

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, September 11, 2011
The Rest of Faith

If there was ever music to our ears, it would have been at times like being on a difficult job and the foreman shouts "It's break time." Hopefully you were able to take a vacation this summer and escape the rigors of your schedule. We all need a rest. We can all relate to wanting a breath of fresh air at times; a reprieve from the daily grind; an inner sense of peace and well being. That's just what God always wanted for us. He wants us to know that he is for us and not against us. In the Old Testament God shouted out "It's break time" but some missed out on it. The writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament letter by that name brought some prophetic insight into David's 95th Psalm. The Israelites had disobeyed God in the Wilderness for 40 years so God said that they were not able to enter his rest. His rest was the Promised Land, which although was a real location, was figurative of a life in relationship with God. Their unbelief is what kept them out. I've called faith the "currency of Heaven." We can't earn faith. It's not something we get because of what we do. It's a gift that we respond to in the inner recesses of our heart. It is the "eye" that sees in the Spirit or the "ear" that hears what the Spirit of God is saying. While the definition of faith is multifaceted it really boils down to an intimacy of relationship. At the core of it is trust. We trust in God. The verb for faith helps us understand it a little more and that's "believe." It has the same root word. To have faith is to believe and to believe is to have faith.

We can get so concerned about trying to do things to make ourselves acceptable to God that we miss what he was trying to tell us all along. There is nothing that we can do to make God love us more or consider that we have arrived. He sent Christ to die in our place so that our acceptance is fully dependent on what Christ did and not us. The Old Testament carried with it a sense of our need to follow the rules to get to God, but God was using this to teach us that we would never be able to do it. Working our way to Heaven was futile. It was meant to create within us a desire for a break, so when Christ would be preached it would be that music to our ears we were longing for.

Hebrews 4:1-11 (NIV)

*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. (emphasis mine)*

God does not want us striving to do what we think we need to do. He wants us to enter into the rest he provided by making us acceptable to him completely through what his son has done for us. While it costs us everything, we get everything in return. He is that Treasure in the field and that Pearl of Great Price. When we give our lives to him, he gives them back to us by revealing who we were always longing to be but were unable to see because we were blinded by sin and self-centeredness. Jesus tells us to take his yoke and learn from him. He wants to make our burden light and give us rest for our souls. Have you been anxious or troubled by many things? God wants to work in us and through us. He wants us to experience his joy, his peace, his love, his rest, his provision, his healing, and his presence. Let's just allow Jesus to be Lord of All and experience his rest.