

“Therefore, Let Us Fear & Rest”

Hebrews 4:1

July 15, 2018

INTRO: Let me ask you 10 (1+9) questions to begin...

1. *What have you heard, believed & applied so far?*

VIDEO: *“Hebrews Survey”*

T/S: With that refreshers... ask the other 9 Q's to start...

2. *Have you hardened your heart?*
3. *What do you fear?* (What are you afraid of?)
4. *What do you know of/about God's promise(s)?*
5. *What are the conditions of God's conditional promises?*
6. *How do you enter into God's promises?*
7. *IF at all... who and/or what are you resting in?*
8. *What is meant by “God's rest” in the Bible?*
9. *What if you &/or others are not really in God's rest?*
10. *What, if anything, supports/validates your answers?*

BIG IDEA: *We need to understand **fear** faithfully and **rest** redemptively!*

PREVIEW:

- *Biblical warnings reinforce our witness & worship!*
- *Biblical fear is foundational to missional faith!*
- *God's biblical promises are believer's guarantees!*
- *Christian rest is more than comfortable relaxation*
- *It's possible to be physically “in” but spiritually out*

I. Warnings Reinforce Our Witness & Worship

“Therefore,”

*** Read Hebrews 3...

1Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. 3For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope

7Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, 8do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10Therefore I was provoked with that generation and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ 11As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

12Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

16For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? **17**And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? **18**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 unable to enter because of unbelief.

The Israelite's faith was as fickle & fleeting as Pharaoh's fear! - JDP

Their 40 years in the wilderness = purge/purity vs. patience!

Hebrews 4 continues the warning to informed but unresponsive Jews that began in 3:7. These Jews not only knew the basic truths of the gospel but had even renounced Judaism. Still they did not trust in Christ. The warning, of course, applies to anyone who is hesitating in committing themselves fully to Jesus Christ, and can be summarized: "**Do not harden your hearts** like Israel did in the wilderness." The Israelites had left Egypt, but they often longed to go back. They refused to trust the Lord completely and, oppressive and disappointing as it was, the old life still had an appeal. They halted at the crucial point of decision. Consequently, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land and into God's **rest**. So it is with many who are drawn to Jesus Christ. Unbelief forfeits rest—that is the writer's thought.

II. Fear Is Foundational To Missional Faith

VIDEO: Francis Chan – “Fear God”

Jesus warned, “Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

“let us fear”

I want to engage the “ear” in “fear.” – JDP

- This is like Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23
- Ditto... the one who built his house on the sand...
 - **Biblical “fear” is an essential component of biblical faith!** – JDP
 - *Healthy-fear eliminates unhealthy-fear!* – JDP
 - **Fear of God is the foundation of reverence for God.** – JDP

III. God’s Promises Are Our Guarantees

“if/lest while a promise stands/remains”

Don’t be afraid to be afraid... missionally. – JDP

- What is THE **“promise”** being referenced here?
 - Micro promise
 - Macro promise
 - Missional promise

➤ “still stands” = “still” = continuation....

Genesis 1:28 reveals the start...

*God blessed them; and God said to them,
"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it;
and rule over... every living thing that moves on the earth."*

○ “stands”

- Nothing can stop our sovereign God!
- **John 3:36** stands!

There's still time. God is holding the door open.

Church... WE are the 12 spies! –JDP

The only question of Hebrews is... are we the 2 or the 10?

- The *overtly-lost* outside of church... know **NO** rest!
- The *lost/goats* IN church... **THINK** they know rest.
- The *wolves* in the church...**PRETEND** to know rest
- The *stumbling-sheep* in Church..**FORFEIT** their rest
- The *healthy-sheep* in the church...**CHERISH** rest...
- The *sheep-dogs* in the church...help **RESTORE** rest
- The *under-shepherds* in church... **EQUIP** for rest.

IV. Christian Rest Is More Than Comfortable Relaxation

“of entering His rest,”

God's perfect rest is a rest in free grace.

VIDEO: *Theology of REST*

In God's rest we are forever established in Christ. We are freed from running from philosophy to philosophy, from religion to religion, from life-style to life-style. We are freed from being tossed about by every doctrinal wind, every idea or fad, that blows our way. In Christ, we are established, rooted, grounded, un-moveable.

Rest is the biblical FRUIT of biblical FAITH. –JDP

V. Many Are Physically Present But Spiritually Absent

“any one of you may seem to have failed to reach it”

- *“any of you” = “who-so-ever” = loving invitation!*
 - See the change of pronoun from “us” to “you”
 - *“failed to reach it” reveals work/faith TENSION!*
- * **Consistent with Genesis 1:28 (bless/obey)**

- ~ Workout your Salvation with fear...
- ~ You cannot be My Disciple unless...
- ~ Their “fruit” will reveal My disciples...
- ~ Faith without works is dead-faith!
- ~ Why do you call Me Lord but do not...
- ~ Many claim with lips but deny in living..
- ~ Parable samples: Talents/Soils/Sand-House
- ~ *Beware false teachers* - Jesus/Paul/Jude
- ~ Test yourself (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)

REVIEW:

- *Warnings reinforce our witness & worship!*
- *Fear is foundational to missional faith!*
- *God’s promises are our guarantees!*
- *Christian rest is more than comfortable relaxation*
- *It’s possible to be physically “in” but spiritually out*

CLOSE:

See our call for PERSONAL “concern” over spiritual rest

AND

embrace all BIBLICAL “fear” that fertilizes MISSIONAL urgency & fuels faithful-obedience.

Let’s PRAY

Hebrews 4:1 (ESV)

¹ *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

It should be evident that the first thing which will enable us to understand our passage is to attend to the *scope* of it. The contents of this chapter are found not in Romans or Corinthians or Ephesians, but in Hebrews, the central theme of which is the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and there is that in each chapter which exemplifies this. The theme is developed by the presentation of the superlative excellencies of Christ, who is the Center and Life of Christianity. Thus far we have had Christ's superiority over the prophets, the angels, Moses. Now it is the glory of Christ which excels that attaching to Joshua.

Our next key must be found in noting the *connection* between the contents of chapter four and that which immediately precedes. Plainly, the context begins at [Hebrews 3:1](#), where we are bidden to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." All of chapter 3 is but an amplification of its opening verse. Its contents may be summarized thus: Christ is to be "considered," attended to, heard, trusted, obeyed: first, because of His exalted personal excellency: He is the Son, "faithful" over His house; second, because of the direful consequences which must ensue from not "considering" Him, from despising Him. This second

point is illustrated by the sad example of those Israelites who hearkened not unto the Lord in the clays of Moses, and in their case the consequence was that they failed to enter into the rest of Canaan.

- **An Exposition of Hebrews.**

Hebrews 4 continues the warning to informed but unresponsive Jews that began in 3:7. These Jews not only knew the basic truths of the gospel but had even renounced Judaism. Still they did not trust in Christ. The warning, of course, applies to anyone who is hesitating in committing himself fully to Jesus Christ, and can be summarized: "*Do not harden your hearts like Israel did in the wilderness.*" The Israelites had left Egypt, but they often longed to go back. They refused to trust the Lord completely and, oppressive and disappointing as it was, the old life was still appealing to them... They halted at the crucial point of decision. Consequently, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land and into God's rest. So it is with many who are drawn to Jesus Christ... Unbelief forfeits rest—that is the writer's thought.

The Meaning of Rest

The English rest and the Greek word (*katapausis*) that it translates here have similar meanings. The basic idea is that of ceasing from work or from any kind of action. You stop doing what you are doing. Action, labor, or exertion is over. **Applied**

to God's rest, it means no more self-effort as far as salvation is concerned. It means the end of trying to please God by our feeble, fleshly works.

God's perfect rest is a rest in free grace.

Rest also means freedom from whatever worries or disturbs you. (*Rest is another word for PEACE.* –JDP) Some people cannot rest mentally and emotionally because they are so easily annoyed. Every little nuisance upsets them and they always feel hassled. **Rest does not mean freedom from all nuisances and hassles; it means freedom from being so easily bothered by them.** It means to be inwardly quiet, composed, peaceful.

To enter God's rest means to be at peace with God, to possess the perfect peace He gives. It means to be free from guilt and even unnecessary feelings of guilt. It means freedom from worry about sin, because sin is forgiven.

God's rest is the end of legalistic works and the experience of peace in the total forgiveness of God.

Rest can mean to lie down, be settled, fixed, secure. There is no more shifting about in frustration from one thing to another, no more running in circles. **In God's rest we are forever established in Christ. We are freed from running from philosophy to philosophy, from religion to religion, from life-style to life-style. We are freed from being tossed about by every doctrinal wind, every idea or fad, that blows our way. In Christ, we are established, rooted, grounded, unmoveable. That is the Christian's rest.**

Rest involves remaining confident, keeping trust. In other words, to rest in something or someone means to maintain our confidence in it or him. **To enter God's rest, therefore, means to enjoy the perfect, unshakeable confidence of salvation in our Lord. We have no more reason to fear. We have absolute trust and confidence in God's power and care.**

Rest also means to lean on. To enter into God's rest means that for the remainder of our lives and for all eternity we can lean on God. We can be sure that He will never fail to support us. In the new relationship with God, we can depend on Him for everything and in everything—for support, for health, for strength, for all we need. (*Rest is the biblical FRUIT of biblical FAITH.* –JDP) It is a relationship in which we are confident and secure that we have committed our life to God and that He holds it in perfect, eternal love. It is a relationship that involves being settled and fixed. **No more floating around.** We know whom we have believed and we stand in Him.

The rest spoken of in Hebrews 3 and 4 includes all of these meanings. It is full, blessed, sweet, satisfying, peaceful. It **is what God offers every person in Christ. It is the rest pictured and illustrated in the Canaan rest that Israel never understood and never entered into because of unbelief.** And just as Israel never entered Canaan rest because of unbelief, so **soul after soul since that time, and even before, has missed God's salvation rest because of unbelief.**

Two other dimensions of spiritual rest will not be found in a dictionary—the Kingdom rest of the Millennium and the eternal rest of heaven.

These are the ultimate expressions of the new relationship to God in Christ, the relationship that takes care of us in this life, in the Kingdom, and in heaven forever.

[Hebrews 4:1-13](#) takes us more deeply into this truth by teaching four things about God's rest: its availability, its elements, its nature, and its urgency.

The Availability of Rest

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. ([4:1](#))

Therefore refers, of course, to Israel's unbelief and consequent failure to enter God's Canaan rest. As illustrated by her experience, not trusting in God is something to be feared.

Jesus warned, *"Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* ([Matt. 10:28](#)). Only God has the power to commit a person to hell. If He is not believed, He is the One, the only One, to be feared.

The Christian has no need to **fear** in the sense meant here. "Do not be afraid, little flock," Jesus said, "for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom" ([Luke 12:32](#)).

The only kind of fear a Christian should have is that of reverential awe (1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7; and others).

This is the fear of respect and honor, not the fear of condemnation or fear in the sense of terror, of which this text speaks.

But to be lost and face eternal separation from God is cause for the most extreme fear. Few, however, who are lost feel such fear. Even many who have heard the gospel and recognize its truth do not have this fear. So the writer urges them, pleads with them, to be afraid of what they are doing and of what they are facing.

- This is like Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23
- Ditto... the one who built his house on the sand...

As long as ***a promise remains***, there is opportunity to be saved and to enter God's rest. Otherwise appeal for belief would be a mockery. **There is still time. God still holds the door open.**

- BE a Joshua...
- BE a Caleb...

When Israel was in the wilderness, those who refused to believe were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. But God did not forsake Israel as His chosen people. The Jews who refused His Son, who mocked Him and crucified Him, were not allowed to enter God's heavenly rest. But God did not forsake Israel even

then. Many Christians, unfortunately, believe that God no longer has a plan for Israel as a nation or even as a people—that His chosen people now is the church. There is no promise left for Israel, and she will have no restoration or future kingdom. This is the view of amillennialism, common today even among evangelicals. Some argue that, because of what the Jews did in the Old Testament in unbelief, and even more importantly because of what they did to Jesus Christ, as a nation and as a distinct people they forfeited every promise of God.

But God's promise to Israel still stands. One of the clearest passages that shows Israel is still in God's economy and that God is still working with her is in [Acts 3](#). Shortly after Pentecost Peter said to a group of Jews just outside the Temple: "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life" ([vv. 14-15](#)). But after this strong and seemingly final indictment, he concludes by saying, "It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" ([vv. 25-26](#)). Even though they had killed the Prince of life, the very Son of God, they were still children of the unconditional covenant God had made with Abraham. So the writer of Hebrews could say to them, "a promise remains of entering His rest." **Rest is still available. What marvelous grace!**

A more accurate translation of the last part of [Hebrews 4:1](#) is, "*lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God.*"

In other words, some Jews were in danger of talking themselves out of trusting in Christ because they thought it was too late. Perhaps they believed their people had forfeited the opportunity to receive the Messiah and be saved. They had no reason for such despair, because **a promise still remained. But they did have reason to be afraid—not because they had lost the opportunity for salvation, but because they *could* lose it if they continued to put off accepting Christ as their personal Savior.**

In his younger manhood Mel Trotter was as debauched as can be imagined. His children were starving because he spent his money on alcohol. His little girl died of malnutrition when she was about four. The neighbors gave enough money to buy her some new clothes and a casket to be buried in. In the middle of the night Trotter broke into the mortuary, took the clothes off his dead child, and exchanged them for a drink. Not long afterward, however, Jesus Christ reached down and changed his life, and he became one of the great preachers America has known.

As long as a person has opportunity to decide, he *can* decide. A person is never too far gone for God to deal with him. As long as his heart is sensitive to what the Spirit is saying, as long as he can hear God's call, he has time to be saved. God's rest is still available. Only God knows how long that is for each person.

Christ Is Greater in the Rest He Gives (Heb. 3:7-4:13)

This long section is the second of the five exhortations in this epistle. In the first exhortation ([Heb. 2:1-4](#)), the writer pointed out the danger of *drifting* from the Word because of neglect. In this exhortation, he explains the danger of *doubting* and *disbelieving* the Word because of hardness of heart. It is important that we understand the background of this section, which is the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and their experiences of unbelief in the wilderness.

To begin with, we must understand that there are spiritual lessons in the geography of Israel's experiences. The nation's bondage in Egypt is an illustration of a sinner's bondage in this world. Much as Israel was delivered from Egypt by the blood of lambs and the power of God, so a sinner who believes on Christ is delivered from the bondage of sin ([Col. 1:13-14](#)). Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God" whose death and resurrection have made our deliverance from sin a reality.

It was not God's will that Israel remain either in Egypt or in the wilderness. His desire was that the people enter their glorious inheritance in the land of Canaan. But when Israel got to the border of their inheritance, they delayed because they doubted the promise of God ([Num. 13-14](#)). "We are not able" wept the ten spies and the people. "We *are* able with God's help!" said

Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. Because the people went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith, they missed their inheritance and died in the wilderness. It was the new generation that possessed the land and entered into their rest.

What does Canaan represent to us as Christians today? It represents our spiritual inheritance in Christ ([Eph. 1:3](#), [11](#), [15-23](#)). It is unfortunate that some of our hymns and Gospel songs use Canaan as a picture of heaven, and "crossing the Jordan" as a picture of death. Since Canaan was a place of battles, and even of defeats, it is not a good illustration of heaven! Israel had to cross the river by faith (a picture of the believer as he dies to self and the world, [Rom. 6](#)) and claim the inheritance by faith. They had to "step out by faith" ([Josh. 1:3](#)) and claim the land for themselves, just as believers today must do.

Now we can understand what the wilderness wanderings represent: the experiences of believers who will not claim their spiritual inheritance in Christ, who doubt God's Word and live in restless unbelief. To be sure, God is with them, as He was with Israel; but they do not enjoy the fullness of God's blessing. They are "out of Egypt" but they are not yet "in Canaan."

With this background, we can now better understand one of the key words in this section—*rest* ([Heb. 3:11](#), [18](#); [4:1](#), [3-5](#), [8-11](#)). The writer mentioned two different "rests" found in Old Testament history: (1) *God's Sabbath rest*, when He ceased from His Creation activities ([Gen. 2:2](#); [Heb. 4:4](#)); (2) *Israel's rest in Canaan* ([Deut. 12:9](#); [Josh. 21:43-45](#); [Heb. 3:11](#)). But he saw in these "rests" illustrations of the spiritual experiences of believers today. The Sabbath rest is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation ([Heb. 4:3](#); see [Matt. 11:28](#)). The Canaan rest is a

picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ ([Heb. 4:11-13](#); note the emphasis on the Word of God). The first is the rest of salvation; the second is the rest of submission.

But there is a third rest that enters into the discussion, that *future rest* that all believers will enjoy with God. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God" ([Heb. 4:9](#)). This word for rest is the Greek word *sabbatismos*—"a keeping of a Sabbath"—and this is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. When the saints enter heaven, it will be like sharing God's great Sabbath rest, with all labors and battles ended ([Rev. 14:13](#)).

We may diagram these rests in this way:

<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>
God's Sabbath rest	Salvation rest	Heaven
Israel's Canaan rest	Submission rest (victory in Christ)	

(5 Types of REST)

- CREATION's rest (Sabbath)
- CANAAN's rest
- CONVERSION's rest (salvation)
- CHRIST-Like rest (submission/faithful obedience)
- COMING rest (coming millennial kingdom/heaven)

With this background of Israel's history and the "rests" involved, we may now examine the passage itself. The writer gives a threefold admonition.

Let us take heed ([vv. 7-19](#)). Take heed to what? To the sad history of the nation of Israel and the important lesson it teaches. The writer quotes from [Psalm 95:7-11](#), which records God's response to Israel's tragic spiritual condition. God had delivered His people from Egypt and had cared for them, revealing His power in many signs and wonders. Israel saw all of this and benefited from it, but the experience did not bring them closer to God or make them trust Him more. All that God did for them did not benefit them spiritually. In fact, just the opposite took place: they hardened their hearts against God! They put God to the test and He did not fail them; yet they failed Him.

The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) erred in their hearts ([Heb. 3:10](#)), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They also had evil hearts of unbelief ([Heb. 3:12](#)); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

When a person has an *erring* heart and a *disbelieving* heart, the result will also be a *hard* heart. This is a heart that is insensitive to the Word and work of God. So hard was the heart of Israel that the people even wanted to return to Egypt! Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt! Of course, all this history spoke to the hearts of the readers of this letter because they were in danger of "going back" themselves.

God's judgment fell on Israel in the wilderness at Kadesh Barnea. That entire generation was condemned to die, and only the new generation would enter the land. God said, "They shall not enter into My rest" ([Heb. 3:11](#)). But what message does this bring to a believer today? No believer today, Jew or Gentile, could go back into the Mosaic legal system since the temple is gone and there is no priesthood. But every believer is tempted to give up his confession of Christ and go back into the world system's life of compromise and bondage. This is especially true during times of persecution and suffering. The fires of persecution have always purified the church because suffering separates true believers from the counterfeit. True believers are willing to suffer for Christ and they hold firmly to their convictions and their confession of faith (see [Heb. 3:6, 14](#)). We are not saved by holding to our confession. The fact that we hold to our confession is proof that we are God's true children.

It is important that we take heed and recognize the spiritual dangers that exist. But it is also important that we encourage each other to be faithful to the Lord ([Heb. 3:13](#)). We get the impression that some of these believers addressed were careless about their fellowship in the local assembly (see [Heb. 10:23-25](#)). Christians belong to each other and need each other. Moses, Caleb, and Joshua did try to encourage Israel when the nation refused to enter Canaan, but the people would not listen.

It is clear from this section that God was grieved with Israel during the entire forty years they wandered in the wilderness. The Jews had not been out of Egypt long when they began to provoke God ([Ex. 16:1ff](#)). After He supplied bread for them, they complained about a lack of water ([Ex. 17:1-7](#)). Moses

called that place "Massah and Meribah" which means "provocation and trial." These same words are used in [Hebrews 3:10](#).

The sin of Israel is stated in [Hebrews 3:12](#)—"departing from the living God." The Greek word gives us our English word "apostasy." This is the only place this word is used in Hebrews. Does "apostasy" mean abandoning one's faith and therefore being condemned forever? That does not fit into this context. Israel departed from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. Rather, He disciplined them in the wilderness. God did not allow His people to return to bondage.

The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Saviour who constantly intercedes for them. But the writer is careful to point out that this confidence is no excuse for sin. God disciplines His children. Remember that Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer's present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.

Let us fear ([vv. 1-8](#)). Believers today may enter and enjoy their spiritual inheritance in Christ. We must be careful lest we fail to believe God's Word, for it is only as the Word is "mixed with faith" that it can accomplish its purposes. The argument in this section is given in several propositions: (1) God finished His work and rested, so that His rest has been available since Creation. (2) The Jews failed to enter into their rest. (3) Many

years later ([Ps. 95](#)), God said that a rest was still available. That "today" is still here! This means that Joshua did not lead Israel into the true rest, because a rest still remains. (Note that the name "Jesus" in Heb: [4:8](#), KJV, ought to be "Joshua." "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua.")

The Canaan rest for Israel is a picture of the spiritual rest we find in Christ when we surrender to Him. When we come to Christ by faith, we find *salvation* rest ([Matt. 11:28](#)). When we yield and learn of Him and obey Him by faith, we enjoy *submission* rest ([Matt. 11:29-30](#)). The first is "peace with God" ([Rom. 5:1](#)); the second is the "peace of God" ([Phil. 4:6-8](#)). It is by believing that we enter into rest ([Heb. 4:3](#)); it is by obeying God by faith and surrendering to His will that the rest enters into us.

- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Confident (Hebrews).

“Therefore”

- Start by stringing/connecting the “therefores” thus far...
 - 3:7-4:13... therefore... per 3:1-6
 - 3:1-6... therefore... per ch.1-2
 - 2:14-18... therefore... per 2:1-13
 - 2:1-13... therefore... per ch.1
 - 1:5-18... therefore... per 1:1-4

- 1:1-4 = God speaks... therefore Hebrews!
- Reveal & explain the chiastic arch of Hebrews 3:1-6
 - Show its Messianic message
 - Connect its Messianic message:
 - Echoes Hebrews 2:1-4
 - Engages Hebrews 3:7-4:13

“...while the promise”

- NOTE: *“promise”* – THE gospel is a promise/guarantee
- What is THE *“promise”* being referenced here?
 - Micro promise =
 - Macro promise =
 - Missional promise =

“of entering his rest still stands”

- Define *“entering”*
- Define *“His”*
- Define *“rest”*
- NOTE: *“entering His rest”*
 - BEing built into His building/”oikos”
 - Receiving the Spirit of God/”fruit of the Spirit”

- Surrendering to victory in Christ!
- NOTE: *“still stands”*
 - *“still”* = continuation....
 - Genesis 1:27-28 reveals the start...
 - Genesis 3:1-14 reveals Satan, sin, & stain...
 - Genesis 3:15 reveals the solution...
 - *“stands”*
 - No one & nothing can stop our sovereign God!
 - **John 3:36** stands!

“let us fear”

- *“let us”* -- this exhortation implies a degree of choice
- NOTE: biblical application of “Divine Sovereignty vs. Human Free-will” is essential to understand this passage (and ALL of the Bible)
 - GRACE leads to & empowers ALL that is “good”
 - “WILL” follows & receives GRACE to engage ALL that is good.
- *“fear”*
 - Biblical definition is critical!
 - Biblical *“fear”* is an essential component of biblical faith! – JDP
 - The fear of God is the BEGINNING of wisdom.

- Fear of God is the foundation of reverence for God. – JDP
- I want to bring out & engage the “ear” in “fear.” – JDP
- What would happen if we were like Christ... if we were unashamedly Spirit-led and unwavering in the face of our fears? What if... like Jesus, we were faithful where & when the world is fearful. What if we marched into our fears the way Shadrach, Mieshach, & Abedigo marched into their fiery furnace? What if your oikos and everyone within your sphere of influence saw the courage of Christ in YOU? What if your oikos and everyone within your sphere of influence was impacted by your courageously-Christ-like Church family, whose faith fully swallowed up their fears? What do you think would happen if your community... your city... your county... your country... and all the continents on this planet... what if they were all forced to encounter an overwhelming force AND family of FEARLESS & faithful, biblically-committed, Christ-like, cross-carrying disciples of Jesus who were engaging, explaining, & exemplifying THE Gospel’s miracles,

Messiah, & mission, all while living-out their love, Light & lessons... locally, regionally, & globally... ALL for God's glory & ALL by His grace? - JDP

- ANSWER: First, God would be glorified. Next, Truth, love, and transformation would flow freely AND faith would begin to fuel heart-fires... From there, a miraculous & momentous, missional-movement founded on a healthy fear of God would start to overcome all the unhealthy fears around the globe. - JDP
- Healthy fear eliminates unhealthy fear! - JDP
 - Indwelt Christians are infused with the Holy Spirit's inspiring courage! - JDP
 - There will be no cowards in heaven... Rev. 21
 - See throughout Scriptures (Hebrews 11)
 - Noah the desert boat-builder...
 - Abraham who left all that he knew
 - Moses against Pharaoh
 - David against Goliath
 - Esther against protocol

- Daniel against sinful laws
- 3-boys against a fiery furnace
- Elijah against the prophets of false gods
- Elisha & his servant against the world's forces
- Peter & John against the threat of persecution
- The Apostle Paul amidst all kinds of persecution
- Jesus the Christ... consuming a cross & a cup!
 - For the joy set before Him...

➤ *"Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (verse 1). The opening words of this chapter bid us seriously take to heart the solemn warning given at the close of verse 3. God's judgment upon the wicked should make us more watchful that we do not follow their steps. The "us" shows that Paul was preaching to himself as well as to the Hebrews. "Let us therefore fear" has stumbled some, because of the "Fear thou not" of Isaiah 41:10, 43:1, 5, etc. In John 14:27, Christ says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And in 2 Timothy 1:7, we read, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." On the other hand, believers are told to "Fear God" (1 Pet. 2:17), and to work out*

their own salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). How are these two different sets of passages to be harmonized?

- *The Bible is full of paradoxes, which to the natural man, appear to be contradictions. The Word needs "rightly dividing" on the subject of "fear" as upon everything else of which it treats. There is a fear which the Christian is to cultivate, and there is a fear from which he should shrink. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and in Proverbs 14:26, 27 we read, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.... The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life"; so again, "Happy is the man that feareth always" (Prov. 28:14). The testimony of the New Testament inculcates the same duty: Christ bade His disciples, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Matt. 10:28). To the saints at Rome Paul said, "Be not high-minded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20). To God's people Peter wrote, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Pet. 1:17). While in Heaven itself the word will yet be given: "Praise our God all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him both small and great" (Rev. 19:5).*
- *Fear may be called one of the disliking affections. It is good or evil according to the object on which it is placed, and according to the ordering of it thereon. In Hebrews 4:1 it is placed on the right object—an evil to be shunned. That evil is unbelief, which, if persisted in, ends in apostasy and destruction. About this the Christian needs to*

be constantly on his guard, having his heart set steadily against it. Our natural proneness to fall, the many temptations to which we are subject, together with the deceitfulness of sin, the subtlety of Satan, and God's justice in leaving men to themselves, are strong enforcements of this duty. Concerning God Himself, we are to fear Him with such a reverent awe of His holy majesty as will make us careful to please Him in all things, and fearful of offending Him. This is ever accompanied by a fearsome distrust of ourselves.



An Exposition of Hebrews.

T/S:

- A lack of fear was a cause of failure!
- A lack of faith was/is a cause of failure cf. v.2)

Key Q's:

- What have you heard, believed & applied so far

VIDEO: Survey of Hebrews!

- Have you hardened your heart

- What are you afraid of

Let's unpack a faithful understanding of fear!

~ Let's lay some faithful groundwork first

* Scripture's Creator controls "meaning"

* Scripture's Context informs meaning

Proverbs:

A. Speak to a fool

B. Don't speak to a fool...

On the topic of "fear"

A. "Fear not" = #1 repeated...

B. "let us fear" = often repeated

~~ Repeat reading of text here

~~ Read many other such texts

~~ SEE the elephant in room...

1. Believe Bible, distrust self

2. Believe self, distrust Bible

3. Whose word wins in you?

* Scripture's Continuity protects meaning

* Scripture's Clarity simplifies meaning

* Scripture's Comprehensiveness affirms..

* Scripture's Consistency defends mean...

* Scripture's Commission applies meaning

See 2 Timothy 3:16-17

See Psalm 119:105

See John 8:32&36

- What do you know of/about God's promise(s)?
- What are the conditions of God's conditional promises?
- How do you enter into God's promises?
- IF at all, who and/or what are you resting in?
- Are there different contexts/meanings for Scripture's rest?
- What if you and/or others are not really in God's rest?

"failed to reach it" reveals TENSION!

* Implies effort/work

* Consistent with Genesis 1:28 (bless/obey)

~ Workout your Salvation with fear...

~ You cannot be My Disciple unless...

~ You will know My disciples by their fruit

~ Faith without works is dead

~ Many on that day will say to Me, Lord!...

~ Why do you call Me Lord but do not do...

~ Many claim to be His but deny Him in life

~ Parables:

Talents

Soils

House built on the sand

Test yourself

Beware false teachers

I wanted to write...BUT...Contend for the faith

- What, if anything, supports/validates your A's

Key Contextual Verses:

- NOTE: Hebrews 4:1ff = Commentary and deeper explanation of 3:12-14, 15-18, & 19

3:1-6 = Introduction & "Illumination"

3:7-11 = Illustration

3:12-19 = Inspection

* Take personal Initiative

~ v.12a

* Take honest/Spiritual Inventory

~ vv.12-13

* Take biblical Instruction

~ v.14

* Take "IF" seriously

~ vv.15-18

*** Take Inconsistencies eternally (v.19) ***

~ v.19 sets up 4:1-13

- NOTE: Specific parts of Exodus unpack the text

Exodus 6:6-8

Exodus 19:5-6

Exodus 23:20-22

Exodus 24:6-8 (paves the way for Leviticus)

- NOTE: expressions of disobedience = no enter!

Numbers 14:22-23

Joshua 5:6

Judges 2:1-3

- NOTE: Specific parts of Leviticus unpack text...

BE holy for I, the LORD your God am holy!

- NOTE: God fulfills His promise(s)

Joshua 21:43

Joshua 23:14

~ God's commands are His promises. - JDP

~ Faithful obedience NEVER fails! - JDP

Key Carry-overs from Hold On 15

You can be physically present & spiritually absent! - JDP

The Israelite's faith was as fickle & fleeting as Pharaoh's fear!
- JDP

40 years = purge/purity vs patience

Sabbath rest = Savior vs Saturday or Sunday!

*** Engage & Explain The Gospel's "generations"

OT

- Gen. 12:1-3 & Gal.3:8 = Abe
- * Gospel Type = offering of Isaac

God did not need to find out if Abe
loved Isaac more.... Abe needed
to learn... (God is sovereign!)

- Heb. 3:15-18 = Num 13-15 & 21 (Moses)
- * Gospel Type = 2

Believe & Receive (Numbers 14)
Look & Live (Numbers 21)

During Christ's life/ministry

- Luke 1:27-33 (Mary) = Gospel of His BIRTH
- John 1 (John) = MESSIAH announced
- Matt 4:23 (Jesus) = Gospel of the Kingdom

Traditional cross/resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4)
Tribulation (post rapture) period (Rev 14:6-7)

- "Everlasting Gospel"
- An ANGEL preaches this Gospel

Gospel = good news of the God of the Garden...

Faithful obedience brings blessing!
See with Adam, Abe, Noah, etc.
See Jesus' faithful obedience brings blessing
Ditto now for us

It not JUST about WHO Jesus is... the Gospel also consists of WHAT He has done.

CLOSE: 1 Peter 4:17

What does the Bible say about fear?

Question: "What does the Bible say about fear?"

Answer: The Bible mentions two specific types of fear. The first type is beneficial and is to be encouraged. The second type is a detriment and is to be overcome. The first type of fear is fear of the Lord. This type of fear does not necessarily mean to be afraid of something. Rather, it is a reverential awe of God; a reverence for His power and glory. However, it is also a proper respect for His wrath and anger. In other words, the fear of the Lord is a total acknowledgement of all that God is, which comes through knowing Him and His attributes.

Fear of the Lord brings with it many blessings and benefits. It is the beginning of wisdom and leads to good understanding ([Psalm 111:10](#)). Only fools despise wisdom and discipline ([Proverbs 1:7](#)). Furthermore, fear of the Lord leads to life, rest, peace, and contentment ([Proverbs 19:23](#)). It is the fountain and life ([Proverbs 14:27](#)) and provides a security and a place of safety for us ([Proverbs 14:26](#)).

Thus, one can see how fearing God should be encouraged. However, the second type of fear mentioned in the Bible is not beneficial at all. This is the "spirit of fear" mentioned in [2 Timothy 1:7](#): "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (NKJV). A spirit of fearfulness and timidity does not come from God.

However, sometimes we are afraid, sometimes this "spirit of fear" overcomes us, and to overcome it we need to trust in and love God completely. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" ([1 John 4:18](#)). No one is perfect, and God

knows this. That is why He has liberally sprinkled encouragement against fear throughout the Bible. Beginning in the book of Genesis and continuing throughout the book of Revelation, God reminds us to “Fear not.”

For example, [Isaiah 41:10](#) encourages us, “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Often we fear the future and what will become of us. But Jesus reminds us that God cares for the birds of the air, so how much more will He provide for His children? “So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” ([Matthew 10:31](#)). Just these few verses cover many different types of fear. God tells us not to be afraid of being alone, of being too weak, of not being heard, and of lacking physical necessities. These admonishments continue throughout the Bible, covering the many different aspects of the “spirit of fear.”

In [Psalm 56:11](#) the psalmist writes, “In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” This is an awesome testimony to the power of trusting in God. Regardless of what happens, the psalmist will trust in God because he knows and understands the power of God. The key to overcoming fear, then, is total and complete trust in God. Trusting God is a refusal to give in to fear. It is a turning to God even in the darkest times and trusting Him to make things right. This trust comes from knowing God and knowing that He is good. As Job said when he was experiencing some of the most difficult trials recorded in the Bible, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” ([Job 13:15 NKJV](#)).

Once we have learned to put our trust in God, we will no longer be afraid of the things that come against us. We will be like the psalmist who said with confidence “...let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you” ([Psalm 5:11](#)).

Recommended Resource: [What Are You Afraid Of?: Facing Down Your Fears with Faith by David Jeremiah](#)

SEPTEMBER 19, 1973

Does Fear Belong in the Christian's Life?

Article by

John Piper

Founder & Teacher, desiringGod.org

It is often said that fear of God has no place in the Christian's life for, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears (for himself) is not perfected in love" ([1 John 4:18](#)).

But there are many commandments to fear in the New Testament; for example, [Romans 11:20](#), "They [the Jews] were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through *faith*. So do not become proud but *fear*." Similarly, [Hebrews 3:12](#) warns against unbelief (although the word "fear" is not used): "*Take heed*, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil *unbelieving* heart leading you to fall away from the living God." (Other texts admonishing fear: 1 Peter 1:17; 2:17; [Philippians 2:12-13](#); [Luke 12:5](#); [Isaiah 66:2](#); [Acts 9:31](#); 2 Corinthians 5:11; 7:1; etc.)

Fitting the Pieces Together

But we shouldn't get the idea that the writers of the New Testament are taking sides here, some in favor of fear (Paul, Hebrews) and some against (John). For even though [Romans 11:20](#) admonishes fear, [Romans 8:15](#) says, "For you did *not* receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into *fear*, but you have received the spirit of sonship."

And even though [Hebrews 3:12](#) admonishes fear of an unbelieving heart (which is the same as saying the fear of God who requites unbelief with punishment), [Hebrews 4:16](#) says, “Let us *with confidence* draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Therefore, the problem is not so much a disagreement between the authors of the New Testament books, but rather the problem is how the same author can say on the one hand, “Fear!” and on the other hand, “Have no fear! Be confident.” The solution will, I think, be found in the suggestion that a sober fear of God will motivate us to trust his mercy shown in Christ and this “trembling trust” will then gradually remove the fear that drove us to it as we see more clearly what our Lord has done for us.

How Only Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

I was reading Lewis’ *Anthology* of George MacDonald and found some helpful comments. He points out that absolutely nothing less than perfect love (both from God toward man and man toward God) should cast out fear. We are prone to want to be rid of fear at any cost, by any means. John says there is and should be only one means—perfect love for God should cast out fear.

We think we will be better Christians when we stop fearing—that may be quite false. We will be better Christians when we love God the more for his perfect love. The perfecting of love necessarily drives out fear, but the driving out of fear does not necessarily mean that love is being perfected. One may wish to be rid of fear in the same way he wants to be rid of a bad conscience and he may use all the same deceptive means to shed this discomfort (e.g., alcohol, drugs, or more commonly, the elimination of all the commands in the Bible to fear God and to love him with your whole heart. See [Deuteronomy 10:12](#)).

MacDonald writes (page 67),

Persuade men that fear is a vile thing, that it is an insult to God, that he will none of it—while they are yet in love with their own will and slaves to every movement of passionate impulse and what will the consequence be? That they will insult God as a discarded idol, a superstition, a thing to be cast out and spit upon. After that how much will they learn of him?

Love Superior to Fear

Fear is an imperfect bond to God, but it is a bond which should be replaced only by an infinitely closer bond—the bond of love (page 67). Nothing else should cast out fear.

Should fear, then, play a role up to a certain point and never again in the Christian life? The point after which fear will have no proper place in the Christian's life is the point at which his love is perfected. But none of us is yet perfected in love; none of us is without moments in which his delight in God fades and the "things which are seen" become deceptively attractive.

In these moments we are in need of a warning from Paul ([Romans 11:20](#)) or from Hebrews (3:12) or from Jesus ([Luke 12:5](#)). In these moments we ought not to be completely free from fear, because we are not completely controlled by love for God; that is, we are not living completely by faith. But the fear that we are to feel as Christians is itself a work of grace. It is a fear which casts us back into love for God and trust in his mercy, and thus destroys itself. Fear is the proper servant of love for imperfect saints.

The second line of "Amazing Grace" is not merely a once-for-all experience:

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.

Jonathan Edwards on Love and Fear

On January 7, 1974, I found the following quote in Jonathan Edwards' *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* (London, 1796), p. 102ff. I think it states just what I am trying to say.

So hath God contrived and constituted things in his dispensations toward his own people that when their love decays and the exercises of it fail or become weak, fear should arise; for then they need it to restrain them from sin and to excite them to care for the good of their souls and so to save them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion: but God hath so ordered that when love rises and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should vanish and be driven away for then they need it not, having a higher and more excellent principle in exercise to restrain them from sin and stir them up from their duty.

There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of that will ever make men conscientious but one of these two, fear or love: and therefore if one of these should not prevail as the other decayed, God's people when fallen into dead and carnal frames, when love is asleep would be lamentably exposed indeed. And therefore God has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises the other sinks...

Fear is cast out by the Spirit of God, no other way than by the prevailing of love:

nor is it ever maintained by his Spirit but when love is asleep...

[John Piper \(@JohnPiper\)](#) is founder and teacher of [desiringGod.org](#) and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of [more than 50 books](#), including [Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist](#), and most recently [Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship](#).