

## Hebrews chapter 4

From *Confessions* by St. Augustine: “Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.” (Book I.1.1) This chapter is about entering into the rest of God. Consider the peace of heart you would have if you knew God is love and that He is all powerful.

**4:1** The fear of missing out in verse 1 calls us to alert discipline. Those that waited upon the report of the 12 spies did fall short and never entered in. Joshua and Caleb said (Numbers 14:9) literally, they will be bread for us. Today we would say, “It’s a piece of cake.” The people heard that good report but preferred the bad. The next verse tells us why and warns us how to prevent that from happening to us.

**4:2** Though we hear God’s Word, we have to combine it with faith for it to live in us. Just hearing is not enough. Leon Morris, a New Testament scholar, says that the word “faith” in this passage implies an attitude of trusting God wholeheartedly. The nation of Israel did not trust God when faced with the obstacles in the Promised Land. Are we trusting God wholeheartedly when we are faced with obstacles? Are we mixing what we hear with faith? What difference does it make? (read the story about Hudson Taylor casting his burdens on the Lord.) If you will trust wholeheartedly, you will have God’s rest even in the worst of situations. The more trust, the more rest you will experience.

**4:3-10** The three uses of rest were typical of academic thought of the time: peace of God, Promised Land, and the rest of God. The promise of the rest of God for His people still holds. The danger is that we fail to reach it! The Children of Israel failed in Numbers 13 & 14 to enter the Promised Land. Rabbi, seeing no evening of the seventh day of creation, say that God’s rest continues through to this time. That is the very rest or peace God enjoys. The Children of Israel finally entered under Joshua (Hebrew for Jesus), but there is no fulfillment of the promise, Psalm 95:7-11, since David, 100s of years later, says there is still the rest of God to enter into. Thus God’s ‘Today’ still exists; the promise is still open to you. While you have life, through faith enter into the very rest of God. Matthew 10:28 It is first a rest from a guilty conscience and fear of the wrath of God. It is also the rest of casting your burdens on the Lord in daily situations. And it is a rest in daily ministry, (rest doesn’t mean not working) knowing that Jesus enables and empowers us. That is His easy yoke and light burden. Finally it is eternal rest when we are transformed into the image of Christ, worshipping and serving God forever. (Revelation 14:13)

The application to this little church was to consider carefully leaving the rest they had begun to enter into. By returning to the works of Judaism they would leave that all behind. They were returning out of fear. That is the very reason they didn’t enter the Promised Land. They were in danger of going down the same road as their forefathers. In fear for their lives, they were tempted to turn back and disobey God. It can happen to any of us,

both in life threatening circumstances, and everyday difficulties.

Another thought on the same verses is to beware lest thinking you came too late in history, in other words, that the great works of God are in the past. Jesus is the same today.

4:11 It sounds like a contradiction in terms, “every effort to enter into rest”, but we can see in the above examples and in our own lives that wholehearted trusting is an effort. It is an effort to take your thoughts captive. It is an effort to allow God to bring outcomes to situations other than those you would have asked for. Matthew 7:13; Philippians 2:12

12-13 In Numbers 14:42-45 the Children of Israel decided they would obey God, but it was too late. God told them not to go, but they disobeyed the Word and paid the penalty. We can all probably recall when the word sliced into our hearts and we responded and the Lord did a healing in us. We can also recall times when the word warned us and we disobeyed and paid the price. Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29

The Word of God has energetic life, penetrating and discerning. It lays open your physical life force and your spiritual life force, your movement, your framework, your very thoughts and intentions. Nothing is hid! We are naked and skinned OR made to look into His penetrating gaze!

In verse 13, literally ends “to whom is our word (logos)”. A play on words, If our lives conform to the Word of God, then our word (account or testimony) will be acceptable to God on the day of judgment.

14 Whew! We need these three verses (14-16) to follow the previous three! Here is the great claim of the letter. Jesus perfectly knows you and God, and He can bring you into God's presence (Great High Priest). “Gone through the heavens,” in the Old Testament, the priest had to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat for the sacrifice to be made complete. As Jesus went through the realm of Satan (Ephesians 2:2), every opposing power that tried to stop His ascent to the Mercy Seat of heaven was defeated. Ephesians 4:8-10 Aaron could not do this. He was earth bound. Because Jesus did this, we should endure! In the words of the passage, “Hold on!”

15 There is no trial or pain you can endure that He cannot fully relate to! In fact, the word *sunpatheo* means to suffer with. No one will ever suffer the assault of Satan and temptation like Jesus did. Satan must have set everything aside to attack Christ. Having never given in through all the enemy could muster, Jesus can show you how to stand firm. See 5:2

16 Confidently march up to the throne of heaven and ask for His instruction, His mercy and grace to help you when you need it most. He is there to intercede. In His great love for you, He is waiting to help. See 13:6; Romans 8:15; Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 4:6-7 This could be a salvation verse. Have you gone to Jesus to receive His mercy and grace for your sins?