

## Hebrews 4

**Verses 1-3: *Therefore, since a promise of remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:***

***“So I swore in My wrath,***

***‘They shall not enter My rest,’”***

***although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.***

--(1) **Therefore.** . . The writer immediately applies this warning of unbelief to those he is writing to. Having proven Jesus is greater and more faithful than Moses, and that the wilderness generation failed to enter into rest because of an evil heart of unbelief, they too must beware.

--Why? **Since a promise remains of entering His rest.** . . They also had a similar promise of future rest, and a similar message of good news preached to them. His focus is now on the necessary step of faith they needed to take to follow Jesus into the rest promised by Him.

--**Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.** . . The writer wants them to learn from the mistakes of the past. He sums up his exhortation in 11.

**\*1 Peter 1:17: *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;\****

--All of us should fear falling short of what God has for us. \*Don't settle for second best!\*

--(2) Notice the **us/them (2)** and **they & them (2)/we (3)** contrast here.

-They had a rest. We have a rest.

-They had good news. We have good news.

-They had no faith. Do we have faith?

--The writer is again emphasizing similar circumstances and dangers. The answer is faith in the good news of God.

--There is some discrepancy in the translation. Is the writer saying:

1) The hearing of the word was not united with faith.

2) The people who heard did not unite themselves to those who expressed faith like Moses, Joshua, or Caleb.

--Both end up being true either way. When the word of God is united to faith in our hearts, our lives will prove it. The seed of the word is always good. The soil of our hearts is not. \*The truth of God can only truly be known through the lived experience of it.\*

--The writer then expresses his confidence that **we who have believed** do enter what **they** who did not believe missed out on. Only believers, or *faithers*, enter.

--I believe the next phrase: **although the works were finished from the foundation of the world**, leads into his next thought, which is that the rest spoken of is something that God had in mind from the foundation of the world.

**Verses 4-11: For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”**

**Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:**

**“Today, if you will hear His voice,**

**Do not harden your hearts.”**

**For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.**

**Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**

--(4-5) The writer now goes all the way back to creation and quotes **Gen. 2:2** and then contrasts that with the phrase **My rest** from **Ps. 95**. He quotes creation to show that God has designed a rest to share with men—as His rest in creation was not a necessity for Him. He shows that God has always had a larger rest in mind than that of Canaan.

--Why would God rest? It has nothing to do with weariness in work. His rest in creation was to take joy and delight in His work. It was all *very good*!

--God’s will to rest, to delight in all that is very good, ultimately secures our own. He will share His rest with us.

--(6-7) God has a rest in mind. The Israelites never reached it, even under Moses and Joshua. That is why the Holy Spirit is still speaking through David, saying it was available **Today** for those who wouldn’t **harden your hearts**.

--Clearly, Joshua’s *Today* and David’s *Today* were different.

--(8-9) Joshua led them into the land, yet that still wasn’t the ultimate rest God had in mind. There was still a rest of God for the people of God. Clearly, that rest had to be more than just Canaan. Israel was in the land and they still were not at rest!

--The people of Israel did receive a measure of rest (**Ex. 33:14; Josh. 21:44**), but only as an “installment” of the future rest God truly desired. \*Similar to how we currently experience a measure of our redemption and salvation but not yet the fulness of it.\*

--The wilderness generation had escaped the slavery of Egypt. They had entered Canaan, tired of wandering as pilgrims and living in tents. God gave them victory. They experienced a level of rest by faith—passing through the Red Sea and stepping into the Jordan.

--Still, **there remains therefore a rest for the people of God**. The writer is saying God has something more for **us; we** who place our faith in Jesus Christ and travel as His companions.

--The word for **rest** here is *sabbatismos*—a unique word used only here in the NT. It means *a sabbath-keeping*. The writer is specifically referring to something fuller and larger than the previous rests he had been speaking of (the Greek for the other *rests* being *katapausis*).

--The God of creation, who was also the God of Israel, who was now speaking in His Son Jesus Christ, was still promising a rest to those who would hear His word with faith.

--(10) We don't see God's rest in our present world, but we do see Jesus at rest as the Father was in creation. A sabbath-keeping rest. A rest from works. He alone can lead us into the rest of God.

--(11) **Let us. . .** the Hebrews of the writer's day—those rejected by their nation, put out of synagogues, branded as traitors to Moses and the law, excommunicated from the services of the temple and priesthood—**therefore be diligent to enter that rest.**

--Neither Moses nor Joshua nor David ever offered the rest that Jesus Christ had secured. They needed to be diligent in faith and obedience to cling to hold fast to Him. \*What are we aiming for in life? The rest of wealthy retirement? Do we ever think about our eternal rest?\*

**Verses 12-13: For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

--(12) The writer returns to his emphasis on hearing the Word of God and responding with faith (1:1-2; 2:1; 4:2). All the things he will say about the Word of God are only true because they are true of God. The Bible is unique because it is His Word.

--**For the word of God is. . .**

1) **Living:** The word is alive because God is alive! The Bible is not a dead letter because the living God speaks through it—unlike any other book. It is called **the living oracles (Acts 7:38)** because it possesses a life in itself, like a spiritual seed.

**\*John 6:63: It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.\***

--We need the Spirit and truth. The word and power. The bush still burns with fire. God still speaks. The voice of the Word is the voice of our Maker, Father, Savior, and Friend. It is God dealing with us personally! Haven't we all experienced something of this? We must, because man does not live by bread alone. \*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening!\*

--As Peter wisely said, **Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn. 6:68).** Where else could these Hebrews turn? What of us?

2) **Powerful:** The word of God is able to do.

**\*Jeremiah 23:28-29: "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"\***

--The word of God is powerful experientially, meaningfully. The word has power to purify like fire and break like a hammer.

3) **Sharper than any two-edged sword:** A sword is typical of division in judgment and is used in reference to the church of Pergamos and their false doctrine (**Rev. 2:12**), and of Christ's ultimate judgment of the nations at His second coming (**Rev. 19:15**).

4) **Piercing:** Penetrating and dividing into things that are difficult for us to discern. Each pair is different but joined in function (Yes, even the soul and spirit are different: **1 Thess. 5:23**). The word of God can find divisions where we cannot.

--How these Hebrews needed their life and history brought into proper focus! How often do we need our knotted mess of confusion untangled?!

--The word of God pierces down into the depths of who we are and allows us to see clearly the thoughts and intents of our own hearts. We all have so many wrong thoughts about God that need clearing up! \*Think of how patient Jesus was with His disciples in this regard.\*

--**(13)** God's word speaks more clearly than any other voice because God alone sees everything truly as it is. Everything is ***naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***

--God alone knows Himself as an infinite. He therefore also knows every place where His wisdom, power, and goodness are expressed in His creation, and where sin mars them. He knows everything with a depth of understanding we will never understand!

--Of course, this is most directly a warning. The Hebrews needed to know excuses for their unbelief wouldn't work. Before the living God, there is no hiding, no excuses, no secrets, and no escape from true accountability.

--But, His knowledge of us is also an encouragement to those who approach Him in faith!

**Verses 14-16: *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

--**(14)** The writer wants them to see Jesus and hold fast to Him! The Greek for ***hold fast*** (*krateo*) means *to get possession of, to seize, to keep faithfully and retain*. . . and was used of the way the religious leaders held to their traditions (**Mk. 7:3-4+8**).

--The thought of a high priest would put their minds on Annas, Caiaphas, and probably Ananias, who was likely the high priest of their day (**Acts 23:2; 24:1**). They could hold fast to those men representing them in the holy of holies in the temple. Or. . .

--They could hold fast to Jesus Christ, their great High Priest, who passed through the heavens (quite literally at His ascension in **Acts 1:9-10**) and entered the holiest place in the highest heaven for them (**Heb. 9:24**).

--How dark and foolish turning from Christ would be!

--(15) In Christ Jesus, they could have a great High Priest who is moved with sympathy for them. He remembers our earthly life. He has sympathy for sinners—though not their sin.

--Imagine what sympathy He has for the difficulties and trials we face for being His companions, confessing Him, and holding fast to Him in faith! And that despite the fact that we are weak sinners. God have mercy on us!

--He faced all that we face but was not overcome. He overcame evil with God. He alone was **without sin**. Temptations hit us, and the sparks find sinful tinder within. Temptations hit Christ like sparks on water.

\*Ware (The Man Christ Jesus, pg. 84): "As one considers again the temptations of Christ, it seems that one should rightly hold that the theanthropic Jesus *could not sin* because he was God. But this does not necessarily answer the question of why he *did not sin*. And, in fact, the answer Scripture suggests to us is this: Jesus did not sin, not because he relied on the supernatural power of his divine nature or because his divine nature overpowered his human nature, keeping him from sinning, but because he utilized all of the resources given to him in his humanity."\*

--Jesus Christ knows what it is to walk through this life in a human body, praying, meditating on the word of God, filled with the Spirit, and living in faith and obedience. All the while being tempted to the furthest extent of human capacities, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

--Jesus can and does sympathize with us. He is our High Priest.

--(16) This was a glorious aspect of our new relationship with Him. The Hebrews would immediately identify this exhortation as part of the new covenant and not the old covenant. In the old covenant, you needed a high priest because you could not approach. Sin and the law made it clear that you had to stay back or die. The veil kept sinners out.

--Now they are called to boldly approach a throne! Not Jerusalem, the temple, or an altar.

--What type of throne? **The throne of grace**. In the Old Testament God's throne was one typically seen as high and lofty and holy (**Isa. 6:1; Jer. 17:12; Ex. 1:26**). Certainly, it was a place of refuge for His people, but not somewhere anyone approached boldly!

--Why do we approach boldly? Because of the Person who sits there!

--What can His kingdom grant to His subjects? Things like mercy, grace, and help.

--What does that tell us of those who are approaching? They are sinners in need of mercy, grace, and help.

-Mercy is given to those who need it.

-Grace is given to those who don't have it.

-Help is given to those who are needy.

--We should never approach the throne of grace as a last resort. Our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, the One we hold and confess, should be the first Person we turn to.

\*Saphir (The Epistle to the Hebrews, pg. 251-252): *“Jesus belongs to the sinner. From His infancy in Bethlehem’s manger to the garden of Gethsemane, and from His agony on the cross to His ascension high above all heavens, He belongs to us, poor guilty and helpless sinners, who trust in Him. He is altogether ours. He came to seek and to save us who were lost. His obedience, His life of sorrow and love, His prayers and tears, His sacrifice on the cross, His resurrection, all is ours, because we are the wayward and helpless sheep who went astray, and whom He found.*

*“And in the heavenly glory He is ours, and His love, sympathy, faithfulness and power, give unto us in our need and misery, all things which pertain unto life and godliness. It is with us sinners that the glorified Savior is now constantly occupied.”\**

--Amen and Amen. ***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***