



Daily Bible Habit

The Letter To The Hebrews

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Focus Points...*For Hebrews 4*

Stop And Consider...

* That God's plan is to bring all people into the eternal Sabbath rest in heaven.

Look...

* At Jesus' role as the Great High Priest who knows our weaknesses and yet offers us full access to His throne of grace.

Listen...

* To the writer of Hebrews as he details how those who turn away from Jesus, the Great High Priest, will share the same fate as all who disobey God.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, as I begin reading Hebrews chapter 4, encourage me so that I will never give up my faith as so many in the Old Testament did. Help me to see the urgency for me and others to believe fully in You today. Encourage me when I struggle in my faith and fail in my testimony. Lead me to approach You, the Great High Priest, and receive Your grace. Amen.

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Commentary:

"Sabbath Rest." It's one of the fundamental themes of God's covenant.

The concept of "Sabbath Rest" began at creation. On the seventh day of creation, God rested or "sabbathed." Having realized the fullness of the six days of creation, God celebrated the purpose for all His creation: to have creation "rest" in the remarkable His glorious power and presence.

In a very real sense, God's rest on that very first Sabbath foreshadowed the Sabbath God intends for all His creation: an eternal Sabbath of total fellowship and communion with God. God's first Sabbath was the first-fruit of a greater, eternal Sabbath in which God and creation lived in complete harmony, grace and unity of purpose.

God's directive in the Ten Commandments, "Remember the Sabbath Day" was more than a call to His people to worship one day a week. What they were also to remember and celebrate each Sabbath was the eternal Sabbath Day of grace

to come. When that Sabbath came, they would celebrate God's presence, that is, the realization of God's purpose for all creation.

In 4:1, Hebrews warns that everyone must be "careful" not to lose this "promise of entering His rest." If they reject Jesus' superiority over that of anything held high by Judaism, they will lose God's Sabbath promise.

As for the Jews, they heard God's promise. But they did not "combine it with faith" (4:2). As prophesied centuries previously in Psalm 95:11, God warned of two consequences for their disbelief.

* The first consequence was that they would incur God's wrath.

* The second consequence was that they would forfeit their share in the eternal Sabbath. "So I declared on oath in My anger, 'They shall *never* enter My rest.'"*
**Italics added*

As for those who died in disobedience, there is no second chance. They will never enter into God's covenant rest. (4:6).

But there is still hope for those who live in a "certain day" called "Today." In a sense, one could say that God has two days in the covenant week. The first of these days is "Today." "Today" is the time during which people are still alive and able to respond to God's calling of grace.

The other day is the "Day of the Lord," that is, the day of Judgment. *In that day*, those who have believed will enter into God's Sabbath rest while those who were disobedient will enter eternal judgment.

As for those hard-hearted Israelites who died in disobedience and never entered God's Promised Land, nothing can be done. They can never enter God's rest. The writer of Hebrew's warning, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts," is for the living.

"Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (4:11).

With these words in 4:11, the "Sabbath Warning And Exhortation" is completed. Unfortunately, the next section of Hebrews discussing Jesus as the High Priest is split by the chapter division at 5:1.

However, the word "Therefore" in 4:14 signals that the belief in Jesus as the "Great High Priest" is intimately connected with what has been spoken previously: the Sabbath Rest, the consequences of unbelief, the warning not to fall (chapter 4:1ff), Jesus' superiority to Moses (3:1ff.), His incarnation (2:5ff), His superiority to angels (1:3ff), and His superior revelation (1:1-2).

In a sense, all of these elements discussed before the “Therefore” of 4:14 are the Jesus’ priestly resume. These qualifications demonstrate Jesus is not merely a “priest” or a “high priest.”

Instead, He is the GREAT High Priest. Because Jesus is our “great high Priest who has gone through the heavens...the Son of God,” believers can hold firm to their faith. Even though tempted, tried, persecuted or killed, our Great High Priest sympathizes with our frailties, doubts and “weaknesses” (4:15). All this He endured without sinning.

The invitation to approach the throne of grace is a remarkable invitation to those who, in times of weakness, have sinned, erred or fallen away. It is also an unconditionally open invitation to all who have, to date, been successful in their struggles against sin but need hope and strength to carry on.

Where can we go when we’ve failed? To the Great High Priest! Because He knows our pain, understands our weakness and experienced our struggles, He is able to empathize with us. Because He overcame struggle without sin, He is able to offer forgiveness to all who come to Him.

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

Prayer:

Jesus, our Great High Priest, what a comfort to know that until we enter the eternal Sabbath Rest in heaven, that You give Your rest to us while it is still “Today.” We struggle daily. Weakness often overtakes us. We often sin. Come to us, Lord. Help us approach Your throne that we might receive Your grace Today. Amen.

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Picture: “Moses Receives The Ten Commandments”

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