

Back to the Beginning: Genesis Session 9 Review and Study Guide

This session of our *Back to the Beginning* Bible study series connects the Sabbath rest in Genesis 2 to the believer's true rest discussed in Hebrews. We didn't completely finish this topic in our last session. Today we'll explore Hebrews 3 and 4, drawing from Psalm 95, to understand how faith enables us to enter God's rest today. Use your Bible and the provided notes to engage with the material, reflecting on how Christ's finished work brings us peace.

Lesson Objectives

- Understand why we connect Genesis 2's Sabbath to Hebrews' discussion of rest.
- Explore Psalm 95's role in Hebrews, emphasizing "today" as the time to enter rest.
- Reflect on faith mixed with hearing God's word to profit from it.
- See how believing leads to obedience and resting in Christ's finished work.
- Encourage personal application of resting in God's promises rather than striving.

Part 1: Connecting Genesis to Hebrews

In Genesis 2, we see God resting on the seventh day, establishing the Sabbath. This leads us to Hebrews, where the author explains the believer's true rest. Turn to Hebrews 4, but first, let's review chapter 3 for context.

Hebrews refers to Psalm 95:7–11, where David warns against hardening hearts like the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus). They heard God's promise of rest in the Promised Land but didn't enter due to unbelief and disobedience. The psalmist urges, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

The author of Hebrews (inspired by the Holy Spirit) interprets this Old Testament truth for us, showing it applies to our spiritual rest in Christ.

Reflection Questions

- Why is it significant that Hebrews interprets Psalm 95 in light of Genesis 2?
- How does the wilderness generation's failure warn us about entering rest?

Part 2: Today – The Day of Salvation

Hebrews emphasizes "today" as the time for salvation and action (Hebrews 3:7–13; see also 2 Corinthians 6:2). We often dwell on the past (regrets) or future (worries), but all we have is today. Tomorrow, if it comes, will be "today."

Apply this practically: If you want to learn French or encourage someone, start today. In spiritual matters, don't harden your heart—believe and obey now. If you have been unsuccessful in your spiritual endeavors in the past, begin anew **today**.

Hebrews 3:12–13 warns against an evil heart of unbelief and urges us to encourage one another daily (“while it is called today”) to prevent slipping away. This isn't judging but supporting each other through periods of discouragement or doubt.

In Hebrews 3:16, the question “Did not all who came out of Egypt provoke Him?” expects “yes”—all were disobedient except Caleb and Joshua, who entered the land due to their faith demonstrated by obedience.

Reflection Questions

- Why focus on “today” rather than past regrets or future worries?
- How can we encourage one another “today” to hold firm in faith?

Part 3: Entering God's Rest Through Faith

In Hebrews 4:1–2, we're warned to fear falling short of God's promised rest. The good news (gospel) was proclaimed to the Israelites and to us, but it profits only when united with faith. The Old Testament Israelites failed to have the necessary faith.

Hearing the word isn't enough—it must be mixed with belief. Faith leads to obedience; believing God's commands changes behavior.

For example, if the Bible says to avoid unwholesome words and speak only what edifies (Ephesians 4:29), believe and act on it. Sin is falling short of God's glory—any gap between His standard and our actions. That gap is wider than we usually think.

Jesus' story of the woman anointing Him (Luke 7:36–50) shows that those forgiven much love much. Realize the mountain of daily shortcomings (failing to love God fully or neighbors as ourselves), yet Christ forgives all. And since that forgiveness covers a mountain of sin, our love for Him grows because of our gratitude.

We can't perfectly keep “all on the altar” or fulfill commandments in our strength—rest in Christ's finished work (John 19:30), like God rested after creation.

Reflection Questions

- How does mixing faith with God's word lead to profit and obedience?
- What does realizing the extent of our forgiveness mean for our love toward God?

Part 4: Resting in Christ's Finished Work

Our efforts fall short—God's standard is perfect love for Him and others (Matthew 22:37–39). Even “good” moments don't meet it fully. In our strength, striving leads to losing, as in “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

Rest means trusting Christ: We're blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). Live out of overflow—love God and others from gratitude, not to earn favor.

This isn't license to sin but freedom to glorify God in peace. When you grasp this, it's like being saved again—exciting and transformative.

A big and important part of this is understanding that as Hebrews 4:10 says, “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” As Christians we understand that we can't be saved by our striving. But we often use self-effort to perform the good things we think God wants from us. But we have to remember that our righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight. The work we need to do is work that originates with the Holy Spirit within us and is empowered by Him.

Works done in the energy of the flesh are called “dead works.” The writer of Hebrews refers to this type of works in 6:1 and 9:14. In 9:14 he writes, “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” It's rest from these dead works that God wants to free us from. It is that rest that is promised in Hebrews 4 and is foreshadowed by God's rest on the seventh day.

Reflection Questions

- Why can't we achieve perfect obedience in our strength?
- How does resting in Christ change how we live daily?

Study Exercises

- Read Psalm 95:7–11 and Hebrews 3–4. Note connections to “today” and rest.
- List ways you fall short daily; reflect on Christ's forgiveness.
- Meditate on John 19:30 (“It is finished”) and its link to Genesis 2's rest.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Hebrews shows God's rest is entered through faith in Christ's finished work, not striving. The wilderness generation failed due to unbelief; today, mix faith with the gospel for true peace.