - but also Hebrews 10:31 tells us “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” This is why it is of extreme importance that we share the gospel of Jesus Christ with each other and others – which will have a transformative positive effect on those who hear it and receive it with open hearts. This is reflected in verse two, which speaks of when Joshua and Caleb came back from scouting out the promised land and told God’s people the “*good news*” about the land before them. But that good news was not “*united by faith*” and believed by all. Some interpreted it to be bad news, for they were convinced that if they entered the land, they would be “*devoured*” by its inhabitants. Because the good news was not believed, it was of no benefit to them. Similarly, the gospel is of benefit only insofar as it is believed. Those who believe it, or those who “*have believed*” it, enter God’s rest.

And so we read that the qualification for entering God's rest is: *Believe the good news*. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we enter God's rest. It's that simple. But it wasn't so simple for the Israelites. To them the good news seemed like bad news. They thought they would lose their lives. The same fear makes today's good news seem like bad news to many who hear it. It is the fear of being devoured and losing one's life: the fear of losing control, the fear of seeing what one values slip away, the fear of giving up the right to define life. The myriad of arguments offered against the gospel is simply a smoke screen for the fear of being consumed and losing life. God tells us that those who don't believe the gospel, who think they are preserving their lives, *"shall not enter my rest."* In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus said: *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"* Faith in Christ means we believe Jesus died in our place for our sins so we might have new life and eternal life.

*"For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.' And again in this passage he said, 'They shall not enter my rest.' 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.' 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 fall by the same sort of disobedience."* Hebrews 4:4-11

The first "rest" of God was on the seventh day after God completed his work of creation. The fact that God rested on the seventh day became the basis for his gift of the Sabbath to the people of God. When God rested on the seventh day, He *"blessed the seventh day and made it holy,"* (Genesis 2:3) - which means that he set it apart for some special purpose. The Sabbath was to be holy time, a time set aside for God for purpose of reflecting on the work of God in redeeming His people from their slavery in Egypt. The purpose of redemption was to bring the people back into relationship with God. He set the seventh day apart in order to have a special day to enjoy his relationship with the people, and so that His people would have a day to enjoy Him. In verses 4-11 the writer of Hebrews links the concepts of Sabbath and land - holy time and holy space, the time for relationship and the place for relationship. At some point the distinction between time and place for relationship breaks down because time and place no longer matters in the presence of God. It is then we hear the voice of God, the Word of God, the voice of Jesus the Word who became flesh, who is the gospel. If we hear the gospel, we have a chance to believe it. But it is also possible to harden our hearts - to not listen and not believe because we suspect it isn't good news. We should therefore open our ears and hearts as wide as possible for as long as possible so that the truth of the gospel settles into our souls.

*"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."* Entering into God's rest means resting from our "works." What "works" do we rest from? We rest from our "works" as God rested from His. How did God rest from His "works"? God rested from His "works" by blessing the seventh day and setting it apart for a relationship with fallen humanity. Rest doesn't mean absence of all activity; it is the means of enjoying a relationship with God. Again, this has both future and present implications. There will come a time when we will cease from earthly "works" entirely and perfectly know and worship the Lord, as John reports in Revelation 14:13: *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"* Jesus himself spoke of this rest: *"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:27-30).

Jesus gives us rest. How does Jesus define rest? He connects it with knowing the Father, who is revealed by the Son to each one of us. Then Jesus says, "*Come to me ...* " Come to Jesus. Embrace him. In other words, believe the gospel. Believe the gospel and know God – and experience rest of Jesus. He will bring you to the heavenly land where our most holy God dwells - and we are there even now, in God's presence. How does knowing the Father produce rest? As we know the Father, as we draw near to him, as we see Him more clearly, we understand that all is well, all will be well and we will be well now and forever. We are weary and heavy-laden - full of guilt and fear and anxiety. We carry God-like burdens because we don't know him, or don't know him well. We are therefore not at rest, and don't feel that we can ever rest. But as we move toward the Father, it all melts away, because we realize that He is sovereign over everything. But we only understand that as we move toward him. And we can't move toward him unless we have access to him. Jesus, by dying on a cross for us, has given us access to God. It is with Him and with Him only that we shall find rest for our souls.

*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.* Hebrews 4:12-13

These two verses about the "*word of God*" begin with the word "*for,*" which means they are related to the preceding text, where we see that Jesus is the word of God, who is the voice who speaks the good news of the gospel into our hearts and souls. This is how our striving allows us to enter the rest of God. When we listen to the voice of the Word of God (which is Jesus) speak about the good news of the gospel, we then enter God's rest. How does hearing the gospel of Jesus change us? Well, our text tells us "*the word of God is living and active*" and it will change us when we listen to it. But before it changes us, however, it diagnoses our condition. The gospel, in a spiritual sense, is "*sharper than a two-edged sword*" - which was a large, heavy weapon that a soldier could use to slice through the bones of an enemy and sever his limbs. As the sword would expose the previously unseen internal workings of the body, the gospel exposes the previously unseen internal workings of the thoughts, motivations and intentions of our hearts. We've already seen that the problem of fallen humanity is an "*evil, unbelieving heart,*" - which is a heart that is fundamentally opposed to God and all God stands for. But that problem is hidden deep within the inner workings of the heart, in one's thoughts, motivations and intentions. The gospel, then, sharply digs in and diagnoses what is in the heart, and our response to the gospel will demonstrate whether we want God's rest or not. The sword of the Word of God exposes the deep issues of the heart and judges whether our hearts desire or reject God: "*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 being sliced open and having one's heart exposed sounds like a frightening process. Yet, it is a good one. How many of us truly know our own hearts? The Bible tells us *none of us knows*. If you think you know, you're even more deceived than you think. If the gospel exposes our heart as hard toward God, at least we're aware of reality; now we know the pretense that our hearts were right before God was, in fact, a giant blind spot we refused to address. And as we then further listen to the gospel, we then fully embrace the gospel, and then fully surrender our hearts to Jesus, and then God begins to change our hearts into one that is soft toward Him, so that we will want God's rest more than anything else in this world. And as the gospel comes to us again and again, it will continue to diagnose our hearts, so that we might be aware of our distance from God and then moves us closer to him. The bow strings of our souls can become too tight for us to be of any good use, and if pushed too far could also cause a brokenness that is beyond repair. We were created by God to love God and worship God and live for God and serve God and share God and rest in God. But these things are hard for us to do because we are a fallen people and we live in a fallen world – and we spend most of our time on earth focused on ourselves rather on God, which causes us to wander and stray from the One who created us to be with Him. Listen to the Word of God. Believe the gospel. Come to Jesus. Rest in God.