

"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"

Part 3

Hebrews 3:7-4:16

Introduction: Last week in our study of Hebrews we considered a very important message which is significant in helping us to understand what the writer of Hebrews is focused upon in the section which is before us.

In the passage the writer reaches back to the Old Testament and he points to the Nation of Israel when they came out of Egypt, when they journeyed through the wilderness, and when they came to the land of Canaan. Now as I told you last week the writer is focused upon the picture which is seen in the Nation of Israel in all they had experienced. The Nation of Israel can be seen as a shadow of the believer's new life in Jesus Christ. Our salvation is seen in the protection for the judgment of God through the application of the blood of the Passover lamb. The testing of our faith can be seen in the wilderness wanderings as God tested Israel and proved Himself faithful as He provided for them for 40 years. The land of Canaan can be seen as the place God desires for us to reside while we live on this earth. It is the place of rest. It is the place where the believer gains victory over his or her sin because we have come to rely completely upon the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. It is the place where we have come to understand that in our own strength and our own attempts we cannot live the way God desires us to live. It is only through surrender and faith that we can enjoy the victories God desires for us to have.

Now let me take a moment and apply this to the believers this letter is written to. These people were under persecution for their faith and they were considering going back to the "old way of life" which would have been Judaism. They did not understand that what they were facing was a test of their faith. But they were just like Israel in the sense that Israel desired to go back to Egypt and these people desired to go back to Judaism. Israel's faith was tested when the 12 spies whom Moses had sent out returned with the report concerning the inhabitants of the land. Here was the report:

Numbers 13:27-33

²⁷ *And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.*

²⁸ *Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.*

²⁹ *The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.*

³⁰ *And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*

³¹ *But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*

³² *And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*

³³ *And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

Joshua and Caleb had faith that God would provide all they needed to conquer the people and the land. The other 10 spies and the people did not have faith that God would provide and they refused to go.

Back to the book of Hebrews again; these people who received this letter were standing in a place just like Israel did when the spies gave the report. Their faith was being tested with the conditions they were facing. They could surrender to God and have faith He would provide as they pressed forward or they could turn back to the "old life" they were once a part of before.

This is the crossroads which the Hebrew Christians were standing at and it is in this passage that the writer is explaining to them the danger of not having faith in God. Therefore the writer of Hebrews had 2 concerns for these people.

1. **He was concerned that some of them were not truly saved.**
2. **He was concerned their lack of faith would keep them from entering God's rest.**

I. **The Warning**

Part 2

Notice Hebrews 3:12

We have already looked at this verse and we discussed one of the concerns of the writer

as seen in this verse. The writer wanted them to know that if they turned back to Judaism there was the possibility they were never truly saved. The writer's concern came from the very Words of Jesus Christ.

John 8:31

³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

But there was also the second concern of the writer and that was if they did not trust God in the face of the persecution and they refused to move forward they would not be able to enter into His rest.

Notice Hebrews 3:13

This verse is full of spiritual wealth for the believer.

The first point I see when I look at this verse is the importance of fellowship for you and I. The writer tells his readers that they were to exhort one another DAILY! The word "EXHORT" is so important here. **It means "to call to one's side in order to give comfort and encouragement"**. As these believers were facing the test of their faith in the midst of the persecution they were to come along side of those who were having a difficult time and they were to offer comfort and encouragement. They were to encourage each other to press on and to not turn back.

I want to show you something in the Old Testament that we can connect with this to help us to see the importance coming along side those of the body of Christ who are weary and tired from the trials and the tests. About 2 years into the wilderness Israel was attacked by the Amalekites.

Exodus 17:8

⁸ *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*

Now we do not get any details here of how Amalek attacked Israel but we do in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 25:17-18

¹⁷ *Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;*

¹⁸ *How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.*

Amalek attacked Israel from behind and he attacked those who were faint and weary. Let me remind you that on Sunday evenings in our study of Corinthians we have discussed how Satan desires to divide and to destroy the church. Here in Deuteronomy he will come and he will attack those who are weary and faint. In other words when someone becomes weary due to the battles they are facing in their life they can become a target for Satan. Let me give you some insight into how he will attack.

Ephesians 6:16

¹⁶ *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

This is just one verse from Ephesians dealing with the believer's armor. But here we can see that the enemy will shoot "**fiery darts**" at the believer. One of the most popular and the most painful darts which he has in his quiver is the darts of discouragement. When we get weary and worn down the enemy will come along and he will shoot a dart of discouragement into our life and it sinks us into a pit of despair. Now I know that we are to take up the shield of faith but have you ever been to the place where you just were not able to come up with the faith to get the dart out? That is where the church comes in. The ministry of the church is to come along side and pull the dart of discouragement out. Let me show you another verse.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27

²⁵ *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

²⁶ *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

²⁷ *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

We are ONE BODY and therefore we are to care for one another just like we care for our own physical bodies. That means that when one member is battle weary we are to come along side and pick them up. We do not press on and let them to "work it out on their own".

Let us get back to the verse again.

Notice Hebrews 3:13

The next thing we see in this verse is the reason why we are to exhort one another. Now we considered how the enemy can discourage those who are faint and weary. Now here is another reason. It is so that the believer is not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. This makes me ask a question:

What is the writer referring to here? What is the "sin" that he is referring to?

The sin that he is referring to is the sin of "unbelief". That is exactly what kept Israel from entering into the land of Canaan. They did not believe God would provide all they needed to face the battles in the land and because of their lack of faith they were not able to enter into the "rest" God had for them. They had hardened their hearts over the 40 years of wandering. But there is more to see about the "hardening" effect. The word used here has the same meaning as the when Pharaoh's heart was hardened in the book of Exodus. Let me show you what Moses wrote concerning Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:19-23

¹⁹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

²⁰ And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

²¹ And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

*²² And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: **and Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.*

²³ And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

There is much to be considered as we look at Pharaoh but the point I want you to see is that Pharaoh was exposed to the mighty power of God over and over. He was a witness to all 10 plagues that came upon Egypt. But instead of surrendering to God he continued to harden his heart and in the process God hardened his heart. The point is, he was made aware of the Truth but he refused to believe God. We could say that he suppressed the Truth that was presented to him.

This is exactly what happened to Israel in the wilderness. They were aware of the power of God but they refused to believe that God would provide for them.

That was the very danger facing the Hebrews who received this letter. They were made aware of the power of God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and they refused to believe that He was able to supply all their needs in the midst of the persecution. To continue to refuse to walk by faith would harden their heart and keep them from entering into God's rest.

I also want to point out to you the "*deceitfulness of sin*" which the writer speaks of here. What does he mean by this?

All sin is deceitful but I want us to see the "*deceitfulness*" in the context which the writer is speaking. The sin is unbelief and the deceit is this: if they were to go back to Judaism life would be better. That is what the sin of unbelief was "telling" them. The TRUTH was if they stayed the course and walked by faith they would be blessed far more than they could imagine. They would learn to live in God's rest and they would be permitted to see the power of God as He provided for them in their walk.

Conclusion/Application:

There are many applications we can apply from all of this.

1. Unbelief is sin.

When we are faced with situations that test our faith we are to walk by faith and continue to press forward. When we face a situation that would cause us to pull back or cause us to not stand for the Truth of God's Word because we are fearful of the consequences that is a serious sin. It is the sin of UNBELIEF. It is the very sin that caused the heart of Pharaoh to become hard and it is the very sin that caused the heart of the people of Israel to become hardened and it caused them to come short of the rest which God had for them.

This is good for us to know with the direction that our nation is going. If persecution comes upon the church we are expected to trust God and stand for the Truth regardless of the cost.

Revelation 2:10

*¹⁰ Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

2. The sin of unbelief is deceitful.

There are going to be times when we are faced with situations that will try our faith. To stand for the Truth will be costly and to "turn back" will look like the way to go. When that situation faces you remember this passage. Unbelief is sin and it keeps us from entering into God's rest, it keeps us from seeing the power of God, and it will cost you far more than standing up for the Truth.

3. **We must be willing to come along side of one another.**

We need to be there for one another. We all grow weary and tired at times from the battle. God has designed the body of Christ so that when we exercise our gifts others are built up in the faith.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

²⁵ *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*