

Hebrews: The Living Word (Hebrews 4:1–13).

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/13/2016)

Introduction

1. The primary issue in this section (3:7–4:13) raises the question: “Am I a true believer?”
 - a. This section was not written to encourage believers to experience all that God has for them in Christ. This is clearly evident by the reference to God’s wrath (4:3; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 5:9, 10).
 - b. We might also list as evidence the exhortation to fear lest we fail to reach the rest promised (4:1).
2. The focus of 4:1–5 is that there are two Sabbath days—one past and one to come.
 - a. The first is addressed in 4:3b, 4, the creation Sabbath that extended practically in God’s promise of rest to Israel in Canaan.
 - b. The second Sabbath is discussed in 4:6–11, the gospel Sabbath that extends to the new creation begun with Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension to God’s right hand.
 - c. Of course, this leads to a serious question: Did Israel’s refusal to obey God and enter Canaan frustrate the purpose of God?

Israel’s failure pointed to another Sabbath, a greater day yet to come as demonstrated by David (Psa. 95) and his promise of “today,” which points to a rest remaining.

Paul points out that David made his warning that “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” In other words, every past failure of man only emphasizes the contrast between human sinfulness and God’s great glory in Christ. Israel, as God’s earthly son, failed, but the true Israel, God’s heavenly Son, cannot and will not fail.

The answer to the questions presented above is Jesus Christ and the greatness of His gospel. All glory to Jesus Christ!

I. His Rest

1. The rest into which we are encouraged to enter is God’s rest (vv. 1, 3, 5, 10).
 - a. We do not enter our rest, but we enter His.

Israel failed because the people could not see themselves as able to take the land of Canaan. However, God plainly told them that He would drive out the inhabitants (Ex. 23:23–33).
 - b. The glorious truth presented here is that God does not simply give things to bless us; He gives us Himself.
2. *He* is everything to the believing soul.
 - a. The great difference between God’s salvation and human religion is found here.
 - b. Israel’s failure was in not finding that God was enough but in seeking something else.

Why else would He need to warn them constantly to avoid the gods of their neighbors?

What about you? Are you satisfied with anything less than Jesus in all His fullness? Do we not see that today? How many Christians are there who find themselves satisfied with something in this world? So, where do you go to seek rest, fullness, and satisfaction?

II. The Living Word

1. Our responsibility—we must be diligent and make haste to prove our profession (v. 11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

a. The verse does not suggest that we can accomplish rest by anything that we do.

This is an attitude thing.

Diligence is linked to fearing God through our hearing and obeying with eagerness and perseverance.

b. As we noted last week, Israel in her foolishness was a day late to enter Canaan and without the blessing of the Lord (Num. 13:40).

We need to give diligence to believe God and not procrastinate obedience.

The proof of one's profession is eagerness to obey and perseverance in it.

c. We need to be “*steadfast and immovable, always abounding*” in His work (1 Cor. 15:58).

2. The living Word is God's provision for us in this spiritual venture (vv. 12, 13)

a. First, this Word is *alive* and *powerful*, being *sharper* than any sword in effecting real change within.

b. Second, this Word exposes the true condition of the heart because God requires “*truth in the inward parts*” (Psa. 51:6).

c. Third, this Word is God's tool to expose every creature to the searching gaze of the Judge of all the earth (v. 13).

“*Labor, therefore, to enter into that rest*” (v. 11).