

"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"

Part 7

Hebrews 3:7-4:16

Introduction: Last week in our study of Hebrews we covered a lot of ground so to begin with this evening I want to review over some of what we have looked at. I do this because I desire for you to grasp onto what the writer says here because when you get your mind wrapped around the Truth found in Hebrews 3 and 4 your heart will be filled with a peace that words cannot describe.

The writer of Hebrews has given a warning to his readers in chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4. As they faced the persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ they were contemplating pulling back. They did not understand that God had permitted the persecution as a way of refining their faith. It was not for the purpose of harming them but it was for the purpose of stripping them of self dependence and making them more God dependant.

If they were to pull back in their faith they would miss the opportunity to enter into the REST which God had for them. To encourage them the writer had pointed back to the Nation of Israel and explained how Israel failed to enter into Canaan, which was a picture of God's REST. They failed because of 2 reasons:

1. They did not know the ways of God.
2. They did not believe the promises of God.

For these reasons Israel failed to enter Canaan when they were at Kadesh-Barnea under the leadership of Moses. So for the next 38 years they would wonder through the wilderness until all the numbered men died. They missed the REST which God had for them.

The same danger was facing the Hebrew believers. They needed to appropriate the promises of God and continue to move forward if they were going to enter in to God's REST.

Now again I need to just remind you that the REST which the writer talks about here is not heaven. There will be rest in heaven when we get there but that is not what the writer is speaking of. The REST which he is writing about is the peace of God within our hearts

while we live in a world filled with trouble and turmoil. It is the absence of worry, panic and fear in the face of everything we face as we move through this world.

Now this is the place every believer desires to be but the question is, "How do we get there?" Or maybe another question would be, "How do we STAY there?" There are many times when we as believers step into God's REST and we experience the peace of God but then when a trial, storm, or test of our faith comes up we panic and we step out of the REST and back into the "wilderness".

The way into God's REST is found in what the writer of Hebrews recorded in Hebrews 4:2.

Notice Hebrews 4:2

The word "gospel" here means "good news". The good news to Israel was that God would deliver the people of Canaan into their hands and they could then possess the land. The good news to the readers of the book of Hebrews was that God would provide all they needed as they faced the persecution and he would use the persecution they faced as a way to shape them into the image of Jesus Christ. The persecution would be a "work shop" for the Hebrew believers. The problem with Israel was they did not mix the promises of God with faith.

Faith was the door into the land of Canaan and faith is the door into God's REST today. But there was something else which is recorded by the writer that I believe is the key to unlocking the door of faith when we understand what the writer is saying here. This TRUTH is found in verse 3 and I need to show it to you in the Amplified Bible so that we can see what is being said.

Hebrews 4:3

For we who believe [that is, we who personally trust and confidently rely on God] enter that rest [so we have His inner peace now because we are confident in our salvation, and assured of His power], just as He has said,

*"As I SWORE [an oath] IN MY WRATH,
THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,"*

*[this He said] **although His works were ^[a]completed from the foundation of the world** [waiting for all who would believe].*

The end of this verse contains a statement that is so deep that we cannot begin to grasp on to all that it means for us. But what the writer is saying here is that Israel would not

enter into the land of Canaan because of unbelief EVEN THOUGH THE VICTORY WAS PROVIDED FOR THEM FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

Last week I told you what this means. God had determined before the world ever began that Israel could have the victory but the victory which God had aforetime prepared could only be enjoyed if they were willing to walk by faith in the promises of God.

Application:

Here is what that means to you and me: When we face the trials, the tests, and the storms of life we must realize that God in eternity past has already determined we would have the victory. You see our victories come because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. With that said let me show you a verse.

Revelation 13:8

⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

In the mind of God Jesus was crucified before the foundation of the world. So if our victories come through His finished work on the cross then we can see that our victories were determined before the foundation of the world.

Now let me tell you what that means to you and me personally. When we face the difficulties of life whether it be pain and suffering or temptation God has provided victory for us before us before the world was ever created. But that victory is only available when we walk by faith in the promise of God. Or I could say it is only available when we live our lives in the Truth of God's promises. The Apostle Paul understood this and we see it in his words found in Romans 8.

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

³² He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

³³ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

³⁷ *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

³⁸ *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

³⁹ *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul says that in ALL these things we are more than conquerors. He can say this because from before the foundation of the world God determined that as His children he would mold and shape us into the image of His Son and He would in the process provide everything we would need for the journey. Let me show you how God sees us in His mind.

Ephesians 2:6-7

⁶ *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

⁷ *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

So when we mix faith with ALL of these TRUTHS it is then that we are able to enter into God's REST. It is there that we find the peace which every heart in this world longs for. Paul words it this way in Philippians:

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

⁷ *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Let me give you a list of some of the things determined before the foundation of the world for believers:

1. God will complete His work in us.
2. We will be made into the image of Christ.
3. There will be sufficient grace for whatever we face.
4. There is within us the power to conquer sin.
5. Nothing can touch our lives unless God permits it.

6. God will provide all we need as we pass through this world.
7. We will live until our appointed day to die.

When we believe these Truths and we walk by faith in them we will enjoy the REST which God has for us.

Notice Hebrews 4:10

We must cease from our works as God did from His. This means the works of God were finished from the foundation of the world and therefore God rested. Now we must cease from OUR works. This means we must cease trying to live our lives in our own power.

Illustration:

There are believers who live in great stress trying to keep things around them going in the direction they desire to see them go. They are always worried about how things are going to work out. They lay awake at night and stress about how this or that is going to work. Then they get involved in situations they have no business in because they feel as though they can somehow control the situation. But with these people there is no REST. They are anxious all the time. I could tell you stories about people who worry about money on a constant basis. They lose sleep trying to figure out how they can save a dollar here or how they can preserve a dollar in another area. It is never ending.

They have no REST because they have not learned to mix faith with the promises of God. They can quote the promises of God but they themselves do not believe them. In order for these people to REST they MUST cease from their own works and believe that God will work out His will. That is one way in which we are to cease from our works.

Now with that said there could be a critic or two who would say, "Then we do not need to do anything. We can just sit down and wait for the Lord to return." The writer addresses that thought next.

I. The Warning

Part 6

Notice Hebrews 4:11

Here the writer tells his readers that if they are going to enter into God's REST then they must LABOR to enter. This seems to be a contradiction but it is not. I believe the LABOR spoken of here to enter into God's REST is twofold.

1. **We must know the promises of God before we can believe them.**

One way in which we need to LABOR to enter into God's REST is we must search the Scriptures to learn 2 things.

- a. The promises of God that pertain to us.
- b. The ways of God as He works in the lives of His people.

Without either of these we will not be able to enter into God's REST. Let me show you what Peter says.

2 Peter 1:2-4

² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

³ *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

⁴ *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Peter tells us that we have Divine power that comes through KNOWLEDGE of Him. That power Peter speaks of is released by faith in the promises of God and therefore we must have the KNOWLEDGE of the promises if we are going to believe them.

John 17:3

³ *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

To know the ways of God and to have knowledge in His promises requires spending time in the Bible.

Now there is another way in which we LABOR to enter into His REST.

2. **We must do the works He has given us to do.**

By this I mean we must serve Him with our time and our talents and our spiritual gifts as we pass through this world. Let me show you a beautiful verse in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Verse 10 is the verse I want you to notice very closely. Let me break it down.

"For we are his workmanship" - This means that God is the One Who has saved us and He is the One Who is at work in our lives at this very present time.

"created in Christ Jesus unto good works" - We are not saved by GOOD WORKS but we are "created new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)" to produce good works.

"which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." - These "good works" were prepared before the foundation of the world so that we would walk in them. In other words it is God's will that we walk the path that He has given to us. We are to do the work He has appointed to us. While we walk that path we are to serve Him with everything we have. Now listen to this! When we do this the power of God is manifest in our lives in the sense that God will use our LABOR and when He does that we will see His power and therefore be encouraged to trust Him more and more with the situations which come into our lives. The fruit of our LABOR will manifest the faithfulness of God as He accomplishes His will in and through us. This will then build our faith so that we will learn to trust Him more every day.

Conclusion:

Notice Hebrews 4:11 again.

Don't miss the Truth that our LABOR is directly connected with the faith needed to enter into God's REST. We LABOR in the Word and we LABOR in the works God has appointed to us.