

# **GOD'S REST**

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- **THE PROMISE TO ENTER REMAINS ...**
- **THEREFORE, LET US FEAR ...**

## **INTRODUCTION: ESTABLISHING THE SETTING**

It seems the best approach to grasp the teaching of the letter to the Hebrews is to understand the setting of the letter to be a pastor writing to his church—a fellowship which he knew consisted of both the saved and the unsaved. We can tell this from the content and the urgent tone of the letter.

We also know that he cared for his people and was concerned for the eternal destiny of each one of them. He was diligent in reaching out to the entire church. He was passionate in his responsibility before God to care for and shepherd the entire flock and to do his best to bring God's message to everyone in the church.

Having those things in mind should help us understand his writing in general and more specifically explain why he begins this section the way he does ... *"let us fear."*

He knew how necessary it was for the unsaved to fear the consequences of their unbelief, just as he knew how necessary it was that the saved fulfill their obligation of mercy and love in steering the unbelieving toward fear to snatch some of them from the fires of hell.

- (Jude 22–23 LSB) **And on some, who are doubting, have mercy; 23 and for others, save, snatching them out of the fire; and on others have mercy with fear,** hating even the tunic polluted by the flesh.

**SUMMARY AND RELEVANCE: WE LIKEWISE ARE CALLED TO RESCUE THE PERISHING WITHIN OUR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.**

### **1. We are exhorted to use fear to save some from their unbelief, 3:18-4:1.**

- (Hebrews 3:18–4:1 LSB) **And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.** 1 Therefore, **let us fear,** lest, **while a promise remains of entering His rest,** any one of you may seem to have fallen short of it.

**A. The promise of entering God's rest remains, but God swears that the disobedient will not enter his rest.**

**B. Bringing a person to fear the consequences of his disobedience is sometimes what is needed to save him from his unbelief.**

- i. Unbelief results in disobedience.**

- ii. Everyone believes something.**

- iii. Biblically unbelief means that the person doesn't believe God.**

- iv. The best, most loving action toward those who have an unbelieving heart is to bring them to fear the consequences of their disobedience.**

**C. The disobedient ones addressed here were in danger of falling back into Judaism and their previous misconceptions of God and salvation.**

**D. As a church we are to "see to it" and bring this fear into the lives of those who are disobedient in our fellowship to purge them of their unbelief.**

- (Hebrews 3:12 LSB) **See to it brothers, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.**

**E. Fear may be used for good as a powerful weapon to free the captive mind of the unsaved by turning their thoughts to God.**

- i. By default humans demand the right to exercise free will in choosing what they believe to be right and wrong, good and evil.**

- ii. But the freedom they think they have is in reality an enslaved mind set on self and ending in death.**

- (Romans 8:6 LSB) **For the mind set on the flesh is death,** but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

- (Romans 6:16 LSB) Do you not know that when you go on presenting yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, **you are slaves of the one whom you obey,** either of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

- iii. Fear when used as intended in this text may be enough to save some and change the direction of the person's mind from death to life and peace.**

- iv. Helping someone to fear as directed in this text may save them from their foolishness.**

- (1 Corinthians 1:18 LSB) For the word of the cross **is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.**

### **2. The good news of the promise to enter God's rest remains but only those who hear it with faith will profit from the good news, 4:2.**

- (Hebrews 4:2 LSB) **For indeed we have had good news proclaimed to us, just as they**

also; but the word that was heard did not profit those who were not united with faith among those who heard.

A. A person only profits from the good news when he hears with faith.

- (Galatians 3:2 LSB) This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
- (Galatians 3:5 LSB) So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

B. To hear with faith means we hear and believe.

C. God could not make it any more clear that the one who does not believe him will not enter his rest.

- (Hebrews 3:11 LSB) AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

D. Fear when used as intended in this text may also bring the person into the presence of God where he or she can hear what is necessary to enter God's rest.

- (Hebrews 4:1 LSB) Therefore, let us fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have fallen short of it.

E. When fear has done its saving work, the person changes his mind and forsakes his way and thoughts for God's way and thoughts.

- (Isaiah 55:7–11 LSB) Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to Yahweh, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares Yahweh. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what pleases Me, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

3. Those who believe enter God's rest just as surely as those who are disobedient will not enter his rest, 4:3-7.

- (Hebrews 4:3–7 LSB) 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. 4 For He has spoken somewhere in this way concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; 5 and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." 6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news proclaimed to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He again determines a certain day, "TODAY" saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

A. If we believe, we enter God's rest.

B. Today is the day to believe God.

C. If we do not believe, God swears that we will not enter his rest.

D. God invites us to the same rest he enjoyed when he rested on the seventh day.

E. We enter God's rest through Christ.

- (Matthew 11:28–30 LSB) Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

4. The promise of entering God's rest remains for the people of God, 4:8-9.

- (Hebrews 4:8–9 LSB) For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

5. Entering God's rest is by grace through faith—no works.

- (Hebrews 4:10 LSB) For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.
- (Romans 4:4–5 LSB) Now to the one who works,

his wage is not counted according to grace, but according to what is due. 5 **But to the one who does not work, but believes** upon Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

- (Ephesians 2:8–9 LSB) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 **not of works**, so that no one may boast.
- (2 Timothy 1:9 LSB) Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.
- (Titus 3:5a LSB) He saved us, **not by works which we did in righteousness**, but according to His mercy.

**6. To be diligent to enter God's rest is to strive to believe God above everything else—it is a battle for the mind.**

- (Hebrews 4:11 LSB) Therefore let us **be diligent to enter that rest**, lest anyone fall into the same example of disobedience.

**A. The diligence here is not working for our salvation but striving in our heart and soul to believe God and find rest in him.**

- (Jeremiah 6:16 LSB) Thus says Yahweh, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; **And you will find rest for your souls**. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”

**B. The person who is not diligent in this way ultimately fails in three ways.**

- i. He loses the battle for his mind.
- ii. He never comes to believe God.
- iii. He falls further into disobedience resulting in belief in a false gospel.

**C. Entering God's rest in Hebrews is the same concept Jesus speaks of as entering the way that leads to life (salvation) through the narrow door and the narrow gate.**

- (Luke 13:23–24 LSB) And someone said to Him, “Lord, **are there just a few who are being saved?**” And He said to them, 24

“**Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

- (Matthew 7:13–14 LSB) **Enter through the narrow gate**; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and **there are many who enter through it**. 14 For the gate is narrow and **the way is constricted that leads to life**, and there are few who find it.

**CONCLUSION ...**

**OBSERVATIONS:** Some observations concerning entering the door or gate of salvation.

1. The person is to strive to enter—diligence.
2. Many will not be able to enter the door that leads to life.
3. Many will enter the wide gate that leads to destruction.
4. The many who enter through the wide gate are satisfied with entering a way that promises life without examining where it leads.
5. We are commanded to enter a certain gate—the narrow gate.
6. The narrow gate opens to the way that leads to life.
7. Few even find the gate that opens to the way that leads to life.

**DEDUCTIONS:** Some deductions from the previous observations.

1. Striving to enter seems to fit very well with the admonition in Hebrews to pay much closer attention.
  - (Hebrews 2:1 LSB) For this reason **we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard**, lest we drift away.
2. Many people who seek salvation and the way that leads to life do not strive for the truth but are easily satisfied with a promise of life.
3. We should strive to believe and share a gospel that saves, not one that merely accommodates.
  - (2 Corinthians 2:17 LSB) For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, **but as from sincerity, but as from God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ**.
4. There is only one gospel that saves.
  - (Galatians 1:8 LSB) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, **should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you**, let him be accursed!