
Words of Truth

Hebrews 4:2

By: Brian A. Yeager

As we continue into this fourth chapter, we read this: *“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”* (Hebrews 4:2). If you will recall, the context is looking backwards at the time Israel tempted God in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-11; 3:15-19; cf. Numbers 13:1-14:38). The contextual lesson is not to repeat their mistakes and instructions on how to accomplish that (Hebrews 3:12-14; 4:1).

The thing that first century Jewish saints had in common with those Jews that lived under the Law of Moses was that the word of God was preached to them both (II Kings 17:13 and Acts 3:25-26). The children of Israel had the word of the Lord spoken to them as far back as when they were in Egypt (Exodus 4:28). The word of the Lord was taught unto them as a guide for them to have good and prolonged days in the land they were going to inherit (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The Gospel preached to the Jews in the first century was far greater than a promised land. The Gospel that was then and is now preached carries the promise of eternal life (II Timothy 1:8-10 and I John 2:25) for the obedient (Hebrews 5:5-9).

The wording translated “gospel preached” in Hebrews 4:2 [εὐαγγελίζω] means: “to announce good news (‘evangelize’) especially the gospel: — declare, bring (declare, show) glad (good) tidings, preach (the gospel). To bring good news, to announce glad tidings. Used in the OT of any kind of good news; of the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings. In the NT used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation; glad tidings are brought to one, one has glad tidings proclaimed to him. To proclaim glad tidings; instruct (men) concerning the things that pertain to Christian salvation” (Strong's # 2097). You can find this Greek word in over fifty verses in the New Testament.

Among those verses wherein we find this Greek term, I want to draw your attention to preaching that was done in Antioch in Pisidia. Notice what preaching the Gospel to the first century Jews was like: *“Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when*

they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers. God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:26-39).

God has always had good news for His people. The problem has been the reception of that good news. The word of God was not profitable to Israel during those ancient days because it was not “mixed with faith in them that heard it.” The word of God has to be mixed together, united with faith. What that means is, the hearer of the Gospel has to choose to believe the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16). Notice: *“Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadeshbarnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice... And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation” (Deuteronomy 9:23 and Psalms 78:18-22).* That was not only a problem right out of Egypt, it was also a reoccurring issue throughout the history of Israel (II Chronicles 24:17-22 and II Chronicles 36:14-16). They forgot the things God did for them in rather short order (Psalms 106:21-24). What can you learn from that?

Whether it was thousands of years ago or today, the word of God is able to save (Psalms 19:7-11 and James 1:21). The question comes down to whether or not the hearer will allow the word of God to bring about that salvation (Romans 1:16). If we do not believe, the truth will remain unchanged (Romans 3:3-4). Our God does not lie (Titus 1:2). His word and works are the truth (Psalms 33:4 and Colossians 1:5). If believed, the truth can effectually work in believers (I Thessalonians 2:13). Later in this Hebrew epistle, we will study about the necessity of faith in the fact that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Understand this, we need to retain that word which we have believed (I Corinthians 15:1-4). Remember what happened to those that did not (Jude 1:5)!