

**Heb. 4:1 ¶ 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.**

I think the NLT expresses the truth of this verse very clearly.

God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to get there.

The place of *rest* is a reference to dwelling in the kingdom of God, the place where Jesus rules in the lives of those with faith in Him. It's a place of God's provision and protection. The writer is again making reference to the fact that not all who profess to be a part of God's kingdom actually are.

**Heb. 4:2 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.**

The word for *gospel* is a reference to "good news." The gospel is eternal, as will be declared by the angel in the tribulation.

Rev. 14:6-7 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel** to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The gospel message calls for us to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him as is His due as our Creator. This can be confusing since the verse in Revelation does not specifically say, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31) The truth is that if we fear God, we will bring Him glory and show Him that we adore Him by placing our faith in Him. The Israelites led by Moses were to give evidence of their faith by listening to and obeying His word as revealed through His chosen prophet, Moses. Since the coming of His Son Jesus, we are to give evidence of that faith by accepting Jesus as the Messiah/Savior that was spoken of by the prophets and affirmed by His Father through the miracles He performed and His resurrection from the dead after suffering the humiliation of the cross. The gospel message of good news for every person ever born is that God loves you very much and has provided for your salvation. It's a free gift; all you have to do is accept that gift in faith.

The writer sadly notes that the wilderness generation did not get to experience the *rest* of living in and enjoying the blessings of the Promised Land because they refused to believe God.

**Heb. 4:3 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.**

The wording is difficult, but point is being made that God has made provision for people of faith to enjoy His *rest* since the very foundation of the world. God was not surprised by man's choice to sin. Even as He spoke the creation into existence, He had already planned to provide the sacrifice of His Son to redeem man from sin. The phrase "the works were finished" is a very telling one. God, who is outside time, considered His works "finished," even though man, who

lives in the dimension of time, would wait for thousands of years to watch this plan unfold. I can't help but think of a wonderful verse in Isaiah.

Is. 14:24 ¶ The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, **Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass**; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

“we which have believed...rest” – The writer is referencing the fact that those who have truly placed their faith in Jesus as Savior are already positioned to experience the benefits of living in God's kingdom. Scripture clearly states that Jesus is our rest.

Matt. 11:28-29 [Jesus speaking] Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

How has the Lord provided for us to enjoy His rest? By giving us the Holy Spirit to empower, strengthen, teach, comfort and provide for our every need.

“as he said” – Where? Psalm 95.

Psa. 95:10-11 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.**

The wording is confusing in this verse in Hebrews, but the context is clear in reference to the wilderness generation that did not get to enter the Promised Land and affirmed by the verse in Psalms being quoted.

**Heb. 4:4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.**

Again the writer quotes from scripture.

Gen. 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

I think this verse is giving emphasis to the fact that in God's mind the redemption for man was completed when He rested from His works on the seventh day. It just points out again the truth stated by the prophet Isaiah.

Is. 55:8-9 For **my thoughts are not your thoughts**, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God, positioned outside of time, could state that His work was completed at the end of six days because in just thinking out His plan, it was completed as far as He was concerned. In no way did this contradict the words of Jesus when He said He came to do the work of the Father.

John 5:17 ¶ But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

John 5:36 But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

Jesus was positioned in time and speaking as the Son in flesh who was obedient to bringing God's plan to completion in the dimension of time.

**Heb. 4:5 And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest.**

For some reason, the writer is impressed to repeat again that those who do not place their faith in God's provision for their salvation through His Son Jesus will not enter His *rest*, the place where He is Lord, His kingdom.

**Heb. 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:**

The ongoing comparison to entering the Promised Land and entering God's rest continues. "They to whom it was first preached" is a reference to the wilderness generation of Israelites who were not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. The blessed truth is that man still has the option of entering God's "rest" through faith.

The good news of the blessings associated with living by faith as evidenced by obedience to His word was first preached to the people of Israel whom He delivered from slavery in Egypt. The nation of Israel was established to give evidence of that very truth from their very inception through God's promise to Abraham and confirmed by the miraculous birth of Isaac.

**Heb. 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

**Heb. 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.**

"limiteth" = to mark out, appoint, decree, declare, determine

The point of these two verses is that the invitation to enter God's rest didn't end with the wilderness generation. Many years later He declared through the Psalmist (again referencing Psalm 95) that His rest was still available to those who would "hear" Him. In the Hebrew it is clear that hearing involves listening with the intent to obey. The writer has hammered home the truth more than once that the condition of one's heart has a direct effect on his ability to hear with spiritual ears.

I agree with the other translations I checked that the reference to "Jesus" should read "Joshua" in context. (The names are the same in the original language.) It was Joshua who inherited the mantle of leadership from Moses and eventually led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. This implies that the Promised Land as representing God's *rest* was not the final fulfillment of that place of rest God has planned for His people; it was but a temporary earthly type of the eternal spiritual and earthly kingdom to come.

I think it is interesting how often the writer has referenced "Today." It's a reference to "now," the present. The writer is taking great pains to emphasize that God's invitation to enter His rest is available now. This implies to me that it might not be available "tomorrow," because we aren't promised tomorrow.

Prov. 27:1 ¶ Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

**Heb. 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.**

**Heb. 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.**

The writer clearly states in verse 9 that there is a rest still available to the “people of God.” The root word for *rest* in this verse is a reference to the Sabbath, and I think that is an important reference to understanding the basis of the *rest* of the Christian. This is clear as shown from the context of the next verse. We enter God’s rest when we cease from following a system of works, as represented by the law, and accept the gift of salvation available to us through Jesus, who has delivered us from the system of works through the gift of grace. Once we accept Jesus’ provision of grace in faith, we can rest in His finished work on the cross just as surely as God rested from His work on the seventh day after creation, the Sabbath. We are no longer under the bondage of obedience to the law.

It’s important to note that the rest God has prepared is for **His** people. Peter makes use of this same phrase.

1Pet. 2:9-10 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now **the people of God**: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Peter is clear in defining the people of God as those who show praise to God by how they live. This truth is emphasized by the context that follows.

1Pet. 2:11-16 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, **they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God** in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but **as the servants of God**.

**Heb. 4:11 ¶ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.**

The wording of this verse seems to be contradictory. The writer recognizes that accepting God’s free gift of salvation in faith is not an easy thing for us to do. It involves humbling ourselves before God and repenting of our sin. It means that we have to admit that God has provided everything for us in the person of His Son Jesus and that we can do nothing whatsoever to add to what He has done. We have to accept that God’s way is the only way, that His provision is sufficient. We give evidence to the truth of our profession through obedience. I repeat—obedience gives proof to our possession of true faith. The Greek for “unbelief” specifically states “disobedience.”

To *labour* is a reference to being earnest and diligent. In this body of flesh, we will continue to be subject to the temptation of sin in the flesh and the attack of the enemy—and it takes earnest effort and diligence to obey God in faith. When

we receive our glorified bodies, we will finally experience the fullness of the promised rest for the people of God. We will no longer struggle in our walk of obedience. We will have no sin nature to contend with nor will we ever have to confront the attack of the enemy again. That is a rest worth every bit of effort we put forth in resisting the flesh and the enemy and making choices that declare our faith in God through His Son.

**Heb. 4:12** For the word of God *is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

I like the wording of the CJB for this verse:

See, the Word of God is alive! It is at work and is sharper than any double-edged sword — it cuts right through to where soul meets spirit and joints meet marrow, and it is quick to judge the inner reflections and attitudes of the heart.

I like the wording of the NLT for the last phrase: “It exposes us for what we really are.”

(3/10) I think of the soul as that part of me that identifies who I really am; it is my self consciousness. It is the part of me that is expressed through my character and relationship toward others. I think of the spirit as my spiritual life force. It is the part of me that relates to God—my God consciousness. When man chose to sin in rebellion against God, it was spiritual death that he first experienced. That spiritual death is what caused man to also experience physical death. Had we not sinned, we would have lived forever in fellowship with our Creator.

The word of God is the scripture as revealed to the prophets through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as revealed in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. You can't really separate the word from the person.

The point of this verse is that God's word gives us a true picture of who we are by how we measure up to its truth. When we read it with an open heart, God will convict us of our sin and give us the words of eternal life. When we read it with the heart of a servant, He will show us how to overcome temptation and be obedient. When we read it with the heart of a child, He will minister comfort to our soul and joy to our spirit. All this is done through the person of the Holy Spirit as He works to grow us in faith. When we look to Jesus, we have a living example of the truth and power of God's word in the life of the person of faith. In Jesus, we have a hope for the future as evidenced by His resurrection.

(3/10) In the light of God's word our thoughts and intents are revealed as to what we treasure or value and the motives for our actions.

The mirror of God's word gives a true reflection of the person we are if we are willing to look. Our flaws and imperfections will be made very clear. But unlike earthly mirrors, the mirror of God's word also shows us how to get rid of those flaws and imperfections by choosing to follow the example of Jesus, the Word made flesh, in faith and obedience to the Father.

**Heb. 4:13** Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

“creature” = original formation...creation, creature, ordinance.

“naked” = uncovered, not concealed, open to view

“opened” = exposed, bare

In other words, there is no part of God’s creation that is hidden from His oversight. He is aware of everything going on everywhere. In light of the previous verse, this took my mind to the parts of creation that are “hidden” from our natural vision, things that we are privileged to observe with the aid of today’s technology. (cf notes at 1:3) I am again reminded of the verse in Colossians that declares the creation’s dependence upon the Creator.

Col. 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

His vision and awareness are limitless. As He observes man, He sees him inside and out; in fact, He looks more at what’s in his soul than on his physical makeup.

1Sam. 16:7 ... for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

“him with whom we have to do” – In looking at the Greek for “to do,” the following thoughts stood out: “something said...reasoning or motive...cause and communication.” It reminded me that we are a unique part of His creation, in that He has chosen to communicate with us by His word through scripture and through the embodiment of His word in His Son Jesus Christ. Through both, He is imparting to us a foundation upon which we are to reason and judge our motives. It is necessary for us to have a foundation from which we can determine right thinking and actions. The word “account” is also included in the Greek, and many translations conclude that the reference is to the fact that we will one day be held to account by God. This truth is also supported by scripture, so I have no reason to argue. This is just another example of the many layers of meaning that can be contained in a given scripture. The key to remember is that these *layers* will complement one another and never contradict other scripture. They always serve to broaden our understanding.

One can’t help but be reminded of the words of the Psalmist in one of my favorite psalms.

Psa. 139:1-16 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the

darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

**Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.**

The writer has established Jesus as greater than the angels and greater than the prophet Moses, the most revered of Jewish prophets; and he now introduces Jesus as our "great high priest." This was another significant truth this group of Jewish "Christians" needed to grasp in rejection of the arguments being used to lure them back into Judaism. I think it is significant that the writer emphasizes that Jesus as High Priest is positioned in the heavens (the abode of God from the Greek) and not limited in His access to God (is implied I believe); this is in vivid contrast to the limitations under which the high priest in Jerusalem served. JFB made an interesting comparison between the heavens and the veil that served as the entrance to the Holy of Holies.

"These heavens were the veil which our High Priest *passed through* into the heaven of heavens, the immediate presence of God, just as the Levitical high priest passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies."

I think it is very significant that the reference is to holding fast their "profession," what they have publicly acknowledged to be what they believe. This is another indication to me that the writer was aware that it was possible that not everyone in this group that *professed* Jesus Christ as Savior actually *possessed* Him as Savior. What had they professed to believe—that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God to provide their salvation as a gift through faith.

I almost forgot to draw attention to how the writer emphasizes the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. There is no earthly authority that supersedes His authority in the life of the child of God. Again, this is a statement of warning against listening to those who were trying to lure them back to a system of works.

**Heb. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.**

At this point the writer reminds his audience that Jesus, our Great High Priest, empathizes with us as human. He faced every type of temptation that man can face, yet He responded to each test "without sin." He never had a response that "missed the mark" (from the Greek for the root word for *sin*) of God's standard. John describes the types of temptation.

1John 2:16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

It's important to note that the word for *tempted* is a reference to testing, being scrutinized or examined, or proven. Jesus made a bold declaration that His desire was to do the will of God the Father, His Father, and that He always spoke and acted in accordance with that will.

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 12:50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

John 14:31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.

His profession was proven by how He held fast to what He professed. He never disobeyed the will of the Father, even to the point of death on the cross. His faith was proven to be genuine.

Jesus was born a man in complete fellowship with His Father—just as Adam had been created. He did not inherit the sin nature of fallen man, but He did possess the same ability to choose to obey the Father or not. Prior to his sin, Adam was privileged to live in a beautiful garden especially prepared for him to supply his every need. He was given only one “do not,” and still he chose to disobey His Creator. Jesus did not live in such beautiful surroundings. He lived in a fallen creation and grew up in a town that was “on the wrong side of the tracks.”

John 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?

When He entered into ministry, He had no roof to call His own.

Matt. 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

He experienced the betrayal of one who was one of His inner circle of twelve.

Matt. 26:49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?

His family didn't even believe Him until after the resurrection. Though some chose to follow Him in faith, He was persecuted and despised by many—especially the religious leaders. He became so hated that they devised a plan to bring Him to trial with false accusation and basically forced the hand of the Roman governor (who declared Him to be free of guilt) to sentence Him to death. In spite of the horrendous physical beatings He suffered, He went as a lamb to the slaughter. In horror of the thought of being separated from His Father, He expressed the desire to be released from the coming judgment if there were any other way. Still, He remained obedient to the Father's will and even asked for the Father to forgive His enemies from the cross.

When confronted with the attack of the enemy during the wilderness testing at the beginning of His ministry at a time when He was most vulnerable physically, He proved Himself spiritually strong through His knowledge of God's word and

the power of the Holy Spirit. He was content to wait on God's provision for Him in God's timing.

In other words, His life backed up His teaching, what He professed to believe, in every aspect in obedience and submission to God. He succeeded in every area of testing in which Adam/man failed.

**Heb. 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

"therefore" – Based on the truth that Jesus is positioned as our great High Priest as One who understands our every trial....

The writer declares that we can approach the "throne of grace," God's throne, to seek His mercy and grace in "time of need," our own times of testing. And our prayers to the Father are to be presented to Him "freely, with frankness, and with confident assurance" (from the Greek for *boldly*) as to His willingness to hear us. Why? Because we have become joint heirs with Jesus; we are His children. What loving Father turns away His child in need? Before leaving this thought, I think it is important to note that we as individuals can approach God in prayer; we don't need any other intercessor between us and the Father than Jesus Christ.

When I looked at the Greek for *need*, it was defined as "well-timed, opportune, convenient, in time of need." I've always read that verse from my perspective, but this tends to point to provision from God's perspective. It takes me back to what I said in the previous verse regarding Jesus' willingness to wait for God's provision for Him in God's timing. I think that is what trips us up sometimes and causes us to doubt. We are looking for God's answer in our timing and according to our will. God is the perfect Father and He will answer His children according to what He *knows* to be best instead of what we *think* to be best—and the two perspectives are often *very* different.

Scripture is very clear in stating that God wants to empower those who trust Him for victory over their enemies.

1Chr. 29:11-14 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Psa. 17:7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*.

Psa. 31:19 ¶ *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

1Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

1John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

I am also reminded of Jesus' response to the woman that touched the hem of His garment for healing.

Mark 5:34 And he said unto her, Daughter, **thy faith hath made thee whole....**

And to the woman who washed His feet with her tears.

Luke 7:50 And he said to the woman, **Thy faith hath saved thee....**

And to the blind man in Jericho who called out for mercy.

Luke 18:42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: **thy faith hath saved thee.**

And to the two blind men who begged for mercy.

Matt. 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith be it unto you.**