

Faith Plus Knowledge of God Lead to Eternal Rest

Hebrews 4:1-11 (vv. 1-3, 11)

Facilitator: Louise P. McQueen

I. Historical Background

A. Historical Background

Jesus famously said, “Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). God’s redemptive history is traced from creation through the wilderness wanderings of Israel, to David’s day, to Christ’s day and finally to today, calling on believers to hold fast their confidence in Christ’s work and warning them against failing to enter God’s rest as their forefathers had done. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience (Heb. 4:1-11).

B. Biblical Context

Our Father in heaven speaks from His throne with the hope that His children will allow His word and promises and truth to bring them into rest today. The rest of God brings us past a slave-like relationship with God and into one that responds to grace. These verses to be studied today addressed a group of Christians, the people of God, who, though once well-grounded in the faith, had become weary and in danger of giving up altogether. Paul wanted his audience to persevere and continue having faith in God in their daily walk with Him. Having faith and being obedient requires us to choose to do so.

II. The Lesson: Faith + Knowledge of God Lead to Eternal Rest

1. vv. 1-3.

The failure of the wilderness generation is a warning for Christians presently. God's promise is still available, despite Israel's failure. This supports the reason why believers need to be careful to claim God's promises. What befell Israel can happen to today's believers. Sadly, those who received the knowledge and the promise of rest in the Old Testament did not have faith with the promise. **Knowledge without faith is useless.** It is not doing us any good unless we BELIEVE IT, OBEY IT AND APPLY IT!

The word that was heard by the children of Israel did not increase their faith. "For we who have believed enter that rest, just 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'" (Heb. 4:3). Unbelief was what prevented Israel from enjoying God's rest. That does not negate God's promise of rest, however. Believers in Jesus Christ are the ones who have believed and are entering God's rest.

2. vv. 4-5.

What is God's rest? It is rest that comes with an achievement, completion of a task. God saw what He had done in the six-day creation and rested. By resting, He established a precedent for us that after the job is completed, believers can have rest as He did. Furthermore, there was nothing else to add to what God had done, and He entered a rest from creating, a rest marked by the knowledge that everything He had made was very good (Gen. 1:31). Our final rest is not a weekly thing but a permanent rest after death. The creation of the universe had been accomplished. *Now God wants His believers to rest in the eternal blessedness and fulfillment in what He shares with His children.* In reality, although this blessing is for many, only those who believe in God while still alive will actually rest in peace. We who

hope to enter that rest can point back to the moment when we believed on Christ and received eternal life. We have not entered God's rest in its fullness, but that day will come when we will see Jesus, face to face.

3. vv. 6-8.

God's rest is still available to us. It remains open for some to enter. The offer is made even more compelling through Jesus Christ. The Israelites at the time of Moses, "those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience." **Their disobedience was evidence of their lack of faith and knowledge of God.** They did not believe that God would give them what He had promised.

God "sets a certain day—'today'—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted, 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.'" Many years after Moses, God again spoke about rest, urging people to not harden their hearts and thereby fail to enter His rest. Hear Him today, David urged. The offer was still good. People could enter God's rest, could be secure in His promise, if they listened with faith and willingness. The Israelites failed to respond to God with faith and willingness.

4. vv. 9-11.

Since so many people did not enter God's rest in Moses' day, or in Joshua's day, we are exhorted in the Psalms about God's rest; the conclusion is that this rest still remains for the people of today. The ancient Israelites even though they had the Sabbath, did not enter the rest Moses was talking about. God's rest is entered by faith—by believing the Gospel (vv. 3-4). A person who keeps the weekly Sabbath but rejects Christ has not entered God's rest. We enter God's rest only by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is also a sense in which entering the Kingdom of God implies a ceasing from one's own work and resting securely on what Christ has done. The promise that still

stands is the promise of salvation through God's provision—Jesus Christ. He alone can provide the eternal rest of salvation through His blood shed on the cross for the remission of sins. God's rest, then, is in the spiritual realm, the rest of salvation.

There is one door to the safe, peaceful, happy rest of the Lord, the door of faith. Anyone who puts faith in God's promises bought for us by the blood of Jesus and is diligent not to throw that faith away, is a part of the people of God. Put your trust in the promises of God's rest.

III. Conclusion

Entering God's eternal rest should be a priority in our lives. The rest of God is worth our striving to achieve it. We should not drift through our Christian life in a careless way, but rather we are to pay close attention to entering into God's rest by resisting temptation, by listening to His truth, by applying the word, submitting to the Holy Spirit and by being utterly dependent upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is our rest. **Faith plus knowledge of God lead to eternal rest.**