

Hebrews 4:1-13

“The radical and revolutionary rest”

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I. Introduction

We took up the 2nd warning in the book of Hebrews last week, and this week we continue with the result of hardening the heart and that is not entering God’s rest. One of the genuine marks of a person who has “*held of from the beginning with confidence to steadfastly to the end*” is that they enter the rest of God.

II. Vs. 1-3 Remaining rest

Vs. 1-3 Having reminded his readers of the generation that came out of Egypt that didn’t enter the rest of Canaan because of unbelief, the writer now continues to warn these present Hebrews of their possible failure of entering the rest of the Messiah. These persecuted professing believers had been taught that “tribulation” was a mark of God’s displeasure and as such found it hard to believe that “rest” was attainable in Jesus. The “Us” refers to professing Hebrew believers at the time of the writing and the “them” to the generation that came out of Egypt. The “good news” that was preached to the professing believers was that there is spiritual rest in the Messiah Jesus, while the good news to the post exodus Hebrews was temporal rest in a land of promise. The truth of the “good news to” post exodus Hebrews didn’t benefit them because though it was heard it was not believed. When those Israelites stood at the borders of the land they had no doubts at all that the land was there, they believed in it. *Their problem was that they*

lacked the faith to act on what they believed! Faith is more than belief; it is activity on belief! Verse 3 provides a chief characteristic of those who believe described as “For we who have believed **DO ENTER THAT REST.**” What happened to these exodus Israelites is what is common amongst many in the evangelical realm as it is known as “*easy believism*”. It un-biblically assumes that a person can raise their hand to receive Jesus as Savior without any personal transformation. **That is a far different reality then the promise of Christ that when He comes into the human heart there is a “radical change of government that results in a revolutionary change in behavior.” A gospel that doesn’t change a soul can not save a soul!** The outcome of this **“radical change of government that results in a revolutionary change in behavior”** is that for the first time his working in us is rest.

III. Vs. 4-10 NEW principle in operation

Vs. 4-10 These verses give us a picture of this rest as seen in the Sabbath. What we learn is that it was available from the foundation of the world. God ceasing from His labors of the seventh day of creation is intend to be **a picture** of what the rest of faith is. God never wants His children to mistake **shadows for substance**. In verse 8 we read that, “...*if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.*” It is clear by verse 9 that the shadow of the Sabbath was not all that God intended, as 500 years later in Psalm 95, have recorded that, “...*there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*” The writers point is **if these are nothing but shadows then what is the real rest?** That’s where verse 10 comes in as we read, “*For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*” There is a radical new and opposite principle of human behavior, that God intends humanity to operate in, it was His plan

from the beginning. It was from this principal that humanity fell, and in 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul explained to them by saying, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* It is this NEW principle in operation in our life, that reveals to us that we can have assurance that we belong to the body of Christ. Humanity after the fall lives in a lie fostered by satan about human activity. We have been told and believe the lie that we have the DNA to be what we want to be when we want to be, we can achieve whatever we desire to be. We are certain we have what it takes, we can educate ourselves, develop new skills, and when we do we will have what it takes to be what we want to be. That’s the lie that the New Testament writers discovered when they came to Christ:

- Consider Paul’s confession of this discovery in Philippians 3:3-10 where he wrote:

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

- Then there is Jesus’ on words in John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”
- To which Paul gives a hearty Amen in Philippians 4:13: He writes “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Saints the truth is: We don’t have what it takes, and we never did. The only one who

can live the Christian life is Jesus Christ in and through us. Our part is to depend

upon him and not upon us, and to do so in: Every situation, and every circumstance,

allowing Him to work and perform every activity. Thus we cease from our own labors.

What's odd is every true Christian began their Christian life this way! We all came to the place where we stopped trying to save ourselves. We looked to the Lord Jesus, and received him, and rested by trusting in His finished work. But now as believers we have become at times what Paul declared to Galatians in 3:3 when he wrote, “*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, **are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**” We stopped heeding the exhortation of Paul’s in Colossians 2:6 where we are told, “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk in Him.**” And because of this we have stopped “*looking unto Jesus, the author **and finisher** of our faith*”, Hebrews 12:2.**

The result of this truth in the life of the believer is Rest! We now ought to have relief and release, from **worrying, fretting** and **straining**, because we are resting upon the One who is completely adequate to do through us everything that needs to be done. The word that is emphasized with regards to this **NEW principle in operation in our life** is the word “**TODAY**”. This informs us that God's design for living is **TODAY**, and not waiting until we are in heaven. **What's being given to us is NOT inactivity, but rather freedom from straining in our own effort.** He expects everything to be done by the Colossians 3:17 principal where we are told that, “**whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

IV. Vs. 11-13 The Word of surgery

Vs.11-13 Looking at the above truth about a **NEW principle in operation in our life,**

ought to bring every reader to two realizations:

- a. *Lord, please show me how to enter into this rest, I want to know what this is in my life!*
- b. *Then in verse 12 we realize that the instrument by which we enter in, is the Word of God.*

In order to enter into this new principal, we must repudiate the old. But the problem is,

the old activity is so ingrained in us that we automatically respond to old thought

patterns. We have a natural reaction to just play “**OLD TAPES**” and because of this the new life of Jesus never gets heard. We find ourselves just singing the same old tunes of bitterness, impatience, anger, frustration, anxiety, worry, fear, uncertainty and inferiority. There is only one thing that can get us from playing the same worn out songs: The word of God! The writer informs us that the Word of God is living and powerful. It is described as, “*living*” and the Greek tense of the verb indicates “*constantly active*”. It is “*powerful*” and the Greek word used is one in which we get our English word “*energy*” from and describes again an “*active and effective energy*”. The word “*sharper*” in the Greek is “to cut” and describes the word of God as having an incisive and penetrating quality as it lays bare ALL, self-delusions and moral false arguments. ***In the of the Holy Spirit it has a two-edged action.***

1. ***It strips off the false:*** It exposes the entrenched power of the flesh in our life, and strips it off. The word of God, is utterly ruthless, moving in on us, backing us into a corner, taking down all our fences and facades, worming its way right into the heart of our nature, discerning even between the soul and the spirit.
2. ***It unveils what's true:*** When we come to the place where we are ready to take a good look at ourselves, then there comes the marvelous, healing, wholesome, comforting, sweet, delivering word that sets us on our feet again, and shows us, in Christ, every provision for every need. We step out each fresh, each new day into the glorious experience of a victory that is already won in Christ.

Further more it is described as “piercing” and the Greek word here means to “go through”.

The phrase “*even to the **DIVISION** of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow*” is interesting in the Greek. They DO NOT mean dividing of the soul and the spirit or of the joints from the marrow. Rather it means going through the soul and going through the spirit, as defined by “*joints and marrow*” which are not in contact with each other and therefore can not be divided. The dividing IS NOT that of one thing from another by piercing it but rather of separating the elements of the soul and the elements of the spirit

so we are able to see what the true make up of them. This is further clarified by the phrase, “*and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” The Greek word “*discerner*” is a compound word that means to “*sift out and analyze*”.

The outcome of this is in verse 13. We all remember Genesis and the Story of Adam and Eve where after the fall they attempted to hide themselves from God. They hid because they realized they was naked and he were ashamed and tried to clothe themselves. That’s what happens we we are examined by the Word of God. James 1:23 describes the Word of God as a mirror; that shows us as we truly are not as we want others too see us as. But this stripping away also through the same Word of God enables us to see ourselves as God the Father sees us in His Son. We are truly we we are, just sinners saved by grace, with nothing to defend, nothing that need be hidden, nothing that cannot be fully exposed to everyone. We have entered into His rest. All our walls and barriers have come down and we are FREE from hiding any more. Because we are what we are before God, we can be exactly what we are before all of humanity. In 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 Paul wrote of what this new view looked like in himself when he wrote, “*For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*”