

"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"

Part 4

Hebrews 3:7-4:16

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study in the book of Hebrews we again come back to Hebrews chapter 3 where we are looking at the second warning given to the readers of this letter. The first warning was a caution about neglecting God's *"so great salvation"*. This second warning is about neglecting God's *"so great provision"*.

The recipients of this letter were Hebrew believers. They had accepted Jesus Christ but because of the persecution they were pulling back. Some were even considering going back to Judaism. But if they were to turn back they would be repeating the same sin which Israel committed while they were in the wilderness. Last week we looked at how Israel came right up to the edge of the land of Canaan and because of their unbelief they would not trust God to provide for them and they refused to enter into the land. God had promised to them that He would give them victory in the land but their unbelief in God's provisions kept them from entering into Canaan.

Now as we had looked at before Canaan is not a picture of heaven for the believer it is a picture of the rest which God desires all of His children to live in while we are on this earth. It is the place where no matter what we face we can rest in the fact that God is in control and He will meet our needs. It is the place where we realize that I cannot overcome sin in my own strength but the Holy Spirit can give me victory through the very same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead.

So the believers who had received this letter were standing in the very same place which Israel did when the 12 spies returned from the land of Canaan. These Hebrew believers could trust God and stay the course or they could allow unbelief to control them and they could go back to the old life they had been saved from. In the section we are in the writer is doing everything he can to keep them from going back.

I. **The Warning**

Part 3

Last week we looked at one verse and that was 3:13.

Notice Hebrews 3:13

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.

The verse also contains a warning about the deceitfulness of sin, and we must keep this in context and understand that the sin referred to here is the "sin of unbelief". The writer had a specific deception in mind here. Now as I told you last week all sin is deceitful but he is not talking about ALL sin here. He is talking about the "sin of unbelief". What was the deception with this sin? The "unbelief" in their hearts was convincing them that if they went back to the "old life" they would be much happier and further ahead. **That was the deception!!** The Truth of the matter was if they returned back to the "old life" they would miss out on entering into God's rest. They would miss the power of God as He would work in their lives as they stayed the course. To turn back would be a life of regret. God had brought them to this point to test their faith and they needed to continue to press ahead and to walk by faith.

Notice Hebrews 3:14

Here the writer reminds them that if they were truly saved then they were "partakers of Christ". They may lose all of what they had in this life but they would never lose Christ and He is Everything.

The word "confidence" in this verse is very interesting. It refers to a "foundation" that is rock solid. The idea in the mind of the writer is that if they were TRULY saved then they would be able to stand in the midst of the testing of their faith. They could stand upon the firm foundation of God's Word and Jesus Christ. Jesus said the very same thing at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

²⁵ *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: **for it was founded upon a rock.***

²⁶ *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

²⁷ *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

Jesus tells us here that when our faith is a TRUE GENUINE faith we will be able to endure the storms that come into our lives. But when someone is "religious" but not saved they will not be able to stand in the tests of faith for they have no saving faith. This is the very thought in the mind of the writer of Hebrews.

Now the writer is going to go back to the wilderness wanderings again.

Notice Hebrews 3:15

Here again we see the urgency in the writer. They needed to set their mind on staying the course RIGHT NOW! The next verses show the reason for the urgency.

Notice Hebrews 3:16-19

Those of Israel had heard the promises of God but they hardened their hearts and they were never permitted to enter into Canaan. They fell short of enjoying all that God had for them in the land of Canaan. That was the very danger that was facing the Hebrew believers.

Now the writer is going to explain to them about the rest that God had for them as we move on in Hebrews 4. In this chapter we will learn exactly what God's rest is and how we can enjoy it today. This chapter will be a great blessing to all of us as we work our way through the verses that are ahead. But before we step into chapter 4 there is something in the chapter 3 that we need to consider that will really benefit us and help us to better understand the REST which the writer is going to address.

Notice Hebrews 3:10

There is something in this verse that is very important for us to see. One of the reasons that Israel did not enter into the land of Canaan/the rest was because they did not know the "ways of God". This statement is so important for us to consider. This is also one of the reasons why many believers today are not able to enter into God's rest. They do not understand the ways of God and therefore they struggle to walk by faith. I want to take some time and consider the "ways of God" in the believer's life because I believe it will really help us to better understand the rest God offers.

II. The Work of God in the Believer's Life

There is something which we need to be reminded of on a regular schedule or we will lose sight of this important Truth.

Philippians 1:6

⁶ *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

When we were saved God started a work in our lives and this work will continue until the very day that we leave this earth. Let me show you the goal.

Romans 8:29a

²⁹ *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...*

Let me show you another verse that will bring this into focus a little better. It is seen in the words of John the Baptist.

John 3:30

³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

This is what it means to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. There will be less of me and more of Jesus when people see me. Now that also includes something else which Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of John.

John 15:1-2

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

So if we pull all of these thoughts together we can see that it is the Father's desire for us to be more like Jesus Christ and it is His mission to continually prune and shape our lives so that when others see us they will see Christ in us. This past week I was reading a book by Miles Stanford called "The Complete Green Letters" and he touched on something that made my mind go right to this text we are looking at in Hebrews.

In our Christian lives it is our desire to get under the sound teaching of God's Word and there we grow and develop. We join a church we surround ourselves with fellow believers

and we find our own personal comfort zone. This is the place we have been looking for and now we are there. We attend service on a regular schedule, we hold an office in the church, and we seem to finally have arrived in the place where we desire to be.

Miles Stanford compares this place in the believer's life to a kernel on an ear of corn. We started out as a seed when we were saved. The seed produced a blade and the blade turned into a stalk. There the ears of corn began to develop and finally the process was complete. There we are on top of the stalk after many storms and days of intense heat. We are shiny and golden in color. We see ourselves as believers who have arrived. But we have forgotten one thing. **This is not God's goal for us.** Let us remember that He is still working and that is where Jesus Words come in from John 12.

John 12:24

²⁴ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Here Jesus speaks of His own death on the cross but it also applies to our lives as believers. Jesus compares our lives to a "corn/grain of wheat". We start as the seed and as we grow we become the "corn of wheat". But the problem with the "grain of wheat" being on the stalk is that it will produce no fruit. The outer shell is beautiful to look at but it is hard. There is life inside but it is trapped. The only way for the life inside to get out is for the hard exterior to be softened. That means it must be loosened from the ear and it must fall into the cold wet ground where it begins to soften and the exterior dissolves then there is the new life that comes forth.

Let me explain how that happens in our life. We find ourselves in a very comfortable surrounding just like the kernel on the ear. Then God permits something to happen in our live. It can be a loss of a job, it can be a sickness, and it can be something that has come upon us because of the actions of someone else. But the point is it is something that takes off of the ear/comfort zone. It is a situation we cannot control and if we do not understand the "ways of God" we begin to wander where God is in all of this. We can begin to question His love if we do not understand His ways. The point we need to understand is that He is removing us from the ear and He is planting us in the "soil" so that the NEW LIFE that is within us will begin to show forth.

We can see a picture of this in the parable of the wheat and the tares which Jesus explained in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:36-38

³⁶ *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

³⁷ *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*

³⁸ *The field is the world; the **good seed are the children of the kingdom;***

Here in the words of our Lord we can see that as His children we are planted throughout the world. Let me show you what Paul said in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

⁷ *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

⁸ *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

⁹ *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

¹⁰ *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.***

¹¹ ***For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.***

The Apostle Paul made it clear that in our bodies there is a treasure. That is the life of Jesus Christ. Then he says they were troubled, persecuted, distressed, and cast down. All of this was for the purpose of dying to self so that the life of Jesus Christ would be manifest through them.

Application:

This is exactly what God does in our lives. That which keeps Jesus from being seen in us is "self". Self is the hard outer coating that needs to be dissolved away. So God allows different situations to come into our lives and those situations become "graves" in which God buries us. These graves can be very painful. This is the planting of the seed. It is then that we are to die to self. That means we do not claim our rights but instead we see the situation as God's hand at work and we surrender to the grave. It is then that the life of Jesus Christ is seen in us. Let me show you the Words of Jesus again.

John 12:24

²⁴ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.***

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Conclusion:

This is a Truth we need to keep at the front of our mind if we are going to enter God's rest. This work of God must be accepted and we must trust God as He works to manifest the life of Jesus Christ in us. We must be able to accept His work as Job did.

Job 13:15a

¹⁵ *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:*