

Good News: Open Ears, Obedient Hearts

Don't Harden Your Heart!

(Read Aloud)

Hebrews 4 New Living Translation Promised Rest for God's People

God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. 2 For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God.[a] 3 For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, "In my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest,'"[b] even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. 4 We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work." [c] 5 But in the other passage God said, "They will never enter my place of rest." [d] 6 So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. 7 So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." [e] 8 Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. 9 So there is a special rest [f] still waiting for the people of God. 10 For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. 11 So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall. 12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. 14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Experiencing God's Goodness

- Willingness and obedience are the keys for receiving God's goodness.
- God gives His love unconditionally, but to experience/receive the promise certain conditions must be met.
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- John 3:16 New King James Version
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Believing is receiving! There's no relief without belief.

Foundational Faith Scriptures

- Hebrews 11:1 King James Version
- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- Hebrews 11:6 New Living Translation
And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.
- Romans 10:17 New King James Version
So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
- James 2:17 New Living Translation
So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

The process of belief:

1. God, who is faithful, speaks.
2. His faith-filled word is heard and received by a person.
3. Faith begins a work on the heart/mind of the hearer to inspire a belief that results in hope.
4. Belief will be evident only by their obedience to do what God said, because faith without works is dead.
5. The open ear and obedient heart of the person will result in them receiving what God promised.

The process of unbelief:

1. God, who is faithful, speaks.
2. His faith-filled word is heard and rejected by a person.
3. Faith cannot begin a work on the heart/mind of the hearer to inspire a belief that results in hope. Instead, unbelief hardens the heart.
4. Unbelief will be evident by their disobedience to do what God said.
5. The closed ear and disobedient heart of the person will result in them forfeiting what God promised.

God's rest is the promise of being able to experience all the good things He's prepared for us since the beginning, free from our own labor, and received only by faith.

Hebrews 4:1-3 New Living Translation

4 God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. 2 For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God.[a] 3 For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, "In my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest,'"[b] even though this rest has been ready since he made the world.

Good News is for Believers

- Death entered humanity by the belief of a lie, and life by the belief of truth.
- When you love God, you obey God, and the obedient are constantly rewarded.

Psalms 84:11 New Living Translation

11 For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

Genesis 6:5-9 New Living Translation

5 The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. 6 So

the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. 7 And the Lord said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." 8 But Noah found favor with the Lord. 9 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

- **How do we obtain favor/grace with God? By walking in close fellowship with Him.**
- **Close fellowship = open ears, obedient hearts.**
- **Choosing to walk in fellowship with Him now is the denial of self, picking up the cross, and following Jesus.**
- **What have you decided about Jesus?**
- **Your response to Jesus is the most important decision you'll ever make. He is the bearer of the good news that leads to life.**
- **Matthew 17:5 New Living Translation**
- **But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him."**
- **John 14:6 New Living Translation**
Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.
- **To be truly connected to Him is to be a branch on the tree of life and produce good fruit.**
- **John 15:5-8 New Living Translation**
- **"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.**
- **Galatians 5:22-23 New Living Translation**

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

- **A prayer for open ears and obedient hearts as we read, hear, believe and receive the Messiah's sermon on the mount. May we experience the goodness and blessings He offers.**

Matthew 5:1-12 New Living Translation

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, 2 and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

3 "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,[a]
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

4 God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.

6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,[b]
for they will be satisfied.

7 God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

9 God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Fruit of the spirit verse

2 Thessalonians 2