

Hebrews 4:6-9

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The second generation entered God's rest when they crossed over and possessed the land. But there remains a rest (inheritance) other than the one that was available to the Israelites. That is the reward of possessing the inheritance of sharing in Christ's sonship.

In the previous section, the Pauline Author emphasized that God did not rest until He finished His creative work on the seventh day. The corollary for believers is that God creates each believer to be a new creation when they believe (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a believer is born again, that creative work is finished and cannot be undone.

Although God's creative work in each believer is fully completed, and they enter the "rest" of being a new creation in Christ, there is another rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9). That is the rest of possessing the reward of their inheritance through walking by faith in obedience to God. The second generation of Israel did unite their faith with deeds, and so possessed their inheritance. But the first generation did not. The first generation *failed to enter* the Promised Land *because of disobedience*:

Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience (v 6).

The *good news* which was *preached* to the first generation of Israelites was that God had granted them the promised land and would give them miraculous help to possess it. God had granted the land to Abraham over four hundred years earlier and had promised him that his descendants would possess it (Genesis 15:18-20).

After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He demonstrated His provision many times during their journey to the boundary of the Promised Land. However, the first generation failed to possess their inheritance. They *failed to enter* into the land *because of disobedience*, refusing to enter the land due to fear (Numbers 13:31-14:2).

The warning here is that believers can also fail to possess the reward of their inheritance through disobedience. The particular reward in view for the recipients of this letter is to be rewarded the title of "son" who shares the "glory and honor" of reigning in service with Christ to steward the earth, thus fulfilling our original design (Hebrews 2:5-10).

Although the first generation of Old Testament Israelites coming out of Egypt did not believe God and missed out on the opportunity to possess their inheritance, the second generation did unite what they heard with faith, and they did enter the land and possess it. This is the example that *it remains for some to enter it* and some to not. While all who believe are God's children, only those who mix faith with hearing and walk in obedience to God will gain the rest that is God's reward—receiving the inheritance of sharing sonship with Christ (Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 3:21).

New Testament believers have a similar opportunity as the Israelites, whether to have the faith to believe God's promises and possess their inheritance or not. The Pauline Author quotes Psalm 95:7-8 to admonish the Jewish believers receiving this letter: *He 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"* (v 7).

Today implies an urgency that the Pauline Author wants these believers to have in following God. The way for believers to possess the reward of their inheritance is to be faithful each day to walk in obedience to God. That is a decision that is made by each believer each day.

Our goal each day should be to walk in faithfulness, for *Today* is the only time we can take action. We cannot control the past with regret. We cannot control the future with anxiety. *Today* we can take actions in faith that God's instructions are for our best. Alternatively, we can live an illusion of control; but we also cannot control the present with anger (James 1:20).

It is common for humans to vow to do the right thing tomorrow. But when it comes to making a choice to act, the only time in which choice can become action is in the present—*Today*. The Pauline Author is admonishing his readers to walk in obedience now, in the present moment: *Today. Therefore, it remains for some to enter it*, refers to the opportunity each believer has to be rewarded as a "son" and possess an inheritance of sharing Christ's honor and glory to reign over the earth in service and harmony (Hebrews 2:5-10).

Faithful action *Today* is what allows believers to unite faith with action and possess the amazing reward of sharing in Christ's inheritance as a "son" (Romans 8:17b; Hebrews 2:5-10; Revelation 3:21).

The Pauline Author does not want them to mistakenly think that the opportunity to enter God's rest of possessing the reward of their inheritance has passed. He wants them to realize that each day is an opportunity to walk in faith.

In Psalm 95, David's reference to entering rest, possessing a great reward of inheritance, does not refer to the opportunity the Old Testament Israelites had to enter and possess the Promised Land. When Psalm 95 was written by David, the Israelites of the second generation had already taken possession of the Promised Land centuries earlier.

After Moses died, God chose his assistant, Joshua, to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:1-9). Joshua was able to provide a "rest" for the Israelites when He led them into the Promised Land, and they possessed the land.

But that rest was not the perfect, final rest that God intended for all who believe in Him. *For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken* (in Psalm 95) *of another day after that* (v 8). If the "rest" of the Promised Land had been enough, then there would have been no need for David to speak of a future rest in this psalm. David wrote Psalm 95 long after Joshua led the people into the Promised Land, which demonstrates that there is a rest that has not yet been entered into by God's people.

The Pauline Author is reassuring and reminding these Jewish believers that they have not yet received their full inheritance. Even now, *there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God* (v 9). This *Sabbath rest* refers to a reward God has for us in the future.

The way New Testament believers gain this future reward is to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus gained the great reward of being named “Son” through the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9). He learned obedience even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8-9). We share His inheritance as joint heirs when we share in His sufferings (Romans 8:17b). By being named “Son,” Jesus was given authority over the earth (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:5,8,13; Revelation 3:21).

Jesus suffered death because He walked in obedience to His Father (Philippians 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:5-7). He is the example we are to follow (Hebrews 12:1-2). So *today* when we hear His voice, let us not harden our hearts. The inheritance of sharing Jesus’s reign and ruling in partnership with and service to King Jesus is an infinitely greater reward than getting to own some ground in the land of Israel (Hebrews 2:8-10; Revelation 3:21). Believers gain that great reward through daily, faithful obedience to Jesus, following the Spirit and walking in the commands of the Messiah (Matthew 28:20; Galatians 5:16).

Biblical Text

6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He 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.”

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.