

Hebrews - A Letter Addressed to Modern-Day Christians

Part 8

Hebrews 4:1 – 11

We continue with this second passage of warning in Hebrews that is based on unbelief.

Hebrews 4:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”*

“Therefore” What does this word imply?

In context it is talking about not entering into our rest.

The author of Hebrews uses the word rest [Greek “*katapausis*” – meaning abode, to settle down, to cease, to colonise] in three different senses in this passage:-

1 **Entering into the Peace of God.** We, through our faith in Christ’s sacrifice receive Christ’s gift of peace.

John 14:27 [NIV] *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

A most precious state of mind that we can enter into.

Romans 8:28, 38-39 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” ... “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Constantly we are surrounded by the Love of God.

2 **Entering into the Promised Land.** To the children of Israel who had wandered for so long in the desert, the Promised Land truly was a rest.

3 **The completion of God’s Creation,** both physical and spiritual.

The promise of this rest still stands: it has not changed.

The danger is that we fail to enter the spiritual rest just as the children of Israel failed to enter their physical rest.

Numbers 14:21-23 [NIV] *“Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times, not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No-one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.”*

They came to the very edge of their rest but through lack of faith in God failed to enter.

Hebrews 4:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”*

“*Still stands*” The offer of this rest will always be open.

In **Genesis 1:3-31** [NIV] At the end of each creation day we have the phrase “*and there was evening and there was morning*” [**Genesis 2:1-2** [NIV]]. But on the seventh day **there is no mention of a time limit, no evening.**

This indicates God’s Rest is one without ending. Eternal.

Hebrews 4:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*”

“*Let us*” Note each of us has a personal responsibility to help others enter into this rest.

Galatians 6:1 [NIV] “*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*”

James 5:19-20 [NIV] “*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*”

2 Timothy 2:24-26 [NIV] “*And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*”

We are all parts of the same body that God wants to enter into His Rest.

Hebrews 4:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*”

“*Be careful*” [NIV] “*Fear*” [KJ] Greek “*phobeo*” meaning “*to be in awe*” and “*to be alarmed*” – God is telling us **not** to be complacent, but to wake up to the fact that we could miss out on what God has promised, as part of the covenant we have made with Him.

Proverbs 1:7 [NIV] “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*”

Fear is the starting place of the Knowledge of God, only a fool would not use the wisdom and self-discipline that fear can create.

Proverbs 9:9-11 [NIV] “*Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.*”

The more we stand in awe of God the more wisdom and understanding He will bless us with, and quality, if not length, of our life will be increased, now and on into eternity.

“*Fear*” Hebrew “*yirah*” to reverence, be afraid, regard as sacred or exalted.

This Christian fear is **not** the fear which makes a man run away from a task, **nor** is it the fear which reduces him to paralysed in action.

It is the fear which makes him put out every ounce of strength he possesses in a great effort not to miss the one thing that is worthwhile.

Hebrews 4:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*”

Key Word “Promise” Greek “*epaggelia*” – announcement – pledge – [something given to a person as security for fulfilment of a contract]. As yet we **only have** the “pledge” **not** a cast-iron guarantee.

We have **our side** of the contract to fulfil, which is belief [faith].

Remember faith is **not** just what we accept as true, but mostly how that truth affects the way we live.

We have to be faithful to God and His way of life.

The sombre warning here is never take our inheritance and entering into the eternal rest with God for granted. It is going to take total commitment on our part.

James 2:14-20 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?”*

Faith without good works lines us up as no better than demons.

Matthew 7:21-27 [NIV] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

Not just words but action.

Matthew 24:46 [NIV] *“It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”*

What we are doing is what counts.

Matthew 11:12 [NIV] *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”*

Forceful men – “*violent*” [KJ]

“*Violent*” – Greek “*biastes*” – energetic forcer, to force oneself; from root word “*bios*” meaning life and living.

Hence an energetic, enthusiastic way of living.

Remember, six days of labour come before the Sabbath rest!!

We will **not** just drift into our rest.

Hebrews 4:2 [NIV] *“For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.”*

Faith, active day-to-day living faith, is essential if the study of God’s Word is to be of any value.

Faith is like a catalyst that makes God's Word come alive.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 [NIV] *“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”*

God's Word can only actively change us if it is seasoned with faith.

That is put into effect in our lives and making changes in our lives.

John 6:35 [NIV] *“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Jesus the Christ, who is the Word of God [**John 1:1**] is likened to bread that will nourish us eternally.

John 6:27 [NIV] *“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”*

God's Word like food has to be eaten and digested, then converted into active energy [good works] and the renewing of the body [mind] if it is to create life [physical or spiritual].

We eat physical food with faith that it will give us physical life, applying the same faith to spiritual food will give us spiritual life.

John 6:32 [NIV] *“Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.”*

Both foods are gifts from God in Heaven.

Hebrews 4:3 [NIV] *“Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.”*

All of us who at the time of Christ's coming, that is when “today” comes to an end for each of us, will enter into God's Rest [“my rest”] which God promised.

God saying that unbelief excludes us from entrance to His Rest, implies that faith gains us an entrance into His Rest.

Just as the Israelites under Moses did not at first enter into their “rest”, the Promised Land, so we as yet haven't entered into our rest with God.

Psalms 95:7-8, 10 [NIV] *“for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert,” ... “For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.”*

Written in David's day, talks about a rest not yet entered into, so could not be referring to the rest Moses failed to enter into with the Israelites.

Hebrews 4:3 [NIV] *“Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.”*

“Finished” Greek “ginomai” to cause to be, brought into being, generated.

Genesis 2:1 [NIV] *“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.”*

“Finished” [KJ] “completed [NIV] The Hebrew word “*kalah*” completed, finished or prepared.

The world was completed ready for the use of man, so better translation is prepared.

Same word is used referring to tabernacle [Exodus 39:32] and temple [1 Kings 6:38].

Both prepared for use by priests in worshipping God.

Hebrews 4:4 [NIV] *“For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.”*

The “rest” which God refers to is a pause for pleasure as He had completed the preparation for the introduction of man, **not** for any reason of needing a rest out of exhaustion [Isaiah 40:28].

God continues to work [John 5:16-17] even on the Sabbath day.

Hebrews 4:3-5 [NIV] *“Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.” And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”*

“Believed” past tense.

This is decision taken at one time.

“Enter” is present tense, so our believing must be a continual decision.

God’s inviting us to enter into His Rest is a distinctive mark of His People, the people of the covenant, both old and new.

The physical resting on the Sabbath, seventh day, was the distinctive mark of the Old Covenant [Ezekiel 20:12].

The distinctive mark of the New Covenant is love.

John 3:16 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

The love that God had towards us by sacrificing His only begotten Son.

1 John 4:19 [NIV] *“We love because he first loved us.”*

Our love to Him in response of His Love for us.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Our love for the brethren.

Hebrews 4:6 [NIV] *“It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience.”*

“Disobedience” Greek “*apeitheia*” obstinate or rebellious; from root word meaning insulant – literally not allowing oneself to be persuaded, withholding belief.

This is a matter of the will, a refusal to give consent.

Hebrews 4:7-9 [NIV] *“Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;”*

Here we see the great Patience and Love of God.

Our weaknesses and failures may delay God doing what is His desire for us, because of the great Love He has for us, but God is never thwarted in the end.

Job 42:2 [NIV] *“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”*

Although Israel failed, God doesn't give up.

He renews His offer of a rest to us, and will resurrect those who died in the wilderness [physical and spiritual], to give them a chance to enter into His Rest, aided this time by the Power of the Holy Spirit and **not** only their own strength.

Hebrews 4:8 [NIV] *“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.”*

Joshua and the second generation of those who came out of Egypt did enter the Promised Land, but did **not** fully possess it and did **not** find permanent rest, again because of disobedience and lack of faith in God.

Joshua 23:5, 13 [NIV] *“The LORD your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you.” ... “then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.”*

Occupation still not complete.

Hebrews 4:9-10 [NIV] *“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”*

“A Sabbath Rest” “Sabbatismos” “A Sabbath keeping” A perpetual rest to be enjoyed uninterrupted by believers in their own fellowship with the father and son.

In contrast to “Sabbatizo” to keep the Sabbath weekly under the law as **used in Old Testament but not in New Testament**.

Hebrews 4:10 [NIV] *“for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”*

Because this “Sabbatismos” is the Rest of God Himself its full eternal fruition is yet in the future, as we are still flesh and blood.

But through the indwelling of Holy Spirit we as believers enter partially into that rest now.

Hebrews 4:10 [NIV] *“for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”*

The key to entering into this Rest of God is to follow the pattern God showed in **Genesis 2:2** *“Rested from His own works”*.

a) **No longer seeking righteousness through our own works** of keeping a set of laws but accepting in faith the Righteousness of God.

b) **No longer doing our will [work]** but God's Work.

c) **No longer doing God's Work in our own strength** but Christ in us doing the works.

Hebrews 4:11 [NIV] *“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no-one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”*

“Let us” second time we see this reminder that we are all part of the same body each to be supportive of the other.

“Therefore” as a result of what God has offered us and now allowed us to experience in part.

“Make every effort” this demands our total dedication, top priority in our lives, if we are to avoid the bad example of our Israelite forefathers in their lack of belief.