

**Text: Heb 4.2**

We are working through our passage slowly. Our translators make Heb 4.1-10 one paragraph. There is an overall argument to the paragraph, but we are taking a “building block” approach: trying to come to grips with it verse by verse.

The first verse warns the readers lest any one of them seem to come short of the rest God promised.

Verse 2 gives us a reason why some people actually do come short of God’s promises, even though they are nominally identified with the people of God.

What do I mean by “nominally”?

If someone goes to church, hangs around Christian people, has some loyalty to the teachings of the church, others may well describe them as Christians.

We repeatedly urge you on this point: You can’t say you are a Christian just because you go to church.

You can’t say you are a Christian because you’ve been baptized.

You can’t say you are a Christian because you read the Bible.

You have to really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, make him your God, and do your best to follow him in everything you do.

Your “doings” will not save you, but there is no getting around it, if you believe, you will do.

The part of the OT our author is working with clearly illustrates the folly of assuming you are of the people of God because you are among the people of God.

Read Heb 4.1-2, text 2

There are some things we need to understand in our text.

1. What is the “good news” preached to us and them? Is it the same thing?
2. Why did the “good news” preached to them not profit them?
3. What does it mean to unite by faith with the “good news”?

All of this will give us an understanding of:

*Faith and the Word*

**Proposition:** Living faith is essential to profiting by the promise.

## I. The present promise

### A. The word for “good news preached”

1. This is all one word in Gk
2. It has a noun form, “good news,” often translated gospel
3. Here it is a verbal form, the “good newsing” or “preaching the gospel”

### B. The good news for “us”

1. The verse starts with “for,” connecting it to v. 1
2. It doesn’t connect “us” to “them” (*i.e.*, Israel), but “good news” to “remaining promise” in v. 1

Lit. “for also we are being gospelized”

### 3. What is the message “gospelizing” us?

- a. The message of a saviour from sin
- b. One who died as our substitute (paying our penalty)
- c. One who rose again from death (offering us eternal life)
- d. This offer of life (of rest) is the “remaining promise” for us

4. Indeed, our text is in the present tense: “we are being gospelized” — the message is constantly reaching out to us

### C. What did “they” hear? Was it the same message”

Lit. “for also we are being gospelized just as also that crowd”

- Lit. “that” instead of “this,” but in the plural, “those” instead of “these”
- “That crowd” is “those who refused to enter at Kadesh, but went back”

1. The word they heard was not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ
2. They heard a word that paralleled the word of Christ in some way
  - a. Read Ex 19.3-7

(Note: None of those elders made it into the land)

b. Read Ex 23.20-33

There is a future aspect to this word, just as there is to the word preached to us:

- For them: “My angel shall bring you into the land, you will be my people”
- For us: “Just as he went, so will he come for them that love him”

3. We will see that they heard an even more specific word, but we will pick that up later

D. The issue for us is the present promise

1. It remains ahead of us
2. We are constantly gospelized by it

The word rings in our ears, pointing us to the end of the course, the Lord Jesus receiving us into heaven.

## II. The unprofitable word

A. “That crowd” did not profit from what was said to them

1. We know the story well: they came to the border of Canaan, sent out spies, and refused to enter
2. God excluded that generation, then they tried to enter but disastrously failed
3. God endured that generation for forty years in the wilderness until they all died out

The promise remained ahead of them

The promise didn't profit any of that generation

B. Back to my literal translation: the word of hearing

“for also we are being gospelized just as also that crowd”

“but the word of the hearing did not profit that crowd”

1. The NAU trans. “the word they heard”

2. In one sense, they did hear the word of promise
  - a. They had ears
  - b. Their ears function properly
  - c. They *understood* what was said
3. The problem was they didn't obey what they heard
  - a. "Hearing" has a connotation of obedience, not just one of your senses

When a mother says to her child, "you hear me?" she isn't wondering if the kid is deaf.

- b. The implication of the promises we read in Exodus was that the nation would follow through
  - 1) The Lord told them, you will go in to the land
  - 2) I will destroy them for you
  - 3) You will not worship their gods
  - 4) Etc.

The key to this is: "go in"

4. No action, no profit: "the word of hearing did not profit" — given even more explicitly
  - a. Read Num 13.30: Caleb's speech
  - b. Note Num 13.31: the speech of the ten, not a "word of hearing" (they weren't hearing and believing "my angel will go before you")
  - c. Read Num 14.6-9: Joshua and Caleb speak
  - d. Read Num 14.10: "stone them with stones"

What was Israel's problem?

### III. The union of word and faith

- A. "The word of hearing" not "united by faith"
  1. "United" means "mixed, blended"

## 2. Used three times in the Bible

- a. Daniel 2.43, the feet of iron mixed with clay
- b. 1 Corinthians 12.24, the comely parts of the body mixed with the uncomely parts (making one whole)
- c. And here... the word not mixed (blended) with faith

## B. One ambiguity in our text

1. “not united by faith in those who heard”
2. Lit. “not united with faith in/with those who heard”

## C. If it is “in those who heard”

1. That means the Israelites could not bring themselves to believe
2. They couldn’t believe, at the last, that God’s angel would go with them
3. They couldn’t believe the word Caleb and Joshua spoke

## D. If it is “with those who heard”

1. Who were the ones who heard the profitable word? Caleb and Joshua
2. Construction could easily read this way: “the word of hearing was not having been blended with the faith of Caleb and Joshua”
3. Here Caleb and Joshua are, proclaiming faith in God’s promise
4. Here Israel is, not joining in with their faith

Either way, no profit to them

## E. The lesson of this verse to us

1. The good news is always gospelizing us
2. We come to church, we hear the word of faith
3. There is a promise ahead of us: resurrection or rapture, Jesus and heaven
4. Are you hearing the message?

5. It is here for you every Sunday (and every day, if you read the Bible)

Are you resting in that promise?

Do you waver outside these doors and seem to go back,  
acting like you don't belong here?

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains... (Heb 4.1)

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** Living faith is essential to profiting by the promise.

There are great opportunities ahead to serve God, even in our crazy world.

The politics of our world are maddening and depressing ... turn your eyes away from that.

Turn your eyes to the promise. Make that what you talk about.

It is preached to you, you preach it to others.