

DAY 11 MONDAY

HEBREWS 4:1-11 TURNING THE KEY

¹ Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.”⁵ And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

⁶ It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. ⁷ Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

There are two ways of not entering God’s rest. The first is not hearing the Gospel. The physician who witnesses recovery of his paralyzed patient that defies all medical knowledge and refuses to acknowledge the power of prayer or the fact of a miracle, fits this category. The evidence is before him, but he just can’t see it. The second is hearing the Gospel but not believing it. The preacher who proclaims a Jesus who loves us, but would never deny anyone anything, especially eternal salvation, no matter what, fits this category. The belief that leads to God’s rest is the belief in God as he has revealed himself to be and not as we would like him to be.

St. John recorded Jesus as putting it this way: ¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). In 26 words we are given the Gospel, and in middle of the Gospel we read the words, *whoever believes in him*. The Gospel is a gift given by God by grace. But like any gift, it is of no use to the addressee of the gift until it is received. We receive God’s Gospel through faith. It is faith that both accepts the gift as gift and uses the gift in life. The Gospel is the key to the kingdom of God. Faith is the action that places the key in the lock and turns it.

You are so gracious, O lover of souls, that you have provided humankind with the key to your rest; to eternal salvation. Give me the ears to hear your Gospel and act upon it. Convict and empower me through your Spirit to receive and use the key in grateful obedience to your desire. Amen.