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Are You Ready to Render an Account? *Hebrews 4:1-13*
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There are some moments in life that immediately change the atmosphere in a room. One of those moments is when people realize they're about to be examined. A student who has ignored assignments suddenly becomes nervous when the teacher announces a test. An employee becomes uneasy when an audit is announced. A citizen becomes fearful when called before a judge. There's something sobering about knowing that we must answer for what we have done or not done.

Imagine a man who worked for a company for almost thirty years. He was respected by everyone around him. He had a good reputation, a family he supported, and a successful career. One day, the company announced a routine financial audit. Most employees thought very little about it, but this man suddenly became anxious.

Over the years, he occasionally manipulated expense reports. At first, it was small things that seemed insignificant. A personal meal marked as a business expense. A purchase hidden among legitimate receipts. No one noticed. No one questioned him. The longer he got away with it, the easier it became.

But now, an outside auditor was coming to inspect every receipt, transaction, and signature. As the audit approached, the man grew increasingly uneasy. He couldn't sleep. He became restless and fearful. His reputation couldn't erase the evidence. His years of service couldn't remove what had been done in secret. When the audit finally came, everything hidden was exposed.

That imaginary story, which has probably happened more than once, gives a small picture of what *Hebrews 4* teaches us today. One day, every person will stand before God, completely exposed. Titles won't matter. Reputation won't matter. Excuses won't matter. Money won't be able to bribe or buy your way out. Hidden motives, secret sins, and private thoughts will all be uncovered before a holy God. Listen to ***Hebrews 4:9-13***.

*“So then, a sabbath **rest** still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God's **rest** also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore **make every effort to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs. Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged*

*sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.***

Today's passage from Hebrews contains both **a gracious invitation and a warning**. In these verses, four things stand out to me: **God's Promise of Rest Remains, God's Word Searches Us, God Sees Us Completely, and God Requires an Account of Our Life**. First, *Hebrews 4* tells us that

1. God's Promise of Rest Remains

Verse 9 says, ***"So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God."***

What a gracious statement that is. Even after generations of rebellion and unbelief, God still extends an invitation of rest. This rest is much more than physical relaxation. This is spiritual rest. It's salvation rest. It's the rest of knowing your sins are forgiven. It's the rest of being reconciled to God. It's the rest of no longer trying to save yourself through your own efforts.

There are many tired people today. Some are physically exhausted because of work and family responsibilities. Some are emotionally exhausted because of stress and pain. Others are spiritually exhausted because they're carrying burdens God never intended them to carry. Some people try to earn God's acceptance through morality, religion, or human effort. They're constantly trying to prove or justify themselves. They live with guilt, fear, or uncertainty because they don't have the peace of God. But Jesus offers us rest. Jesus says in **Matthew 11:28**, ***"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*** What an invitation that is. Christ invites weary souls to come to Him. He doesn't say, *"Fix yourself first."* He doesn't say, *"Clean up your act first."* He says, ***"Come to me."***

The reason we can have rest is because Jesus completed the work necessary for salvation. **Hebrews 4:10** says, ***"For those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his."*** When God finished creation, God rested because the work was complete. Likewise, when Jesus died on the cross, He cried out, ***"It is finished."*** Salvation was accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection, and is received by

grace through faith in Christ. But the writer of Hebrews also gives a warning. While God offers rest, not everyone enters it.

Verse 11 says, ***“Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.”*** At first, this verse sounds almost contradictory. We’re commanded to *“make every effort to enter that rest.”* What does that mean? It means we’re not to become spiritually careless, complacent, or indifferent. The Christian life requires perseverance. Genuine faith continues trusting Christ.

Hebrews points back to Israel in the wilderness. They saw miracles. They heard God’s Word. They experienced God’s provision. Yet, many of them still hardened their hearts in unbelief. Proximity to God doesn’t always lead to obedience to God. That’s a sobering reality. It’s possible to hear sermons every week, and still miss Christ. It’s possible to know Bible stories and religious language while remaining spiritually lost. Hebrews warns us, repeatedly, about the danger of unbelief because eternity is at stake.

The Christian life requires intentionality. We choose to relate to God through repentance, worship, obedience, submission to God’s Word, and prayer. Not because we earn salvation through these things, but because genuine faith seeks to grow closer to God and produces endurance. Temporary enthusiasm is not saving faith. Many people respond emotionally to spiritual things for a season, but eventually walk away because their hearts were never truly transformed, and they miss out on God’s rest.

After talking about the possibility of rest, Hebrews then shifts our attention to how

2. God’s Word Searches Us

Verse 12 says, ***“Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.”*** The Bible is not merely an ancient religious book. It’s living. It’s active. It carries divine authority and power. When we hear or read God’s Word, it does more than transfer information. It confronts the soul. It convicts the conscience. It exposes hidden sin. It reveals the true condition of our heart.

People can hide things from other people for years. A person can appear outwardly religious, while inwardly living in rebellion against God. People can hide bitterness, lust, pride, greed, hypocrisy, and unbelief, beneath a polished appearance.

But God’s Word cuts through every disguise. We don’t just read the Bible. The Bible reads us. God’s Word exposes motives, intentions, and thoughts that others can’t see.

Doctors can use MRI scans, CT scans, and X-rays to reveal hidden diseases beneath the surface. A person may appear healthy, outwardly, while something dangerous is growing internally. In the same way, the Word of God scans the soul. It reveals spiritual disease hidden beneath outward appearances. It shows us who we truly are before God. That’s why some people avoid the Bible. They don’t mind inspirational messages, but they become uncomfortable when the Word of God begins exposing sin. But exposure is necessary before healing can happen. You can’t be saved until you recognize your need for salvation. Sometimes, the Word of God wounds before it heals. It may convict before it comforts.

Verse 12 ends by saying God’s Word discerns *“the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* Humans judge appearances. God judges motives. People may applaud what others can see, but God knows **why** we do what we do. God knows whether our worship is sincere. God knows whether our obedience is genuine. The Lord knows whether our faith is authentic or merely external. **1 Samuel 16:7** says, *“Human beings look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”* Which leads to the next point.

3. God Sees Us Completely

Hebrews 4:13 strips away every illusion of secrecy. Nothing is hidden from God. No hidden thought escapes God’s sight. No private sin remains concealed. No secret rebellion goes unnoticed. The phrase, *“And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare,”* communicates complete exposure before God. One day, every mask will come off. Every excuse will disappear. Every carefully managed image will be stripped away. We can spend a lot of time trying to control how people perceive us. We can work hard to protect our reputation and appearance. But on the day we stand before God, none of that will matter. God already knows everything about us completely. ***Ecclesiastes 12:14*** says, ***“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”*** ***Romans 14:12*** states, ***“So then, each of us will be accountable to God.”*** ***2 Corinthians 5:10*** declares, ***“For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”*** These are all evidence of God seeing us, which supports our fourth point.

4. God Requires an Account of Our Life

The climax of *Hebrews 4* is the phrase in verse 13, “*To whom we must **render an account.***” **Render** isn’t a word you hear too often, is it? “*To render an account*” means to formally present a detailed report, explanation, or justification of one's actions, stewardship, or financial dealings to a person in authority. It implies accountability, responsibility for management, and the obligation to explain how duties or resources were handled. There are numerous stories Jesus tells that involve people having to render an account of their stewardship and of their life; it’s one of his favorite motifs or themes. Some of these stories are: the parable of **the Rich Fool** (*Luke 12:13-21*), the parable of **the Wise and Faithful Steward** (*Luke 12:42-46*), the parable of **the Unjust Steward** (*Luke 16:1-13*), the parable of the **Unforgiving Servant** (*Matthew 18:21-35*), and the parable of **the Talents** (*Matthew 25:14-30*).

Much like those parables of Jesus, *Hebrews* asserts that one day, every person will stand before God and must render an account for our life. *Hebrews 4* moves from **the promise of rest to the certainty of accountability**. The message is clear: one day every person will render an account before God. The question is not whether that day is coming. The question is **whether you’re ready for it**.

One day, every person will render an account before God. We’ll answer for what we believed, for how we lived, and for how we responded to the good news of Jesus Christ. Did we trust, obey, and follow Jesus, and seek to become like Him? Did we ignore Him? Did we reject Him? **Jesus even said we will give an account for every careless word we speak** (*Matthew 12:36*). That should humble every one of us.

The question is not whether a day of judgment is coming. The question is whether we’re prepared for it. People prepare diligently for temporary things. They prepare for careers, vacations, retirement, and emergencies. They invest time and energy preparing for earthly futures that may last only a few years. But some people spend almost no time preparing for eternity. One day, your career will end. One day, your possessions will belong to someone else. One day, your earthly accomplishments will fade away. And one day, you will stand before God.

Imagine standing before God while every chapter of your life is opened completely. Every thought. Every motive. Every secret sin. Every careless word. Nothing

hidden. Nothing omitted. How could anyone stand before a holy God, based on their own behavior or righteousness? The answer is: we can't. That's why the gospel is such good news.

Jesus Christ lived a perfect life we could never live. He died the death we deserved because of our sin. On the cross, He bore the judgment we deserved, so that all who trust in Him could be forgiven, reconciled to God, part of God's family, and share in God's work to see the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven.

For those who belong to Christ, judgment is no longer condemnation because Jesus already bore that condemnation on the cross. **Romans 8:1** says, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."***

The safest place to stand on judgment day is in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Without Christ, we stand exposed in our guilt. With Christ, we stand forgiven by grace.

The author of Hebrews wants everyone to realize the high stakes that are involved in how we live. He's trying to make the consequences of accountability to God so clear that we'll want to live with greater purpose and holiness.

The invitation today is: stop hiding. Stop hardening your heart. Stop pretending everything is fine. Come honestly before God. Repent of any hidden sin. Submit yourself to the searching Word of God. Trust fully in the finished work of Jesus Christ and the rest that provides.

Hebrews repeatedly says, ***"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*** Notice the urgency of that word: today. Not tomorrow. Not someday. Today. We're not promised another opportunity. We're not promised another year. We're not promised another breath. Today, God offers rest through Christ. Today, mercy is available. Today, forgiveness is offered.

But one day, the opportunity to repent will end, and every person will stand before God to render an account. The same Savior who offers rest today, will one day sit as Judge. So, I ask you: Have you truly entered God's rest? Is there any hidden sin you refuse to surrender? Are you prepared to stand before God today? May we come to Christ today, in repentance and faith, so that we may stand before Him then, with confidence and gratitude.

Let's pray.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. *Hebrews 4:12* says the Word of God is “living and active.” What do you think that means practically? How is God’s Word different from an ordinary book or human opinion?
2. The Word “pierces” and “judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Have you ever experienced the Bible confronting or convicting you, personally? What was that like? Why do you think God is concerned not only with actions, but also with motives and intentions?
3. Verse 13 says “no creature is hidden” from God. How does that truth affect the way we think about: private sin, secret struggles, and authenticity before God?
4. The phrase “naked and laid bare” is very strong language. What emotions or reactions does that phrase stir up in you – fear, shame, relief, honesty? Why?
5. What are some ways people try to hide their true spiritual condition from: others? themselves? God?
6. The passage ends by saying we must “render an account” to God. If you truly lived with that awareness daily, what might change in your priorities, habits, or relationships?