

*<sup>1</sup> 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.* Hebrews 4:1 Our text begins again with the author's frequent use of the word, "therefore." He is building a case to challenge the Hebrew followers of Jesus to not return to Judaism to escape persecution. He used the example of Israel's failure to enter the Promised Land. After having been miraculously freed from Egypt and walking through the Red Sea on dry land, after being miraculously provided for each and every day, and seeing Moses meet with God on Sinai, after seeing water come out of a rock to quench their thirst, and seeing their enemies fall before them, they still feared to enter the Promised Land. They got so close, but fear took hold of their hearts and they yielded to it (Numbers 14:1-4).

The good spies, Joshua and Caleb told them the Canaanites would be bread for them (Numbers 14:9). In other words, it would be a piece of cake. The other ten spies said the people were so huge that we would be like grasshoppers (Numbers 10:33). That was when fear collided with faith. Would they look back on all God had done to the Egyptians and the other enemies they encountered? Would they remember the many times God punished them for disobedience and be afraid to disobey God, or would they yield to fear of man and refuse to enter the rest God had promised them? The author is reminding the readers of the choice their ancestors made, how they provoked God in the wilderness for forty years, and how the wilderness became their graveyard. They never entered the rest of God. "Therefore," what choice should his readers make?

The author doesn't explain why the promise of rest still stands until later in the text. But since the invitation is still extended to everyone, he tells the readers to fear lest any of them not reach it. The Jews in the wilderness feared the Canaanites more than they feared failing to enter the rest of God and the consequences of that failure.

The fear of not entering God's rest is rarely seen. We fear our enemies like they did. We fear certain circumstances. We fear not having sufficient provision. We fear losing our health. But the author is saying our greatest fear should be that of missing the rest God has for us. In the original language the sentence starts with the word, "fear." Fear, that just as your forefathers came so close and missed it, you too might fear the wrong things and never enter the rest of God (Psalm 111:10).

*<sup>2</sup> 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.* Hebrews 4:2 The good news was delivered by Moses. He came to the Jews in captivity in Egypt and told them God had sent him to free them and take them to the Promised Land. From the very beginning they doubted. They heard the message, but they didn't combine what they heard with faith. They doubted in Egypt. And it did look like Moses failed at first. They doubted in the wilderness in spite of the wonders God did on a daily

**Commented [PW1]: Numbers 14:1-4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night.

<sup>2</sup> And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!

<sup>3</sup> Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

<sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

**Commented [PW2]: Numbers 14:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

**Commented [PW3]: Numbers 13:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

**Commented [PW4]: Psalm 111:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

basis. They doubted Joshua and Caleb on the border of the Promised Land (Numbers 14:9-10).

Please don't miss the analogy the author is presenting. This good news has come to us too, only it came by one much greater than Moses. Jesus told us He had come to free us from the captivity of sin and take us to the Promised Land (John 8:36; 14:2-3). At first it looked like He failed too. Imagine how the disciples felt those nights Jesus' body lay in the tomb (John 20:19). But the resurrection declared Him to be the eternal victor (Hebrews 2:14). Don't think of the Promised Land as heaven off in the sky somewhere (Luke 17:21). **We enter it right here and now when we combine what we hear from Jesus with faith.** God's rest for you is life in Jesus, believing He can conquer every enemy He calls you to conquer, whether that enemy is fear, or lust, or addictions. The rest of God is to continually unite the Word with faith (Romans 10:17).

When you unite the Word that says "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," (1 Thessalonians 5:18) with faith, and praise God in the difficulty you are facing, you experience the rest of God. You enter into His rest. When you combine the Word that says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," (Matthew 28:20) with faith, you believe He is present and enter the rest of God.

Consider for a moment what that rest is. Do you think the God who knows all, sees all, and is all-powerful is ever disturbed? Do you think He could ever say, "Oh, no! I didn't think those humans would ever do that! What will I do now?" That's a silly thought, and yet we act as if it were so by fearing and doubting. We don't enter that rest because we, like those Jews, fail to believe God, and instead we trust in ourselves. If you are trusting in yourself, you have every reason to fear failure and defeat (Jeremiah 17:5). But if you are trusting God, if you add faith to what He says, you will be at peace in whatever situation you face. The Word of God is our most precious possession, but it does us no good unless we combine it with faith.

*<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."<sup>5</sup> And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."* Hebrews 4:3-5 Instead of the word, "faith," he uses the word, "believe." Faith results in belief. He will tell us later in this book that "faith is the conviction of things unseen." (Hebrews 11:1) If you believe God regardless of what you see, you will enter the rest of God. Notice again that we don't enter it someday. The analogy is to the Promised Land, and we enter that land now by faith. When the Jews finally did enter the land, they still had to fight enemies. They still had times of hardship. They still had to till and cultivate the crops. They still had to build the temple and bring sacrifices and offerings. But if they did all those things with faith in God's finished work, they were at rest in Him, even as they served Him and others.

**Commented [PW5]: Numbers 14:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

<sup>10</sup> Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

**Commented [PW6]: John 8:36 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**Commented [PW7]: John 14:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

**Commented [PW8]: John 20:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

**Commented [PW9]: Hebrews 2:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

**Commented [PW10]: Luke 17:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

**Commented [PW11]: Romans 10:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**Commented [PW12]: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Commented [PW13]: Matthew 28:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Commented [PW14]: Jeremiah 17:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD.

**Commented [PW15]: Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

God swore that the older generation in the wilderness would not enter that rest. They were set in their murmuring and distrust in Moses and the Lord (2 Chronicles 30:8). In spite of all the miraculous signs they just refused to believe. Though God has been resting since He finished the six days of creation, that older generation would not experience His rest or trust in His completed work.

**Commented [PW16]: 2 Chronicles 30:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you.

In the creation account in Genesis, each day ends with a statement of the evening and morning ending that day (Genesis 1:5). The only day that has no ending is the seventh. It was the day God rested. From that description, some Jews assumed that God was still resting and that we are still in His seventh day. All His works were finished by the end of the sixth day. Jews see His intervention in the world from that time forward as such an easy thing for Him that He does not consider it work. He predestined all things, every intervention, and every outcome by the end of the sixth day and is watching it all come to pass. We are invited to enter that restful assurance that it will all bring glory to Him and result in exactly what He destined every detail to be from the beginning. The psalmist tells us God has written in His book each day He ordained for us (Psalm 139:16). Paul tells us God planned good works for us in advance (Ephesians 2:10). God planned it all before the end of the sixth day. He foresaw our every choice, good or bad, and planned all things to bring Him glory. Can we trust His completed work?

**Commented [PW17]: Genesis 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**Commented [PW18]: Psalm 139:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

**Commented [PW19]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

*<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> 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."* Hebrews 4:6-7 The author is building a case from the way the Holy Spirit inspired the wording of Genesis and the Psalms. He is reiterating his points to be sure they followed his logic. It's helpful for us too. The Jews in the wilderness received the good news. That is the same Greek word we translate "gospel." They received it but they disobeyed. The invitation is still there to us who have heard the gospel. This is the long, "Today," that David spoke of over four hundred years after the Jews entered the Promised Land (Psalm 95:7). That means we can still enter into that rest even now if we do not harden our hearts.

**Commented [PW20]: Psalm 95:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice,

These Jewish believers had received the good news, but were they going to enter God's rest and trust Him to see them through the persecution that was coming? Would they rest in what God had completed on the sixth day? Will we? We always have that choice when we are faced with difficulty. What a difference it makes in our attitude and demeanor! If we freak out, trust in ourselves, become discouraged, even depressed, or justify some sinful behavior to try to ease the pain of what we are enduring, or if we escape our situation by any means other than the rest God has for us, we will surely face some kind of consequences (James 4:17). But if we simply see God has pre-planned the events for our good and His glory, we trust it will all turn out as it should. That is a frame of mind that is free of murmuring or complaint. It's a trusting soul.

**Commented [PW21]: James 4:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

I struggle with this as much as anyone. I turn to the Lord, but then things often get worse. That is just what happened to the children of Israel. God is testing us. Will we really trust Him? Do we really believe? Are we striving to fix it in our own strength or looking to the Lord? I'm not saying we shouldn't do anything. I'm suggesting that we ask the Lord what to do. Then do it in recognition of His ability and power in you to help you (Philippians 2:13), and that the outcome is destined to be. If it still appears to get worse, allow your faith to grow and believe that God will resolve it in His way and His time. It's not easy. Men are problem solvers. We like to think we can figure it out on our own, so God allows us to face impossible situations. We grow, or we see how much we need to grow and the repercussions of just doing it our own way.

*<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* Hebrews 4:8 Joshua brought the children of those who died in the wilderness into the Promised Land. Joshua is the Hebrew name of Jesus who brings us into the rest of God. If the rest they sought was merely a land of their own, there would have been no need for the psalmist to have written of a later day. The psalmist was writing during the kings of Israel. If the invitation extended to that day, it is just as valid now.

Think of the Old Testament men and women who lived in the rest of God, Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Deborah, David, and many of the prophets. They weren't perfect, but they knew if they were repentant, if they put their hope in God, He would be their salvation spiritually and even physically as long as He saw fit (Psalm 42:11). Whatever they faced, they faced with confident faith in God's goodness.

*<sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* Hebrews 4:9-10 The author is saying there is a seventh day rest for God's people. It doesn't mean refraining from labor on Saturday. It is being in Jesus, trusting Him for your salvation and every circumstance you face as well. It's knowing God is sovereign and had it all worked out long before you were born (Psalm 139:16). We can get all anxious, as we so often do, but when you realize this truth, we see anxiety and fear are merely a signs of disbelief (Philippians 4:6).

I really admire the people that live in this rest. They never seem disturbed. They experience pain and are empathetic, but they never seem anxious or stressed. How I long to stay in this place of rest. I believe that many of you are desirous of the same. Well, if we will enter into this place of believing faith, we find rest. Hear His voice. Apply faith to what you hear. I want to stress that this is not only true for salvation but for everything we deal with in this life. Verse 10 sounds like the Apostle Paul's declaration, *<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Galatians 2:20 (NIV) Jesus is our continual Sabbath rest. He has already done it all. Enter in! Let Him be your life. Live in His predestined outcome and enjoy the journey.

**Commented [PW22]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

**Commented [PW23]: Psalm 42:11 (ESV)**  
<sup>11</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

**Commented [PW24]: Psalm 139:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

**Commented [PW25]: Philippians 4:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

*<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*

Hebrews 4:11 I am so thankful this verse was added to the exhortation. We must strive. I find this to be a daily effort. It almost sounds contradictory to strive to enter into that rest, but if you are a believer in Jesus you know exactly what the author is saying. We continually crucify the flesh and tell our old nature to shut up and get back in the coffin (Galatians 5:24)! Or is it just me? I have to constantly watch my thought life and remind myself of the truth. I have to remind myself of the consequences of sin. That is a healthy fear of the Lord, the godly fear with which the chapter began (see verse 1). We strive by staying in the Word, in fellowship, in communion with the Holy Spirit, and by continually exercising our faith muscles by refusing the temptation to complain and worry (James 4:7).

This verse is telling us even more than that. It is also reminding us that we are our brother's keeper. We need to look out for one another to see that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience (Hebrews 10:25). We should be close enough to a number of brothers or sisters in Christ that we can see when they are struggling and encourage them to trust God and enter His rest.

Though the next two verses go with this passage, I want to save them for next week and have us focus the conclusion on our need to enter the rest of God, which is Jesus, our Sabbath rest. This passage has really spoken to me and I hear the good news it is declaring to me. Most of you do as well, but now will we mix it with faith? That was the issue at the beginning of the chapter. I hear it, but what will I do about it. Will I strive to enter that rest now more than ever before, not just for my peace of mind, but for the testimony of my life and the glory of God?

What does God's rest look like? See Job, sitting on the ash heap, scraping his boils with a potshard, bereaved of his children, wrestling with the bruises of Providence. Can faith be so great that it says, "This was set in motion before the foundation of the world, and somehow, some way, it will bring glory to my merciful and great Creator"? Shouldn't the testimony of millions of saints tell us that is the only conclusion we should reach about our great God? Though the millions encouraged by the testimony of Job's suffering were out of the range of the vision of Job's faith, could he have rested in the assurance that a loving and all-wise God was at work? And if he could, if he did, he would have experienced God's rest. It would not have eased his physical pain, but it would certainly have eased his mental turmoil. Only in looking back after the blessings came could he see but a small portion of the plan of God for his life. And only from the vantage of that great cloud of witnesses could he watch time unfold to the good of the millions and to the glory of the God who felt his agony.

The very day before I began working on this message I had my own little six hour trial that raised my blood pressure and had me feeling completely frustrated. How should I have handled it differently? If I really believe God saw me through it before the foundation of the world, and if I was joyfully watching to see how His plan unfolded

**Commented [PW26]: Galatians 5:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**Commented [PW27]: James 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**Commented [PW28]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

while I peacefully walked through each hurdle, what a difference it would have made! Our mindset should be, "God has foreseen this. He'll use it for my good and His glory!"

I'm certain there is another faith stretching experience on its way, because I am loved. It's coming your way to see if you took hold of the message in this passage, because God is preparing us for eternity in His presence. Will we praise God or become anxious, frustrated, and ready to scream? It depends on whether or not we are living in the Sabbath rest of God, the realization that it is already done. God had this figured out before He rested on the present seventh day. Let us strive to mix faith with what we have heard and continually enter into what God called, "My rest," the Sabbath of God.

#### Questions

- 1 What illustration did the author use?
- 2 What happens when fear collides with faith?
- 3 How can we mix what hear with faith?
- 4 Describe God's rest.
- 5 What was completed on the sixth day?
- 6 What is "Today"?
- 7 Why does God give us impossible situations?
- 8 How would your life change if you enter His rest?
- 9 How do we enter?
- 10 What is verse 10 asking of us?