

HEBREWS 4

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hebrews chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

This is a very powerful letter that was written to Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem, and the reason Paul wrote this letter to them was to get them refocused on a salvation of grace and not of works.

You see, they were struggling with their faith, being drawn back into Judaism because of persecution or just the lure of seeing the Temple and the sacrifices on a daily basis. Thus, Paul is trying to show them that Jesus is a better way, don't go back to that which can't help.

And I guess a good way to sum up this letter is like this – ***JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING!***

And yes, specifically Paul is speaking of Jewish practices, Jewish religious beliefs, the heavy hitters of the Jewish faith like Moses. Jesus is superior to all.

And Paul starts out this letter by showing us that Jesus is superior to the prophets in Hebrews chapter 1. God the Father has appointed Jesus as heir of all things, He created all things, the prophets did not. And Jesus is speaking to us in these last days through His Word. Thus, Jesus is superior to the prophets!

From there, continuing on in Hebrews chapter 1 and on into Hebrews chapter 2, he shows us that Jesus is superior to the angels and he shows us that the angels are ministering spirits for God. We saw that angels worship Jesus. We saw that Jesus is God, the Father calls the Son, God! We saw that Jesus created everything. In other words, Jesus is superior to angels!

Then in Hebrews chapter 3 Paul shows us that Jesus is better than Moses, the deliverer, the Lawgiver because Jesus created him.

You see, Moses was part of the house of Israel and Jesus created the house of Israel. We saw this back in Hebrews 3:1-6, **“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”**

And Paul goes on to show them that because of unbelief in the promises of God, they could not enter into His rest, they could not enter into the Promise Land but wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

Even Moses, their prophet could not enter in, only Joshua and Caleb from that generation entered in, everyone else from 20 years old and up at the time of the rebellion, died in the wilderness, they did not enter into that rest that God had for them in the Promise Land.

Over 600,000 people and maybe upwards of some 1.5 million people could have died in those forty years of wandering. They were on the longest death march in history and once that generation died out, they entered the land under the leadership of Joshua.

Now, as we move into Hebrews chapter 4 this evening, Paul is going to show us the superiority of Jesus over Joshua or that Jesus is better than Joshua.

Why is that?

As we will see, even though Joshua brought them into the land, there was still a future rest that he could not give them, a rest that is only found in Jesus.

And, as we will see, Hebrews chapter 4 opens up linking us back to what Paul was saying in Hebrews chapter 3.

So let's just pick up this evening in Hebrews 3:16 and see what Paul had to say as he finished up that chapter. He wrote, "**For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.**" Hebrews 3:16-19.

With that said, let's begin reading in Hebrews chapter 4, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

HEBREWS 4

VERSES 1-2

Paul opens up with the word "**Therefore**" and as we have seen many times before, when we come to this word we need to look back and see what it is there for!

And here in Hebrews, as we look back to chapter 3 of Hebrews, we see the failure of Israel to enter into the Promise Land, the Canaan rest that God had promised them because of unbelief.

You see, their rest was the inheritance that God had promised them, and it relates to a walk of faith, of walking in the Spirit and not by sight.

Why did they refuse to enter the land that God had given to them?

Because, when they went in to spy out the land, ten of the twelve spies came back and said that there were giants in the land, the cities were strong, the people were strong, and they had discouraged 2 to 3 million people to not enter the land that God had given to them! In other words, they refused to walk by faith! This was a promise of God and they refused to believe the promise but they trusted in what they saw, and it was overwhelming to them, and it froze them, and they did not enter that rest.

And please understand that this was not something new to the children of Israel. This was not just sprung upon them to enter the land of Canaan.

We are told in Deuteronomy 12:9-11 of this inheritance that God had for them, **“for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD.”**

And, as I have said, to go into the land of Canaan they needed to walk by faith and not by sight, but they refused and hardened their hearts to what God had promised them. They limited God because of unbelief.

In Psalm 78:40-42 we are told of this, **“How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy.”**

They knew the promises of God, they knew the power of God, but they did not mix the promises of God with faith and they died in the wilderness!

I wonder how often we do that?

God promises us something, but we must walk by faith. And we let fear stop us dead in our tracks and we don't enter what God has for us.

Now some struggle here and they believe that you can lose your salvation because of what Paul is saying. I don't believe you can lose something that you never earned in the first place. You received it by faith, it is a grace gift, not grace and a certain amount of works, who knows how much.

There are many verses in the Bible that I can share with you that are very clear on our salvation being secure in Christ and not because we have held on to the end. But I will share this one with you. In I Peter 1:3-5 we are told, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Now we can spend the rest of the evening looking at these verses, but I want to focus on just a couple of points here. First of all, He has begotten us, it was not by our efforts. And this salvation is not going to fade away, it is reserved for us in heaven. And the key point, we are **“kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Did you see that?

Whose power is going to bring us to heaven?

Not our power!

It is the power of God that can and will do that. You see, grace saves us, it is by the grace of God we continue on in the faith or it sustains us, and one day it is the grace of God that will take us to glory – the power of God!

Let me share these words from David M. Levy, a Jewish believer, in his commentary on Hebrews. And again, if there is something in the Scripture that seems to contradict what other parts are saying, look further for the answer.

Again, I do realize that there are many who do believe that you can lose your salvation, but I don't think you can. I think the Scriptures are very clear and I think for those few Scriptures that seem to speak contrary; I think there is an answer for that. Listen to what David M. Levy wrote,

The author warned Jewish believers in Jesus who were suffering severe persecution not to succumb to the same fate as their forefathers: “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it” (v. 1).

Some considered returning to Judaism to escape persecution. But by doing so, they would fall “short” of the life of faith and rest that God had designed for them.

What does the author mean by *rest*? Some teach it speaks of the personal salvation that results in eternal life. This is doubtful because those redeemed out of Egypt and those addressed in Hebrews were believers, not unbelievers. No true believer can lose his or her salvation. Scripture clearly teaches that the lives of believers are hidden with Christ in God and that Christ will not lose one soul the Father has given Him (Jn. 6:37, 39; Col. 3:3).

Others teach that *rest* refers to the Millennial Kingdom rest at Christ's Second Coming. Although both millennial and eternal rest will be granted to all believers, neither one was the rest promised to the Israelites when they took possession of the Promised Land under Joshua. Theirs involved security, protection, the guarantee of God's presence, and rest from war (Dt. 12:9-11). The rest promised in Hebrews is appropriated by faith in Christ and produces peace, harmony, and joyful fellowship with Him even amid opposition and conflict in the world.

- David M. Levy, Hebrews a Commentary, p.p. 41-42

I hope that makes sense to you because there are many Christians who feel that they are saved one minute and then the next minute they are not and they are in turmoil, never knowing if they have made it or not.

And the reality is, we can't make it by what we have done. But the work that Christ has done for us is finished and we can rest in that!

Now let me speak a little about these promises of God. I think for us as Christians, we know the promises of God. We probably can quote a good number of them. We have probably shared them with others who needed to hear them.

You know what some of them are. Promises like, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”** Romans 8:28.

And **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Philippians 4:19.

And the list goes on with the many promises of God the Bible has for us.

But folks, all these promises will do you no good unless they are mixed with faith, unless you truly believe that God is able to bring to pass what He has promised.

It is like Paul said in Ephesians 3:20-21, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

They heard the promise and refused to believe, and we have the same choice, may we believe and walk by faith!

One more point before we move on and that is looking at what some of these **“rests”** are that the Bible speaks of.

SABBATH REST – God rested on the seventh day of creation completing the work. (Genesis 2:2). It wasn't that God was tired but that the work was completed. Then sin entered the world and God has been working to rectify that problem as we are told in John 5:16-17, **“For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’”** For us, it is taking that time and spending it with the Lord.

CANAAN REST – This is a picture of walking in the Spirit, trusting in God. This was promised to the children of Israel but because of unbelief many did not enter into this rest. Their failure was not in their shortcomings, their lack of strength, their lack of resources, that didn't keep them out of the land. Not at all! It was their failure to mix God's promises to them with faith and walk accordingly! It is as Paul said in Hebrews 3:16-19, **“For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”**

REST OF CONSCIENCE – This speaks of knowing that our sins have been paid in full by Jesus and we can be at peace with God through Jesus Christ. There is no guilt, no worry, no anxiety if we are saved or not, because it is finished, the work is completed in Christ. Paul tells us this in Romans 8:1, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”** It is as Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** Our rest is in His finished work and it takes all our fears and anxieties away!

ETERNAL REST – This is the final rest as we spend eternity with our Lord and Savior. This is the rest we look forward to but don't lose sight of the rest that God has for us here and now, may we enjoy it!

VERSES 3-5

Paul starts out by speaking of believers here in Hebrews 4:3 as he said, **“For we who have believed do enter that rest . . .”**

Now let me ask you this question. What is the prerequisite to rest?

Faith is the prerequisite to God’s rest; it is what opens the door.

Notice what is said of the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 2:13, **“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”**

They mixed the Word of God, the promises of God with faith, they believed, and it was then manifested in their lives, their walk!

Listen to what Paul says of these believers in Thessalonica, **“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”** I Thessalonians 1:9-10.

Now, after he speaks of those Jews who have believed and have entered that rest, he speaks of those who have not entered that rest that God has for them. They came up short, they did not enter the Promise Land you might say, or as Paul put it, **“. . . ‘So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest.’”** Hebrews 4:3.

And as Paul quotes out of Psalm 95:11 here he is using Israel as an example of those who started out well by following Moses out of Egypt but refused to believe God’s promise to them, they did not enter the land of Canaan, the Promise Land!

And Paul is using Canaan and the seventh day rest, the Sabbath, to represent the rest that is found in Jesus! And it is this work that is finished from the foundation of the world, the work that Jesus completed on Calvary, paying in full the penalty for our sins and thus, we can enter into His rest!

And, as I have said, the Sabbath day rest was a foreshadowing or a picture of the true rest that was to come in Christ.

Paul, in Colossians 2:16-17 said, **“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”**

What is the substance to all these pictures?

The substance is Christ!

Look at the picture. God rested on the seventh day of creation and Jesus rested as He sat down at the right hand of the Father paying in full the penalty for our sins.

Thus, our rest is in Him and His finished work. We don't have to work or labor for our salvation because the work has been completed!

And make no mistake about it, this rest is still open for people if they would walk by faith, if they would receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

But will it remain open forever?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 6-8

Think about this point that Paul is making here. He again is quoting out of Psalm 95:7-8. Thus, some 500 years after they entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, David said, **“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”**

The only conclusion that you can come to is this. That Joshua, by entering the land of Canaan, did not completely fulfill the promise of rest that God is speaking of. Otherwise, some 500 years later, when David says **“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts”** would make no sense. If it was fulfilled in Joshua, what is David saying?

I think it is clear for Paul, just in case we missed it, says in Hebrews 4:8, **“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.”**

And this is speaking of our rest in Jesus and we will see that more as we read on.

But here’s the thing. Today is the day, don’t pass it up, give your life to Jesus because there are no guarantees on how long you will live!

Paul said in II Corinthians 6:2, **“... Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”**

The opportunity for the rest that God has for us is open for all to receive today, but it won’t be open indefinitely!

The age of grace will come to an end and the reality is, the age of grace comes to an end for every person who dies outside of Christ, their chance is over, thus, enter in **TODAY!**

VERSES 9-10

First of all, the rest in Canaan is a picture of the rest we now have in Christ, of walking in the Spirit, the Spirit filled life.

Thus, Jesus is superior to Joshua in that the rest in Canaan was only a picture of the true rest that was to come, and that rest is only found in Jesus.

Now, here in Hebrews 4:10 there is a few ways to look at this and I think we need to understand what is being said.

The reason being is that some take this the wrong way when Paul speaks of ceasing from works. They think that we don't have to do anything anymore. We can sit back and relax. That if we have to work, if we are sweating, then it is not of God. Everything is a piece of cake!

That is not what Paul is speaking of.

First of all, we need to understand that the Law, under Moses was tedious, it was exhausting, it never ended, and it could never save us anyway. All the Law could do is condemn us or show us how far short we have come from being saved, being righteous before God.

And we have covered this back in Hebrews chapter 3 where Jesus is greater than Moses. And the reason is simple. The Law was given to show us that we are sinners and we can never keep the Law perfectly, which God requires.

Now don't lose hope because the Law pointed us to the Savior as we see our sin and our need for a Savior. In other words, not the Law but it was grace that would bring us home!

And that is the point that Paul is making here. We don't have to work for our salvation, there is no longer a need to work. And the reality is, you can't work your way into righteousness. You are either righteous or you are not and thus, we are not, and we need Jesus!

You see, He finished the work. It is not that He started it and we have to finish it, as some think. He started it and He finished the work of our salvation!

Morris put it like this, *“There is a sense in which to enter Christian salvation means to cease from one’s works and rest securely on what Christ has done.”*

And if you think about it, this ceasing from works for our salvation, for our righteousness, fulfills our *“Sabbath rest.”*

God rested from His works on the original Sabbath of Genesis 2:2 because the work was finished. And we cease from self-justifying works because Jesus finished the work on the cross of Calvary!

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:18-21, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”**

The work of our salvation was completed at the cross of Calvary by Jesus as He tells us in John 17:4, **“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”**

So there is no longer any place for works as the basis of our own righteousness but as Paul said, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** II Corinthians 5:21.

So no, we are not to labor for our salvation in that respect because Christ has completed the work, it has been paid in full!

But make no mistake about it, as bondslaves of Jesus Christ we do labor in the work, not for salvation but as evidence of our faith in Him, our love for Jesus!

The Scriptures show us over and over again that we are to labor in the work, even to the point of exhaustion, some even to death because of the work.

Years ago there were some in the church that would criticize me in this area, usually those that are not laboring, but they think I work too much. Here's the thing, if there is work that needs to be done, I do it.

I look at Paul who was a man on a mission and I don't hear people criticize his work ethics. I don't even come close to what Paul did, but the love of Christ does compel me to go forward.

And if the work that I am doing is not out of love, the love for God and the love for people, then I should not be doing the work. I am not saying I don't get tired in the work; I do. But I do not get tired of the work, I am honored to serve the Lord and you!

Listen to Paul's ministry, the things he suffered, how he labored for the cause of Christ, not out of compulsion but out of love.

In II Corinthians 11:23-33 we are told, **“Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.”**

Also, in II Corinthians 6:4-10 we are told, **“But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”**

Notice what Paul says of a dear saint, Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25-30, **“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.”**

He almost lost his life as he served the Lord!

You can read over and over again of how the saints of God labored for the cause of Christ, to the point of exhaustion.

I think today many Christians are weak in this area, they don't have the time or the energy, and I believe that is wrong.

And it is not only the time and energy, but they have lost that love for God and that love to serve people.

We need to understand that we are only allotted a certain amount of time on this earth, may we not waste it but use it for the glory of God.

Yes, in heaven there is rest as Revelation 14:13 tells us, **“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’**
‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

It is not that we won't work in heaven but there will not be fatigue, weariness, getting tired and-so-on for we will serve the Lord and worship Him forever!

But in this life as we serve Him, we do labor in the work!

I hope that point is clear.

We cease from work in regard to our salvation because the work was completed by Jesus! But we still serve Him, work hard, and one day, we will be taken to glory, not because of our good works, but because of His grace!

VERSE 11

Now as some read this, they think Paul is saying that if we don't hang in there, we can lose our faith. That is not what Paul is saying, not at all, for it would contradict many other Scriptures.

So what is Paul's point?

First of all, the example that Paul is speaking of is the example of the children of Israel. They were delivered from their bondage in Egypt, they enjoyed supernatural protection and provisions from God, they were guided by God in the wilderness.

And as well as they started, they did not finish well.

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 10:5 about the children of Israel, “**But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.**”

Think about it. Of the 2 to 3 million people who came out of Egypt, maybe some 600,000 to 1.5 million who were twenty years old and above, because of unbelief, died in the wilderness, they did not enter the Promise Land! (Numbers 14:29)

Only Joshua and Caleb from that group made it into the Promise Land because they walked by faith!

And what Paul is doing here is showing them what happened to the children of Israel so that they may learn the lesson and not go down that same path of unbelief.

And this is not a salvation issue here. This is one of living in the spiritual wilderness and not entering that life of the Spirit, the Promise Land, the land of Canaan.

You see, it is possible to be a Christian and live a carnal unproductive life for Him, just living in the wilderness. Out of Egypt, out of the world, but not living that Spirit-filled life!

Make no mistake about it, the wilderness represents carnality, complaining, unbelief and a state of arrested spiritual development.

And because they are carnally minded, they constantly complain about what God hasn't given to them instead of thanking Him and being grateful for what He has provided.

There are many Christians who lust after the things of this world even as Israel lusted after the things of Egypt, even after God delivered them and had been so good to them.

It is as we are told in Psalm 106:13-15, **“They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul.”**

Again, this is not a salvation issue here. Remember what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12-13, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

Philippians 2:12 is very troubling to some. They read this and they think, *“See, Jesus saves us but then you must work to keep, to maintain your salvation and if you don’t, you will lose it!”*

What is wrong with that statement?

It is not Scriptural!

We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through works!

Here is the key. Paul tells us that we are to **“work out”** not ***“work to get in”*** our salvation.

His point is simple, since God has worked in you, now let that flow out into your actions, the things you are doing, bear fruit in your life showing you are abiding in Him!

You see God put it in you and now you must work it out in your daily life. You must humble yourself and surrender your life to God, be in obedience to what He has said, like Jesus demonstrated for us, and that is how it starts to look as it’s working its way out into your life.

Keep in mind that the verb **“work out”** carries the meaning of ***“work to full completion,”*** such as working out a problem in mathematics. In Paul’s day it was also used for ***“working a mine,”*** that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible.

In other words, Paul is telling us that we are to reach for our full potential in all that we do for God's glory and that is only going to be accomplished as we surrender our lives fully to His will and purposes!

May we walk in that Spirit-filled life, following the Lord and seeing all that He wants to do in us and through us for His glory! In other words, learn the lesson from the children of Israel, those who died in the wilderness!

VERSES 12-13

Keep in mind that Paul has been talking about rest and now he is talking about the Word of God, how does that even fit in or does it?

You bet it does.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, "**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**"

You see, the rest is found, first and foremost in Jesus. You have to come to saving faith, you have to repent of your sins and ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior! And that is done as the Word of God is spoken or read and the Spirit of God opens up the Word of God to your life and you see Jesus for the first time, the One who has paid in full the penalty for your sins!

But it does not stop there. Many Christians are not at peace, they are not resting because they are not in Jesus! And what I mean by that is they are not in God's Word and thus, they are not applying the Word of God to their lives because they don't know the Word of God.

Someone correctly said, *“The Word of God will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Word of God.”*

And tragically many believers don't spend enough time or any time in the Word of God.

Many pastors and teachers do not spend enough time in the Word of God, and they don't share it with the people that God has entrusted to them.

Think about it. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and if we don't read it, if it is not taught, we have taken away an important piece of our spiritual armor!

Like it or not, agree with me or not, the solution to our problems is the Word of God being taught because the Word of God is living, it is not dead, it is not boring.

Spurgeon put it like this, “A sword with two edges has no blunt side: it cuts both this way and that. The revelation of God given us in Holy Scripture is edge all over. It is alive in every part, and in every part keen to cut the conscience, and wound the heart. Depend upon it, there is not a superfluous [unnecessary] verse in the Bible, nor a chapter which is useless.”

God's Word is powerful, it is energizing, it will accomplish in our lives what God wants it to.

Make no mistake about it. The Word of God is like a surgical instrument, like a scalpel that can pierce or penetrate right through to the inner man, our soul and spirit.

As it does it pierces through to the joints or how we walk, it will have an impact on our actions.

Also, it goes right down to the marrow or the place that the red blood cells are produced, our very lives and thus it will be reflected in how we manifest things outwardly because what takes place on the inside will overflow to the outside.

Who can know what is in our heart?

Only God can as Jeremiah 17:9-10 tells us, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

Why are heart issues not dealt with today?

Because the Word of God is not being applied to people’s lives and we can put on a good show outwardly but inwardly, what God sees is a mess.

We need to give it to Him; we need to be in the Word of God allowing the Spirit of God to show us what is in our heart so we can get rid of it!

And conviction is a tough one for a lot of people. Most of the time, when conviction comes, they get mad or they run out of the door!

I can’t tell you over the past twenty-five years the number of people that have been offended by the teaching of the Word of God.

Well, I should correct that.

God has convicted them as the Word of God was taught and many left because instead of dealing with the truth, they want their ears tickled!

Sorry, I won’t do that.

We are living in a day when Biblical illiteracy is rampant, people truly don’t know what they believe, what the Scriptures teach on subjects, and that is tragic and dangerous! They also don’t agree with it, so they negate it so they can do as they please and that is also dangerous!

And notice what Paul says here in Hebrews 4:13, **“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.”**

Folks, you can't fool God. I have been fooled over the years by people and I am sure you have too, but God knows not only a person's heart, but the motives behind what he is doing, the motives of his heart.

Everything is open to Him to see and thus, allow God's Word to work in you to purge you of these things, to refine you in the Refiners fire so that as the Lord looks at your life He sees His reflection just as the refiner sees his reflection in the purified gold!

VERSE 14

Now Paul is setting up his readers for what he is going to be speaking about in Hebrews chapters 5-10, showing us the superiority of Jesus over the Levitical priesthood.

That Jesus is from a better priestly order, He has a better covenant, a better sanctuary, and He is a better sacrifice.

And this may not mean a lot to us, but to these Jewish believers, the Levitical priesthood was very important!

And notice what Paul does here to begin to show them that Jesus is superior over the Levitical priesthood.

He starts out by showing us that He is the better High Priest, He is the Great High Priest, something that was never spoken of regarding the High Priest.

And He does not enter the Holy of Holies once a year but has passed through the earthly tabernacle into heaven, into the presence of the Father and now in heaven He ministers before the Father on our behalf.

That is what the High Priest did, he brought the people before God, now Jesus does that for us.

The High Priest was the son of man but our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, is the Son of God!

Thus, Paul is saying to these Jewish believers, don't go back to the High Priest when we have the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ who stands before the Father for us!

And because of all that, Paul tells them and us to "**hold fast our confession.**"

Again, keep in mind he is writing to Jews and most Gentiles do not get this.

The Jews would understand the reference here and they would connect what Paul said to the Day of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement.

How does that work?

Keep in mind that in the Law of God, for the Day of Yom Kippur, there was to be a twenty-four-hour straight day of fasting and confession of sins.

Zola Levitt had this to say regarding what took place. He wrote, "***We might all balk at the terrible thought of twenty-four solid hours of confession, but then the Jews were confessing the sins of an entire year. We might even balk at the idea of merely staying awake for twenty-four hours, but if our salvation hung in the balance, we would try to make it. Such were the blessings and curses of God's own people.***"

But today, regarding the Day of Yom Kippur, the Jew would tell you that they would fast and give alms or money to the poor to atone for their sins.

That sounds great but that is not what God said. In Leviticus 17:11 we are told, "**For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.**"

And Paul will talk about this again in Hebrews 9:22, where he will tell us, “**And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin].**”

Now hear me out on this. What we read in Leviticus and in Hebrews is that without the shedding of blood there is no atonement, or literally – *no covering!* That is what Yom Kippur means, the “*day of covering.*”

And here is the problem for the Jews today. In 70 A. D. the Temple was destroyed and thus, there is no place for them to make atonement for their sin. In other words, the old sacrificial system is over and it has been replaced with a better sacrifice, the only sacrifice that is needed to take away our sins, the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world!

And so, the confession we hold fast to is the confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who has come and taken away the sins of the world, once and for all!

And because of that, to these Jews who were struggling with persecution for their faith in Jesus, to give up, he wants them to hold on tight to their confession of faith in the face of temptation!

VERSE 15

Keep in mind that to the ancient Greeks, the primary attribute of their gods was apatheia, the essential inability to feel anything at all. They just didn’t care!

Jesus isn’t like that. He knows and He feels what we go through.

The ancient Greek word translated sympathize literally means “*to suffer along with.*”

Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, yet He never gave in to those temptations, He remained sinless, but it allowed Him to understand what we go through when we are tempted and to have sympathy for us.

Remember, not only is Jesus fully God but in the incarnation He is fully man, thus, He knows our pain, our temptations as He was tempted as we are, but to a much higher degree as I have said.

You see, He never sinned and thus, He knows the depths of temptation, but again, without sin.

We are told in I John 3:5, “**And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.**”

Let me give you an example of what I mean with this true story:

Booth Tucker was conducting evangelistic meetings in the great Salvation Army Citadel in Chicago.

One night, after he had preached on the sympathy of Jesus, a man came forward and asked Mr. Tucker how he could talk about a loving, understanding, sympathetic God.

“If your wife had just died, like mine has,” the man said, “and your babies were crying for their mother who would never come back, you wouldn’t be saying what you are saying.”

A few days later Mr. Tucker’s wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the Citadel for the funeral.

After the service the bereaved preacher looked down into the silent face of his wife and then turned to those who were attending.

“The other day when I was here,” he said, “a man told me that, if my wife had just died and my children were crying for their mother, I would not be able to say that Christ was understanding and sympathetic, or that He was sufficient for every need. If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient. My heart is broken, it is crushed, but it has a song, and Christ put it there. I want to tell that man that Jesus Christ speaks comfort to me today.”

The man was there, and he came and knelt beside the casket while Booth Tucker introduced him to Jesus Christ.

Folks, we have a Great High Priest who is sympathetic with what we are going through because He has experienced it Himself and thus, He can bring comfort, aid, help to each of us no matter what we are going through!

Now you may be thinking, ***“I can’t come before Him. I am not good enough. I can’t find that kind of help!”***

Please read on here in Hebrews, verse 16 of Hebrews chapter 4, and let God speak to your heart about what we are able to do because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Listen to what Paul tells us!

VERSE 16

“Wait a minute. How can we do that” these Jews may be thinking. ***“There is no Temple, no blood sacrifice and no atoning for our sins!”***

We need to remember that both in the Old Testament and into the New Testament times the High Priest would approach God and only once a year, for a brief period of time, only to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the mercy seat for himself and for the people, and then he would come out.

In saying that, folks, do we need to go through a priest or pastor or some religious hierarchy to get to God?

No!

Do we need to go through Mary to get to God?

No!

Do we need to go through this saint or that saint to get to God?

No!

If we have considered Jesus, if He is our Lord and Savior, we can boldly come to His throne of Grace and find the help we need in our time of need!

Notice it is not the throne of the Law, why?

Because there is no grace in the Law, there is only the Law. If you are guilty you would have to pay for the debt of the Law which you broke.

I like the way that Morgan put it. He tells us,

I am never tired of pointing out that the Greek phrase translated "*in time of need*" is a colloquialism [idiom] of which "*in the nick of time*" is the exact equivalent.

"That we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the nick of time" - grace just when and where I need it.

You are attacked by temptation. At the moment of the assault, you look to Him, and the grace is there to help in the nick of time.

There is no postponement of your petition until the evening hour of prayer. But there in the city street with the flaming temptation in front of you, turn to Christ with a cry for help, and the grace will be there in the nick of time.

- G. Campbell Morgan

Here's the thing. The throne of grace is only available to a child of God. You see, all unbelievers will appear before His throne someday, but it won't be a throne of grace it will be the Great White Throne of judgment.

Let me also share with you these words from Warren Wiersbe. He wrote,

But there is another aspect to Christ's position: not only is He in heaven, but He is enthroned. His throne is "the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16).

The mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant was God's throne in Israel (Ex. 25:17–22), but it could never be called "a throne of grace." Grace does not veil itself from the people. Grace does not hide itself in a tent.

Furthermore, the common people were not permitted to enter the holy precincts of the tabernacle and the temple, and the priests got only as far as the veil. The high priest alone went beyond the veil, and only on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

But every believer in Christ is invited, and is even encouraged, to "come boldly unto the throne of grace"! What a great throne it is because our Great High Priest is ministering there.

Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, is enthroned in heaven. Something else makes Him great: He is ministering mercy and grace to those who come for help. Mercy means that God does not give us what we do deserve; grace means that He gives us what we do not deserve.

No Old Testament high priest could minister mercy and grace in quite the same way. When an Israelite was tempted, he could not easily run to the high priest for help; and he certainly could not enter the holy of holies for God's help.

But as believers in Jesus Christ, we can run to our High Priest at any time, in any circumstance, and find the help that we need.

- Warren Wiersbe

Amen to that!

As I close this evening please understand that Paul is not saying that ***“We may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”*** but it is better translated that ***“We will obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”***

What are you going through right now?

Bring it to His throne of mercy and grace because He will help you, He understands your pain, your temptations because He has experienced them and thus, He desires to bring you help, He wants to wrap His arms around you, all He asks you to do is to come to Him!

What a Great High Priest we have, what a Great God we have, what a Friend we have in Jesus!