

Hebrews 3-4: Entering the Promised Rest

Welcome, welcome! How very thankful we are that we can worship God together in peace in a free land! We welcome you to another family church service. We are thankful that you can be with us this morning for our Bible-based sermon.

We have been studying in the book of Hebrews, and this week we shall consider chapters three and four. The two go together.

Turn with me to Hebrews 3, verse 1.

Hebrews 3:1—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." What does it mean to be holy, and what is this heavenly calling that we are said to be partakers of?

Actually, the two go together.

The word, "holy," comes from a Greek word meaning "dedicated." We are to be dedicated, totally dedicated; and to what? To the "heavenly calling."

The Apostle Paul, the author of Hebrews, explains the meaning of a "calling" in 1 Corinthians 7:20. In a secular sense, it is your business, profession, or means of employment. But in nine other places, Paul talks about our spiritual calling. Here is one of them:

2 Timothy 1:9—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

God has called you and me to a special work, and we must maintain a continued dedication to it. God calls us to accept Christ as our Saviour, by faith in Christ to obey His Ten Commandment law and to minister to those around us. This is our calling.

1 Thessalonians 4:7—"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

It is our daily decisions, to remain close to Christ, which renders it an ongoing, established calling.

2 Peter 1:10-11—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Before us is the prize of eternal life—and even wider service in heaven. Surely, such a future is worth our best efforts down here.

Philippians 3:13-14—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In order to make our calling and election sure, we must—every day—behold Christ, obey Him, and seek to be like Him. —And that brings us back to the first verse of our chapter.

Hebrews 3:1—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

We are to walk in Christ's steps and enter into His calling. He was sent to earth to save the lost, and we are to do the same.

John 20:21—"As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

In carrying on His mission for humanity, Christ was obedient as we should be.

Hebrews 3:2—"Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house."

Christ always did those things which would please His Father (John 8:29), and we should do likewise.

John 17:4—"I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

But now, as we turn our attention to the second half of Hebrews 3:2, we find Paul making a comparison. The Apostle was writing to people who were not certain about Jesus Christ. That is why Paul spoke about Christ's divinity, and how He is superior to angels, in Hebrews 1. In Hebrews 2, we are told of Christ's full humanity. That is important, for Christ's perfect priesthood is based on the fact that He has both a full divinity and full humanity. Those who claim that Christ was not fully like us, yet without sin, would destroy His qualifications to be our great High Priest.

So we can understand when, here in chapter 3, the Jewish readers—the "Hebrews"—are told that Christ is superior to Moses. "Something greater" is a continued theme of the book, and that "something" is Christ.

Hebrews 3:2—"Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house."

Paul is here referring to a statement by the Lord in Numbers 12:7:

“My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house.”

How was Moses faithful in God’s house?

Exodus 40:16—“Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he.”

Moses was accounted faithful in God’s house—because he obeyed Him! You and I can be faithful in God’s house also!

Paul presses his point still further: Christ, He says, is greater than Moses for a very special reason:

Hebrews 3:3-4—“For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God.”

Those two verses are a very clear statement that Christ, the builder of the house,—is God!

You and I can be faithful workers in the house, also, but the builder of the house is the one we must constantly look to as we carry on that work.

Christ is not only the Builder of the house,—but the Foundation the house is built on!

Matthew 16:18—“Upon this Rock I will build My church.”

Now Paul switches the metaphor, from builder of the house to its occupants.

Hebrews 3:5-6—“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.

“But Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Moses was, indeed, a faithful servant in the house, just as you and I can be. But Christ owns the house. He is the Son, the inheritor of all things.

Elsewhere in Paul’s writings, the metaphor is changed once again,—and *we become the glorious house itself* which Christ is building, as He prepares us for a place in heaven. Another sweet promise to rejoice at!

Ephesians 2:19-22—“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone;

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

What a glorious objective our God has in mind! We help in building the house, by working closely with Christ, in ministering to the needs of others and helping to draw them closer to God.

1 Peter 2:4-5—“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

We are God’s temple. He made us; and, by caring for our body temple, we honor our Creator.

2 Corinthians 6:16—“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

But a warning accompanies the promise: The last part of Hebrews 3, verse 6:

“—If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

The blessing only comes through continued obedience. It was continued obedience that kept the angels in heaven from falling. It will only be obedience, through the enabling grace of Christ, that will enable us today to take the place of the angels which fell.

By clinging resolutely to Christ, and to Him alone, will we endure and be saved.

Matthew 10:22—“He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

Hebrews 10:35-36—“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

So far in Hebrews 3, the Apostle has shown us that Christ is greater than Moses and that we are His house, or temple. But now Paul switches to another point: the promised rest. Moses led them out of Egypt so they could enter the rest of the promised land—but, Paul says, there is a greater rest which Moses could not give them.

Hebrews 3:7-9—“Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.”

Because they rebelled against God and sinned in the wilderness, most of the generation of Israelites which entered the wilderness did not enter the promised land, which was the rest Moses had promised them.

Deuteronomy 9:7—“Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 10:9—“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.”

Because of their rebellion, God was grieved in His heart.

Hebrews 3:10—“Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known My ways.”

Oh, how it hurt Him! It was because He loved the people that He brought them out of Egypt. But they rejected His rule, so He had to withdraw from them. How very important it is that we, today, forsake not the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

Never can the human heart know happiness until it is submitted to be controlled by the Spirit of God. Because the Israelites refused to obey God's law, they were rejected.

Hebrews 3:11—"So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest."

Only a few who had remained obedient were permitted to enter the earthly Canaan.

Numbers 14:28-30—"Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Numbers 32:13—"And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the Lord, was consumed."

Oh, my friends, this could happen to us today! God will not tolerate sin,—regardless of who it is found in. Only those of us who are faithful to the end will enter the heavenly Canaan.

Hebrews 3:12—"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

We must individually search our hearts, and encourage one another in right living, right doing—while it is today. None can know what tomorrow will bring.

Hebrews 3:13—"But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

We must pay close attention to that which led to the downfall of the Israelites in the wilderness. We dare not follow in their track.

Psalms 78:56-57—"Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not His testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow."

Jeremiah 2:13—"For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Fortunately, Hebrews 3:14 has the answer!

Hebrews 3:14—"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Just now—today—make sure you are right with

God! Know of a certainty that there is nothing standing between you and Him! No idols, no little pleasures of which Heaven cannot approve.

Hebrews 3:15—"While it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

The remainder of the chapter is well worth remembering:

Hebrews 3:16-19—"For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?"

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

And now, let us pass directly to Hebrews 4, for that is where Paul wants to immediately take us. It is actually an extension of chapter 3.

Hebrews 4:1-2—"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 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."

Not everyone who professes faith in Christ will go to heaven. Church membership will not save anyone. It is obedience to the Ten Commandments, by the enabling grace of Jesus Christ, which counts in the eyes of God.

Matthew 7:21-23—"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; *but he that doeth the will of My Father* which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

What is this promised rest which Paul talks about in Hebrews 3 and 4? For the Israelites, it was the land of Canaan. There they would be able to receive their promised rest: a land which belonged to them, which they could occupy in peace, as long as they obeyed God.

But the antitype, the broader application, is to the heavenly rest. God intends to save His obedient children—and give them the earth made new as their promised rest! And what a glorious promise that is! A rest which will never be disturbed.

Next Paul presents us with something special: the symbol of the promised rest.

Hebrews 4:3-6—"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

"For He spake in a certain place of the seventh

day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.”

In verse 3, Paul is referring to Genesis 2:2-3, where the Sabbath was instituted. In verse 4, he mentions the Fourth Commandment. In verse 5, the Apostle is noting the fact that, even though the Israelites eventually entered the promised land, their sins kept them from obtaining the promised rest. Rebellion and warfare was their continual lot.

But, Paul says, there is a more complete rest which we can enter today.

Hebrews 4:7-9—“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

What is this special rest? It is twofold. First, it is the rest of acceptance by God and oneness with Him, as we become His humble, believing, obeying children. This experience is spoken of as “righteousness by faith.” No longer are we doing our own works of self-pleasing and sin; henceforth we are kept by God’s power as His little children.

Hebrews 4:10-11—“For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

But, second, this rest is symbolized by the observance of the Bible Sabbath, the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath is not only a memorial of Creation, a reminder of our redemption, but it is a symbol of our rest in Christ.

Keeping the Sabbath deepens the rest! Not keeping it is transgression of God’s law, and there is no rest for those who do that (Isaiah 57:20-21). The Sabbath and the promised rest go together. Both help lead us to the heavenly Canaan—that final promised rest.

And now, Paul directs us to the Bible, our instruction book to help us along the pathway to our final home.

Hebrews 4:12-13—“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of

the heart.

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

The Word of God is powerful. It searches out the sins in our heart; and, if we are willing, it leads us into repentance and a new birth in Christ.

Jeremiah 17:10—“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

1 Peter 1:23—“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13—“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

The “sword of the Spirit . . . is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). God knows every thought of our hearts; and, if we will let Him, He will transform us into His own image.

Psalms 139:23-24—“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

As if all that we have been taught in this chapter is not glorious enough, the Apostle concludes by leading us to the very throne of God!

Hebrews 4:14-16—“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

What a wonderful promise is this! Memorize those three verses, and make them your own—while it is today—so that you can be assured of the promised rest.

Hebrews 9:24—“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Hebrews 10:23—“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised).”

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