

HEBREWS 4 Fear and Faith

Shirley Polykoff, died in June of 1998. I doubt that any of you know who she was. Most of you won't remember or have never heard what she was known for. But some of you still remember the line she came up with in advertising...

"Does she or doesn't she? Only her hairdresserknows for sure"

That was a tag line that put Lady Clairol on the map and unleashed women to choose the color of their hair. The ad campaign lasted 15 years and Clairol's sale increased 413% in the first six years.

Why do I tell you that?

Because too many in the church believe in the Lady Clairol Christian – it's ok to keep things hidden because "only God knows for sure."

All illustrations break down of course, so yes, there is a sense in which only God truly knows our hearts, BUT scripture is clear that there should be clear evidence of faith in our lives. Once such piece of evidence is perseverance in faithfulness, and that is what Hebrews is all about.

The author shows that there are two options for those who claim to know Christ:

-Press on toward maturity

-Drift slowly into dullness and apathy and destruction.

1Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 2For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 3For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

"AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,"

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; 5and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." 6Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

8For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. 11Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience

DON'T BURY THE LEAD:

All of chap 3 and 4 flow out of 3:1 – Consider Christ. The passages explain why to do so – He is superior to Moses and Joshua. They also explain the consequence of NOT doing so- an evil unbelieving heart and failure to enter the rest of God.

WHAT IS THE REST?

"REST" = a reposing down; putting to rest; metaphor for the heavenly rest of God or that of believers. 9 uses of "rest". The Greek word is quite flexible or versatile. As we'll see, one of them is different from the others.

A rest described as God's rest 4x v.4 quote from Gen 2 "His Rest" "my rest" v.10 "God's rest"

In verse 9 a new word is used. That is not just style, but substance. The wording draws us back to Genesis 2. What does this mean? God's rest on 7th day. Why? Not fatigue. But he looked and saw it was very good. He enjoys what he has made. **God was pleased with the work He'd done creating the Garden and putting Adam and Eve there to reproduce a godly heritage, reflect Him, and reign as his vice-regents over all He had made.** God was pleased and He rested on the open ended 7th day.

God rested on the 7th day, thus fixing a pattern for us. In Gen 2 – each day 1-6 has a refrain "there was evening and there was morning" the first day, second day, etc. Those words mark out the boundaries for each day. Then we come to day 7 and there is no such refrain for the 7th day, on which God rested.

There is nothing in nature that would establish the sequence of a week. There is a rhythm of a day – darkness and light; there is a rhythm of seasons that can be figured out. But there isn't a natural rhythm of a week. **God wove the "week" into the fabric of our lives, and he has included a day for us to experience a Sabbath rest. (Bob will address this more in early June)**

God's rest included that rest on the 7th day, but it is also more than that...

"Although Hebrews 4:3-4 refers to God's delightful rest after He had finished the six days of creating work in Genesis 1 and 2 – a work pronounced "very good" – this "rest of God" refers to something infinitely greater than that." Dr. Douglas Kelly

God entered an unending epoch of rest. He wasn't tired or retired – John 5:17. The father is always working. His creating work is over, but He is active and working, but He still rests. Today, God works in doing good things for his people through providence. He is "working all things together for good to those who love Him."

At the conclusion of creation there was no more to add. All was "very good". God took delight and satisfaction in knowing that all was very good. The idea would be for those made in His image to share and enter into that rest.

I believe that God wanted man and woman, male and female, as He created them, to do the work He gave them and find delight in that work. He told them to be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion. They were to be His vice-regents on the earth to reflect His glory, rule and raise a godly heritage. EX: "I feel His pleasure" – Chariots of Fire

Things went wrong quickly, and they lost fellowship with God, lost their trust with each other and got kicked out of the garden.

Ever since the Fall we've been trying to get back to the Garden. We've been trying to get back to that sense of rest and delight in who we are as image bearers and vice-regents of God. **BUT WE'RE GOING ABOUT IT IN ALL THE WRONG WAYS.**

"The restless heart of Israel is divinely chosen by God to represent with fullest accuracy the dissatisfied, seeking heart of all humanity. In the story of Israel, you and I, by grace, will find ourselves (as we really are, not as we may pretend to be)." Dr. Douglas Kelly

There are echoes of the garden in our souls so we yearn for it. But we pursue it in our own ways rather than through faith.

Those echoes are so strong that even secular artists, songwriters, filmmakers, etc tap into it.

A great example is the song WOODSTOCK, written by Joni Mitchell, sung by CSNY. You may not think you know the title, but I bet you know part of the chorus:

Lyrics (Woodstock)

Well, I came upon a child of God He was walking along the road
And I asked him, Tell me, where are you going This he told me
Said, I'm going down to Yasgur's Farm
Gonna join in a rock and roll band
Got to get back to the land and set my soul free

We are stardust, we are golden
We are billion year old carbon
And we got to get ourselves back to the _____garden

Well, then can I roam beside you? I have come to lose the smog,
And I feel myself a cog in somethin' turning
And maybe it's the time of year Yes and maybe it's the time of man
And I don't know who I am, But life is for learning

CHORUJS

By the time we got to Woodstock We were half a million strong
And everywhere was a song and a celebration
And I dreamed I saw the bomber death planes
Riding shotgun in the sky,
Turning into butterflies, Above our nation

Chorus

Songwriters: Joni Mitchell

I found the comment section to be quite interesting:

- ❖ We will live the words of this song.
- ❖ "Gotta get ourselves back to the Garden." Its music like this, this song specifically, why my Heart and Head both agree. The Garden is the place to be. Strive for the Garden's return.
- ❖ As long as men kill in the name of religion, we will never get back to the garden.
- ❖ We missed this generation, but the revolution of universal love is here again now. Diggin it. 2016
- ❖ We are stardust, we are golden, we aren't billion year carbon, and we'll never get back to the garden. But that don't mean we shouldn't try
- ❖ No. it won't ever be innocent like this again. We have left this place; that was the last generation of purely organic human consciousness.
- ❖ Thank You Lord for taking me back to where it started, Walkin in the cool of the day with You in the Garden. Stardust, even Joni Mitchell knew what she was talkin bout, "gotta get back to the Garden", she just didn't know the Route. His name is Jesus, He's the Truth and the Way, The Life that keeps on giving from His abundance of grace!

The wrong ways that we go about finding that rest in the garden are not so much our problems, as they are our wrong solutions, our insufficient solutions. All ideas have consequences; wrong ideas have victims. Our false solutions take many forms, and some are more destructive than others, but they are all rooted in our attempts to define life for ourselves, assume the place of God, live as if we

are autonomous, redefine our job description, and avoid the call to faithfulness to the God given call on our lives.

What is YOUR Garden or Land of milk and honey? It is different for all of us, but we all have one, and guess what? THAT IS NOT THE TRUE PRIZE. THAT IS NOT THE TRUE REST.

We work and dream and hope to get what we think is the Garden and it will not bring us what we truly want and need. Only God and the REST that He gives can do that, in trials and heartache.

Every culture has its version of the dream life – a sort of shalom or rest- and it is all too easy to get sucked into chasing that dream, that rest, rather than what God offers and promises. What God offers isn't fully tangible right now. We see it and pursue it by faith, for now.

BUT You can enter this rest. **SINCE God's rest goes back to Genesis 2 and is older than Israel and 10 commandments, then the real rest is bigger than LAND and Israel.** THE LAND pre-figures the ultimate rest of getting back to the garden, where God will make all things right and wipe away every tear.

How to enter the rest v. 6 Some get in, some don't. Is it due to obedience and works? **NO.**

V. 2 – It is **GOOD NEWS, received by faith. God promises a rest, but it is not a blanket universal entitlement.** It only belongs to those who have persevering faith. Jesus extends an invitation to all those who are trying to get back to the garden through their own efforts by saying, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

God's Rest is someone we meet before it is something we enjoy.

There is a connection between the rest we know by faith and a life of obedience and perseverance. **Entering the rest by faith in Jesus is the source of the obedient faith, not vice versa

How do we rest and enjoy our finished work? Work never ends. But one did enjoy his rest and did finish His work- Jesus. He came and did it. “It is finished”. He sat down at the right hand of the Father.

Faith is looking at Jesus and knowing that it is finished. “I can't add to it, or subtract from it.” That is rest. Not full, yet, but a foretaste of heaven. Live in light of “It is finished”.

Are there things to do? Yes, but be careful of saying or thinking, “Yeah, yeah faith, Jesus, cool, got it” and then just blasting by the good news and the reality of believing to get to the doing.

The biblical paradigm is BELIEVE IN ORDER TO OBEY.

Jn 6 – What are the works we are to do? “The work of God is to believe in the one whom He has sent” v.29

Faith is how we enter the rest, and it is how we walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called. Faith is how we enter the rest and it is how the Rest advances in us.

URGENCY OF THIS REST

Negatively – v. 1 “let us fear” EX A gibbet was a sort of gallows on which a dead body was hung as a warning. This is what the author does to the Exodus generation.

That is what the writer is saying. The stakes are so high. How sad to live your life under a weight of pressure and guilt thinking that you are “earning” points with God only to find at death that you got no points and you have to face an eternity of continuing in that state of unrest.

NERD ALERT

The verbal form used for the word fear doesn't mean that we live our whole life in fear, but according to the Greek, it would mean "Consider it and be done with it"is the way the Greek would read it. If it were Present subjunctive, then it would be "Let's continue to fear" The author is telling them to be "anxious" about having missed "entering into His rest", but If one hasn't missed it then stop "fearing".

THE PROBLEM

v. 2, 6 they ignored the gospel – the most culpable are those who hear the gospel and ignore it. If you ignore the gospel, then if you hear it over and over and ignore, then your blood is on your hands, not mine or Bob's or the elders, etc.
Be diligent to enter the rest and hold on to him.

v. 12 – He goes to the bible.

He's writing to those thinking of going back to Judaism. The author says, "God knows your whole heart. He knows every secret that your friends don't know."

He knows the wrong ways that we are trying to get back to the Garden to find rest.

His word will pierce you and cut through the good hype you get from those who like you.

This is where the anti-Lady Clairol aspect comes into play. It shouldn't just be God who knows the profession and practice of our faith. It should be evident, and we should be diligent to live in a way of faith so that it shows. **Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they will glorify your father in heaven." It is not a question of being a spiritual show-off, but of being a spiritual sign post pointing to Jesus.**

The names Joshua v 8 and Jesus are the same words.

Imagine how the Hebrew audience heard this?

There was a Joshua who led the people into the land, but not into the rest.

There is a second Joshua who doesn't lead us into a land but does lead us into the rest.

Be diligent to hold onto this second Joshua, who is also the second Adam who leads us back to the garden where we once again can delight in knowing that everything is "very good."

God's Rest is someone we meet before it is something we enjoy.

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