

Hebrews: Reaching God's Rest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 August 2024

Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

- [0 : 0 0] Those of you who are staying up here, go to Hebrews chapter 4. Hebrews chapter 4.
- Oh, I'm on. Hebrews chapter 4. All right. Even when Jared was a little guy, he was never that cute, I'm sure.
- He would have looked funny in pink. You're right. All right. Hebrews chapter 4. Let me ask you a question to start off this morning. What words would you use to describe your salvation? You think salvation, what word comes to your mind?
- Jesus. Jesus? Faithfulness. Faithfulness? Forgiven. Forgiven? Undeserved? Comforting.
- Comforting. Hope. What did you say, Steve? Mercy. Mercy? Hope? Okay. Okay. Did anybody think of the word rest?
- [1 : 2 3] Rest? Ah. Rest. How? I was just thinking reassuring. Reassuring. Okay. But the word rest, how would the word rest be a good description of salvation?
- When you get older, it don't make any difference how long you sleep. You don't get any rest. You won't finally mind. I understand that. I know exactly what you're talking about. It happened last night.
- So, yes, I understand exactly. But how would you use the word rest to describe salvation? Well, it's, we have rest in God's finished work.
- And we can rest because it's done. Okay. We can rest because it's done. All right. I can rest because I know that I don't have to struggle against things that God has taken care of.
- And I can rest from fear and anxiety and all that. Okay. We can rest from all those things because God has taken care of it. When we come to him and accept him as Savior, it's all taken care of.
- [2 : 3 1] It's all done. It's one of the neat things about salvation is we look at we don't have to work for it. But it's done. It's already given to us.
- All we have to do is accept it. So, Hebrews chapter 4. Look at verse, beginning at verse 1. We'll look at the first three verses to start with. Beginning at verse 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
- For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.
- For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.
- Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. From the foundation of the world.
- [3 : 3 7] It's been all taken care of. We can rest in it. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, I pray this morning that you would help us to learn some more about this rest. We started talking about it last week in chapter 3.

And how Israel missed the rest they could have had. Because of their unbelief. Lord, help us not to miss the rest that you have for us. Because of unbelief. And Lord, help us to comfort ourselves in the rest that we have in Jesus Christ.

Lord, I pray that you just bless our time together now. In Jesus' name. Amen. So, first of all. If you're keeping an outline. He talks about an unacceptable response.

An unacceptable response. Hebrews chapter 3, last week, focused on Israel's unbelief. In the past. And the consequences.

They went along with that unbelief. What were the consequences? Of not believing God. They wound up not going into the promised land. They wound up not having rest.

[4 : 42] Instead, they wound up wandering the wilderness for 40 years. They did not get the rest that God had planned for them. And when we stop and we look at what they missed.

The writer here is warning people to make sure you enter into the rest that God has for you. The reason they missed what God had for them was because of unbelief.

They did not believe and act on what God had said. We need to believe and act on what God has given to us. Why can't we have rest? Why can't we have all those different things you mentioned in salvation?

Because God has already done it. All we have to do is believe. In Hebrews chapter 3, he's referring to the past. The things that happened there in the wilderness. But notice in Hebrews chapter 4, the beginning of verse 1, he talks about, Let us therefore fear.

He's talking about right now. He's talking about what do we do now. You know, it's little value to know what happened in the past if we're not taking it and applying it to now.

[5 : 55] If we have not learned from it. Israel's example, where he warned the people, It's going to apply to these people now.

Learn from what they did. Learn from how they handled things. He says, Look, Hebrews, learn from what they did in the past.

Take heed. Notice what was done to Israel when they did not listen and did not believe. That generation refused to do what God wanted them to do.

And they wandered in the wilderness until that whole generation was gone. Until they had all died off. Their unbelief caused them to lose out on God's blessing.

The next generation is going to learn what happens when you believe God. Remember who actually went into the promised land? Caleb, Joshua, and the children of all those other people.

[6 : 56] Caleb and Joshua, because they believed. Because they said, Let's go. God's with us. They trusted. The others did not. Because they did not trust.

They did not believe God in his word and what he had said to them. Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 2. You don't have to turn there. It says this. And he said, I will hide my face from them.

I will see what their end shall be. For they are a very froward generation. Children in whom is no faith. So how did God describe them as a froward generation?

What did he say about them? They were children. Excuse me. Children of no faith. How is our faith today? How are we looking when we look at God and what he has done?

Are we understanding that God has control? God is working. We are trusting him no matter what takes place. God promised his rest for eternal salvation for all of us today.

[8 : 05] If we are living for Christ. If we are asking him into our life. If we are allowing him to live through us. He says we have rest. But so often we miss opportunities.

Because we are not trusting God in the way that we should. See, without genuine faith. We can know the facts of the gospel. But without faith in the gospel.

What does it do for us? There's a lot of people who are wandering around. Who know the facts. If you ask them, how does a person get saved? They can tell you.

This is how a person gets saved. Do you believe that for yourself? Well, I'm thinking about it. Well, I hope so. Well, see, without the faith, it doesn't work.

We can have knowledge, but we need to have faith. See, knowledge itself is no guarantee. It has to be mixed with faith. Notice verse 2 there. He says, For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.

[9 : 13] But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. He says it doesn't do any good if it's not mixed with faith.

You can hear it, and you can hear it, and you can hear it. But if you do not have faith in what Jesus Christ did for you, if you do not trust that that is the way of salvation, and the only way of salvation, he said it's not going to do you any good.

Do I believe that Jesus Christ died for me? Do I believe that he gave his life for me? See, it's one thing to say, yes, I believe Jesus did this for the salvation of the world.

But did he do it for you? That's what happened with me. I was led through the plan of salvation, and apparently prayed and everything. And then when I was sitting in a service, and wow, the Holy Spirit really got a hold of my heart, and I did get saved because I was believing with my heart, and it's not my plan.

And the question was asked to me, well, don't you remember sitting at the table, and you went through the whole plan of salvation? And I said, apparently not, because it wasn't real to me.

[10 : 27] It was believing in my heart. It's the same with me. My parents got saved when I was three, and when they got saved, they got very active in the church and very involved in different things.

And we used to have missionaries and CEF ladies and different ones in our house all the time. And supposedly when I was four, the CEF ladies were there, and they were talking, and I got saved, my parents said.

When I was 11, I heard a preacher and evangelist at our church preaching on hell, and I knew I did not want to go there. And as he preached and then gave an invitation at the end, I went forward.

I wanted to be saved. My parents said, don't you remember when you were four? Nope. But I remember that day when I was 11. I remember he had that message. I remember the guy's name was John Goodhart.

I remember everything about that day. That's the day I believe I got saved. That's right. That's like the rituals I went through during being raised Catholic, going to First Communion.

[11 : 35] Oh, I got a pretty dress. I got a pretty veil. I'm a little bride. And that was, you know, and then confirmation. It's like everybody else is doing it.

I guess I'm not understanding any of it. So it was useless. It was a waste of time, actually. And I just thank God he did save me.

So understanding that having the knowledge has to be mixed with the faith. What am I doing? Why am I doing it? Do I understand that it is for me?

So we need to make sure of that. The Israelites had seen God's miracles in Egypt, everything that he had done there. They had heard the instructions that he had given to Moses, and Moses was sharing with them what God had said.

They had been challenged by Joshua and Caleb about going into the promised land. So they had no shortage of knowledge. But it was applying that knowledge with faith to their own lives.

[12 : 40] 2 Peter 2, verse 20 says this, For if after they had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Okay, so he's saying they knew everything that had happened, and then they still rejected. Verse 21, For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22, But it is happened unto them according to a true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

So what does he say here about the false teachers and stuff and the knowledge they had? It did them no good without enacting it through faith.

What does he give for an analogy? Dog returning to his vomit, a pig going back to the mire. When we hear the things of God, and we hear everything, and we have that knowledge, but we don't mix it with faith, what's going to happen shortly?

[14 : 00] We're going to go backwards. We're going to go back to what we used to be. We're going to go back to what we used to be a part of. He says, Don't do that. Like the Israelites. He says to these Hebrews, Receive God's truth.

Receive it in faith. Applying it to your lives, so that you live according to his word, and continue. Look at verses 3 and 4.

He says there, For we have believed, do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest, although the works were finished, man, I cannot read today.

Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world, for he spank in a certain place for the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

See, for them, they knew the good news of salvation. These Hebrews, they had heard. They knew what God had said. They knew what Jesus had done. They had been told all about it.

[15 : 12] Now for them to receive what God had offered them, they had to respond in wholehearted belief. Did they believe that it was done for them? They knew that they had to have the knowledge mixed with faith.

Since the completion of creation, God's desire was for his people to have fellowship with him and to enjoy the blessings that he would provide for them.

God wants to have fellowship with us. God wants to have, give us blessings and stuff. But, sin can destroy that fellowship.

It can come between us and God. We're going to talk about that some more this morning as we talk about forgiving one another. See, God made spiritual rest available to us.

We don't have to be in a turmoil all the time. We don't have to be upset all the time. We just need to trust God and enter his blessings. The wilderness that Israel, they failed to believe.

[16 : 24] And because they failed to believe, they wound up forfeiting the rest that they could have had if they had gone into the promised land, allowed God to use them and help them to defeat the enemies and have the land all to themselves.

But they weren't prepared to do that. They weren't prepared to believe God and everything else. Again, even though they had seen everything that he had done.

I still stand amazed and I'm, and we're all human so we probably would have done the same thing. But to stand there and watch God separate the Red Sea in front of you and you walk across on it and you get down to the other side and you see the Egyptians coming behind you and you see that sea and then to say, I don't think God can handle those people.

It just doesn't make any sense to me. But, hey, we're human and we do that a lot ourselves. We've seen God in working times in our lives, don't we? And then we come up against situations and say, I don't think God can handle this one.

We would never say that out loud, but by our actions that's what we're saying. We need to be so very careful because of that unbelief, they had unappropriated blessing.

[17 : 44] That's number two up there. Unappropriated blessing. Bonnie, would you read verses four through 11 since I'm having trouble reading today? Chapter four? Yeah, chapter four, verses four through 11.

For we spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this one, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest, seeing hereof, it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

Again, he limited a certain day, saying in David, today, after so long a time, as it is said, today, if you will hear his voice, pardon my hearts.

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that has entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his.

Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same sample of unbelief. All right. What is he saying there?

[18 : 59] The people of Israel didn't enter to God's rest because they hardened their heart through unbelief. They hardened their heart through unbelief.

I don't believe God can do this. I don't trust that God can take care of this. And their unbelief thwarted God's plan. Their unbelief kept God from doing the things that he wanted to do because they did not trust them because they did not believe.

The blessings of God, he had prepared to bless them with all kinds of things and continue blessing them. But in order to do that, they had to appropriate the faith and they would not do that.

You know, back in Genesis, you don't have to turn there, Genesis chapter 2 verses 2 and 3, it talks about the fact that God worked for six days and on the seventh day he rested. He rested and he ceased from all his activity, from all his creation activity.

Think about it for a second. I don't think God has a problem with pride. Others do, but I don't think he does. But to think that he created all of this and on that seventh day he rested.

[20 : 10] I think he would have just sat back for a minute and taken a look and gone, that's pretty nice. I mean, think of us. We live on the coast of Maine.

It doesn't get any better than that. That's right. It doesn't get any better than that. I mean, two or three million people are going to come down High Street during the summertime to go to Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor.

Why do they go there? Because it's gorgeous. Because it's beautiful. There's nothing else like it. God created all of that.

And he must have had deep satisfaction in the fact that, wow, I did good for those people. And he created Adam and Eve and he had given them some things.

He takes rest for himself. If God needs rest, how much more do we? If I were to ask you, how many of you here are tired this morning?

[21 : 12] Ah, okay. How many of you want to take a nap this afternoon? How many of you are not going to take a nap during the morning service? Okay. Got to make sure there.

All right. See, God provided rest for us and he wants us to enjoy it and enjoy the fellowship with him that we can have.

But from the human side, our unbelief, our sin of unbelief is going to block it. We put up a wall between us and God when we sin and we don't believe.

Look at verses 5 and 6. It says, And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest, seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

The unbelieving Jews wandered into wilderness for 40 years because of unbelief. They had no trust in God because they hardened their hearts against him.

[22 : 20] I want you to notice he uses the word today in the verses coming up. He talks about today. Verse 7. Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying to David, Today, after so long a time, as it is said, Today, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts.

Look back at chapter 3 for a second. Notice what he said in chapter 3, verse 7. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today, if you will hear his voice.

Verse 13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Verse 15. While it is said, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation or as in the rebellion when they went into the wilderness.

How important is today? Every day, as you go through life, every day, we need to trust Christ.

No matter what's going on in our life, no matter what's happening, Today, I need to trust him. When it gets to tomorrow, I need to say, Today, I need to trust him.

[23 : 39] When it comes a week from Tuesday, Today, I need to trust him. Do we get in our minds that every day we need to follow him?

Psalms 95. You don't have to turn there, but Psalm 95, verse 10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and said, It is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known my ways, unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

What does he say was the problem? What did he say was the thing that kept them from going into the rest that he was willing to give them? unbelief?

Where? In their hearts. It is a people that do err in their heart. Is our heart given over to God? Are we following him in everything that he has for us?

As they look back on their national history, you know, they might have speculated that once Joshua led them into the promised land and they took it over.

[24 : 50] God's rest was there. There was no more to go for, no more rest to worry about. They had it all. But it's interesting. Look at verse eight.

For if Jesus, who had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day? When he says Jesus there, he's talking about Joshua. Joshua, Jesus, same name, Hebrew and Greek.

Joshua gave them rest, but he says they remain at the rest, verse nine, to the people of God. Hmm. Come up to 400 years from Joshua, you come to David.

That's who wrote Psalm 95. And he talks about a rest that is necessary there. Then you come up here to Hebrews and he's talking about a rest for the people of God.

See, there was a rest coming and it came when Jesus Christ went to the cross for us. Now salvation is permanent.

[25 : 53] Now salvation is done. He has given us a way to have rest. Look at verses nine and ten. It says, there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God for he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works as God did from his.

What truth is he trying to get across there? What is it he's trying to help us to understand about getting into heaven, about getting into God's rest? It's all done.

We don't have to do a thing. It's all done. He's already taken care of it. He says, we can cease from our own works as God did from his.

God sat back and said, creation is done. What a thing to behold. We come now and Jesus Christ has gone to the cross. He's risen from the grave.

He's ascended back into heaven. We can stand back and say, it's all done. What a wondrous thing to behold. What Jesus has done for us. God's rest is attained by faith in him, not through anything we have done.

[27 : 06] Notice it said there in verse 10, he ceased from his own works. It's not our works that get us into heaven. It's already taken care of. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, it says, In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that doth obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

what is he saying there? If we don't obey, we have things that we're going to face, just like Israel did. 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 17, For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

Ooh, judgment has to begin at the house of God. He says, And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

We often, we share the gospel, we share it as a gift that has been given to us that have to be received. But those verses I just read, what does he say about the gospel?

Gospel is something that must be obeyed. Those verses again, he talks about, in 2 Thessalonians 1.8, he says that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 32] 1 Peter, he says, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? It's a gift that we have been given.

It's like I talk about a Christmas gift. It's there. You just need to reach out and take it. But once you have it, obey it. Follow it. Do what it says.

Israel would not do that. The gift was there. But they hardened their hearts by unbelief. And would not trust God. How are we doing?

Do we trust him? With everything? We'll talk about some more next week. Father, thank you for this time we've had together. Lord, pray that you would just minister to our hearts.

Lord, help us to look and to trust you. Lord, sometimes it is hard. Sometimes it is, we look at the circumstances and we look at things and it is hard.

[29 : 31] But Lord, may we trust you with everything that we have because you are a God who will not fail. You are a God who is going to work in all kinds of ways.

Ways that we don't even expect. But you're going to perform your will and it will be done. Thank you, Lord, for using us to help do that.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.