

Hebrews 7 Chapter 4

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The author is writing to Hebrews. Most are believers, having recognized that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in fact, their long awaited Messiah Who came in fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, in fulfillment of all the types, symbols and rituals of Judaism, Who came as the sinless Lamb of God to die as the Sacrifice for sin and that man could be completely forgiven, come into fellowship with God and eventually spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Others of these Hebrews are intellectually convinced of the truth of the Gospel but have not placed the faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Still others don't believe but keep coming around.

In the first chapters the writer has presented Jesus Christ as preeminent, superior to all others as the Son of God. He showed His superiority over angels, over the prophets and even over Moses who had been the greatest leader, prophet, miracle worker and shepherd Israel had ever known.

Now, he will present the Lord Jesus Christ as the only One who can lead His people into God's rest, which even Moses could not do. Most of those who came out of Egypt in the Exodus died in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

To review the last part of chapter 3: Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

The writer of Hebrews is warning His readers, especially those who are part of group #2, those who understand the truth of the Gospel message but have refused to fully believe in order to commit to trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation... He is saying, 'warning!! caution!! be careful!! stop disbelieving!' The Hebrews who died in the wilderness after the Exodus during 40 years wandering died because they disbelieved God and they disbelieved the good report from two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb. Out of the millions of Hebrews who left in the Exodus from Egypt, twenty years old or older, only 2 entered the Promised Land... not even Moses was allowed to enter because of disbelief and disobedience.

That, in itself, was a picture of God's promise of Salvation of His elect... only 2 out of millions... that is a small remnant! Jesus is the One Who said, 'Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.' Matt 7

He continues in **chapter 4**: 'Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.'

God has promised His rest to all who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but not even everyone who believes enters that rest and certainly no one who is not born again. He is saying, you, of group #1, you who are saved... even you are not guaranteed of entering God's rest while here on Earth... your belief must be mixed with faith... and you of group #2, you certainly will never enter God's rest if your belief does not become mixed with faith... He says, 'believe what I am teaching you! God's Word will not profit you if you do not, by faith, receive it and believe it!'

What rest is He talking about? What is this '**rest**'?

He is not talking about the Israelites crossing the Jordan River into Canaan after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Certainly, he uses that as an example and as a 'type' for the rest He is offering but He is talking about something completely different for the people of God, for these 'people of God,' those to whom He is writing, those who have been born again... the Body of Jesus Christ... the Church... the **true** Church.

Remember... everything, literally everything about Old Testament Israel and the Hebrews foreshadows and points to the coming Messiah and the Eternal people of God. Everything! The election and call of Abraham out of the pagan idolatry of Persia was a picture of His election and call of those He chose before the foundation of the World. His creation and protection of Israel pictured His creation of His Eternal people called from every tribe, tongue and nation. Their slavery in Egypt pictured the life of every person in slavery to

sin and the kingdom of darkness. The Exodus, led by their shepherd, Moses pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, leading His people to Salvation and freedom. Their wandering in the desert pictured the life of the believer who remains in the grip of sin, fear or doubt... unable to enter God's rest because of unbelief or misbelief. And their finally crossing the Jordan River and entering Canaan, after wandering for forty years is the picture of most believers who never enter God's rest until they cross the river of physical death and enter into Heaven... and the reason that most never enter His rest is also because of unbelief. However... just like Joshua and Caleb... they represented those who could have entered God's rest because of faith and belief... like believers can now... while still alive, enter God's rest... in faith and belief.

What do we fail to understand and believe today which then restrains us from entering into God's rest?

Verse 3: ³ **For we who have believed do enter that rest**, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; ⁵ and again in this *place*: "They shall not enter My rest."

We, who believe, can enter that rest... but not all who have believed unto Salvation do enter that rest. Just as He swore in His wrath that all those disbelieving Israelites (the people of God) would die (physically) in the desert, He also says that many believers today refuse to enter His rest because of unbelief and will die, physically, in the desert of this world without ever having entered His rest; they will never do so until they enter Heaven.

What is this rest and what is the lack of entering it?

God rested from ALL His works on the seventh day... His works were finished from the foundation of the World. Where have we heard that before? '... just as He chose us in Him **before the foundation of the world...**' Eph 1:4 and... twice in Revelation it refers to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, **slain from the foundation of the World**. God's works were finished from the foundation of the World... and what works are acceptable to God? Are our works acceptable to God? Yes and no. Isaiah writes, 'But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; Isa 64:10 Paul stresses over and over that no righteousness comes from our works: he writes, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6:20, 23 "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' ... Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. **But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.**' Rom 4:3

Paul stresses over and over, no righteousness before God comes from works that we can do; no righteousness comes from works... the only works that God accepts as righteousness are the works of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 6: Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. Today you can enter into His rest... you don't have to wait until you die... today, if you will understand and believe correctly.

Some must enter His rest... others will not. Remember... the writer of Hebrews is not talking primarily to or about Old Testament people, places and things. He is writing to Hebrews under the New Covenant... some are believers while some are not. Today, he says... 'Today is the time appointed, now is the hour of salvation... now is the time to believe... don't let this time slip away from you... don't sentence yourself to eternity in Hell because you refused to believe, because you tried to hold on to the Old Covenant, thinking it was the way to approach God. Don't, as a believer, waste your time here on Earth outside of God's rest because of your unbelief, thinking that your works of righteousness were the way to enter into God's rest.' Paul writes, 'We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says:

“In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation. 2 Cor 6:1

For the unbeliever... **NOW** is the time appointed unto salvation. For the believer... **NOW** is the time appointed to believe and enter into God's rest now!

Verse 9: There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself ***also ceased from his works as God did from His.***

There it is! The one who has entered God's rest has ceased from his works... as God did from His.

The people of God can now enter into God's rest. This is not talking about when a Christian dies. How often has this passage been misunderstood to be referring to when a believer dies physically and enters into Heaven, that a believer enters his rest and ceases from his works when he dies. That is not the meaning at all.

Verse 11: 'Let us therefore ***be diligent to enter that rest*** (now), lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.'

Would we even imagine that He is saying... 'Let us ***be diligent to die*** so we can enter His rest?' Of course not! Therefore, His rest is something we can enter into now but it takes diligence.

Diligence means: 'careful and persistent work or effort.' He is saying, 'We must persistently work to cease from work.' 'We must work diligently to be at rest.' We must work hard at not working.

Then how do we explain Eph. 2:10... 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ***for good works***, which God prepared beforehand ***that we should walk in them.***'

Since entering into God's rest obviously does not mean lying around in a coma, it must have to do with our attitudes and motivations... ***why we do what we do.***

Jesus Christ didn't cease from His works when He died on the Cross. His work... His sacrifice... He was crucified from the foundation of the World. God ceased from His works at the foundation of the World... on the seventh day He rested.

So what is this rest, then? How do we enter it or how do we keep ourselves from entering it?

Verse 12: 'For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.'

What does that have to do with entering God's rest or not? Look closely at what those verses are saying... the Word of God is what God uses to cause us to examine ourselves. God doesn't need His Word to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts... we do. Whether or not we enter God's rest has to do with how well we examine ourselves and our thoughts, intentions and motives. What we do and why we do it.

His Word digs out our true motives and intentions. No one can hide from Him... He knows our hearts.

Why does a person do what they do... especially in the area of good works or ***supposed*** good works?

That's the point here.

The Word of God tells a person the truth about themselves; they can either pay attention and change their thinking and actions or they can immediately forget what the Word of God has shown them. James 1:23 says, But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the ***perfect law of liberty*** and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

We enter rest by quitting working.

From the very beginning God offered man to join Him in His rest. For some time, an unspecified time, we don't know how long... Adam and Eve did join God in His rest. They had no separation from God; they were in constant perfect communion and fellowship with God. God walked and talked with Adam in the cool of the

day. Adam felt no need to try to please God or impress God or coerce God into doing Adam's will; Adam saw no need for any type of 'works' to get God's attention or to appease His wrath in any way or to 'bribe' God into doing Adam's will... after all... isn't that what works are all about? Isn't that why false religions bring sacrifices to their gods? And isn't that also why so many Christians do what they do... whether it be praying, fasting, reading the Bible... going to Church... tithing... feeding the poor... or any number of other 'good works'... isn't that what 'works' are all about... usually?

Am I saying that those things are unimportant or meaningless? No, not at all but if the motivation is wrong, they are meaningless... they are no different than and no more efficacious than the types, symbols and rituals of Judaism which the writer of Hebrews is telling His audience no longer have meaning since every one of them were completed and fulfilled in God's final, perfect sacrifice for sin, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and that they can even be so dangerous as to keep one from coming to God through true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross because they can think that the old rituals are enough. (The Old Testament rituals used to be very important; they used to point to the coming Messiah but now that He has come, they are but shadows of the true substance which is Him.)

How can our motivations be differentiated? How can we know the true reasons why we do what we do? The first step is to determine why we do what we do... what are we trying to accomplish?

Imagine a child, let's say he's five years old and he has a really great father... a perfect Dad. When I was a child, my father wasn't a perfect Dad. He would be angry without warning or reason, he would punish capriciously. He would never explain why something was good or wrong... it just was... because he said so. I don't remember him ever saying he was proud of me. I would try to be good to make him not be angry or to make him be proud of me or just to make him like me. I remember there would be friends whose dads were different, who were nice, who smiled and encouraged and loved their kids. I can remember thinking, I wish that man was my dad. When I was in the High School youth group here at Milwaukie First Baptist, I remember thinking that about a few of the men here, the fathers of friends... Chuck Seymour, Ted Heydel, Mal Bolen and a few others...

Anyway... imagine this child, five years old and he has a perfect father. He knows his father loves him completely at all times, whether he is good or not so good... his father loves him. His father disciplines him correctly and fairly. He knows his father couldn't love him more than he does and he knows that his father would never love him less than he does... no matter what! He loves his father and he always wants to do his father's will... only because he loves his father and loves to see him smile.

When this boy works on a project at school, he takes joy in the project because he knows he is making it for his dad. He knows his father will tell him it is great, no matter what it looks like, but he still wants to do his very best because he loves his dad, because his dad truly loves him. No matter how big the project or how involved, it never seems like work to the little boy because it is for his dad.

God wants us to please Him... He wants us to want to please Him... He wants to bless us and reward us...

We read about the perfect law of liberty... The person walking in God's **perfect law of liberty** can enter into God's rest. Who is that? He is the one who understands the reality of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross. All my sin was forgiven... completely... forever... there is nothing I could ever do that was not completely paid for on the Cross... there could never be a time when the complete absolute perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is not imputed fully to me. God only ever sees me clothed in the righteousness of His Son. When He looks at me, when He listens to me, He only sees and hears the righteousness of His Son... I am His beloved child. I don't have to measure up, I don't have to make up, I don't have to shape up.

If I have entered into God's rest, then I don't worry about my relationship with Him. If I pray... it's because I want to talk with Him and be with Him... not because I'm trying to figure out how to make Him do what I want. If I fast, it's because I want to be able to more clearly hear from Him. If I read my Bible, it's because I love Him and want to know Him more and to understand more clearly His will for my life. If I go to Church regularly, it's

because He says it is best for me and I believe Him. If I tithe, it is simply a way to honor Him and remind myself that He owns everything I have. And a primary indication of my having entered His rest as far as motivation for doing what I do... I am looking forward to His unimaginable eternal rewards... to stand before Him and hear Him say, 'Well done, My child... welcome!'

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a **rewarder** of those who diligently **seek Him**. Heb 11:6

What does that say?

I can know that I have entered His rest when I know that my primary motivation in everything is that I am seeking Him... to know Him.

On the other hand, how often do I make sure that someone else knows about those things I do? If so, then my motivation is obviously to impress others, to look spiritual and righteous... and they become simply worthless, meaningless, empty hollow works of self aggrandizement.

There are about six reasons why we do what we do as far as 'good works,' but there is only one reason which is acceptable to God and indicates that I've entered His rest.

1. to make God love me... if I can do enough good stuff, maybe He'll love me.
2. make God forgive me... If I can do enough good stuff, maybe He'll forgive me.
3. make up for something I've done... If I do enough good stuff, maybe He'll forget about that thing I did.
4. make God do what I want Him to... If I do enough or give enough, maybe He'll answer my prayer like I want.
5. impress others... As long as i can make sure others see what I do... they'll have to be impressed with me.
6. or... because I love Him and simply want to make Him smile because I know He loves me no matter what.

The truth is I can't make Him love me more than He does... He loves me completely with an everlasting love. He forgave me completely at the Cross and His complete forgiveness was applied to me when I trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

I can't make up for anything I've done... nothing I could do would make up for my sin... only Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice was enough.

I can't coerce God into doing my will, no matter how much I do or how much money I send to a charlatan TV preacher. God will always do and accomplish what is best for me and I cannot alter that.

I can certainly try to impress others with my great spirituality, but if I do, I will forfeit God's eternal reward I could have had for doing His will with the correct attitude and motivation.

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. Matt 6:1

If I sin, I don't have to perform a work of penance to reestablish my relationship with God... He never left. He wants me to not sin but if I do sin, He wants me to simply be thankful that He forgave me at the Cross. Is that a license to sin? Actually, yes it is... **but** I would be foolish to think of it that way because when I sin, it costs me unimaginable eternal rewards. Seeing it that way is the only way I can really please Him. To please Him, I must understand that I can sin if I want to... but that it will cost me dearly because He does reward faithfulness and will withhold reward for unfaithfulness.

However... if my attitude is, 'Now that I'm saved, I can sin if I want...' then it's probably an indication that I was never really born again in the first place.

To be in His rest means: I am not trying to work to be saved or to stay saved... I recognize that I am saved completely eternally... I am His and He is mine.

I am not working to be forgiven... He has forgiven me completely because of Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice.

I am not working to gain His favor... I am always in His favor because I am In Jesus Christ.

I am not working to make Him do my will... He will always do what is best for me.

I am not working to impress others... I want God's eternal rewards... not the acclaim of men.

God ceased from all His labors on the seventh day and He invites us to do the same... forever.

He wants us to diligently and carefully watch over our motivations and attitudes and to change them when necessary. He wants us to enter into His rest and to remain there until He returns for us... soon.