

Learn, Lounge And Labor
Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

Intro: When I was growing up there was a safety campaign called **Stop, Look and Listen**. It was designed to keep those of us who walked to and from school each day safe as we walked. It was a very simply message that carried a three pronged warning. We were instructed to find a safe place to cross the street and then **Stop** before you get to the curb, **Look** all around for traffic and then we were to **Listen** for any sound of traffic. If we saw any traffic or heard any traffic we were told to let it pass before crossing the street. A very sound warning.

Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 is similar in some ways to the **Stop, Look and Listen** campaign, it is the second of 5 warnings the writer of Hebrews has for us, it deals with Israel's failure to enter into the rest provided for them by God. The OT Israelites believed God to bring them out of Egypt, but they did not believe in God to bring them into Canaan. As a result they lost the blessing of the Promised Land. The warning has to do with **disbelieving the sufficiency of God**. The Israelites were *content* with half a salvation, so to speak, and that is all they received. The punishment emphasis was on the temporal side of things. Those who disbelieved had to be content with a second-class life in the wilderness, and there they died, never having enjoyed the rest of Canaan. The same is true of the believer today. They are saved but live earthbound lives with **no joy, no peace, no rest, and no victory**. If these four verbs describe your Christian walk then today's message is for you.

[Ready Hebrews 3:7-4:13/Pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

It is important that we understand the background of this section, which is the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and their experiences of unbelief in the wilderness.

To begin with, we need to understand that there are spiritual lessons in many of Israel's experiences even from the geography. The nation's bondage in Egypt is an illustration of a sinner's bondage in this world. As Israel was delivered from Egypt by the **blood of lambs and the power of God**, so a sinner who believes on Christ is delivered from the bondage of sin (Col. 1:13-14). Jesus Christ is **"the Lamb of God"** whose death and resurrection have made our deliverance from sin a reality.

It was not God's will that Israel remain either in Egypt or in the wilderness. His desire was that the people enter their glorious inheritance in the land of Canaan. But when Israel got to the border of their inheritance, they delayed because they **doubted the promise of God (Num. 13-14)**. **"We are NOT able"** (Num 13:31) wept the ten spies and the people cried with them and wanted to turn around and go back to Egypt. However, the message of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb different, **"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us"** (Num 14:8), their message was clear, **"We ARE able with God's help!"** Because the people went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith, they missed their inheritance and died in the wilderness. It was the new generation that possessed the land and entered into their rest.

What does Canaan represent to us as Christians today? It represents our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3, 11, 15-23). Some have taught that Canaan represented heaven but in context that isn't possible, Canaan was a place of battles, and even of defeats, it is not an illustration of heaven! Israel had to cross the river by faith (a picture of the believer as he dies to self and the world, Rom. 6) and claim the inheritance by faith. They had to **"step out by faith"** (Josh. 1:3) and claim the land for themselves, just as believers today must do.

Now we can understand what the wilderness wanderings represent: the experiences of believers who will not claim their spiritual inheritance in Christ, who doubt God's Word and live in restless unbelief. To be sure, God is with them, as He was with Israel; but they do not enjoy the fullness of God's blessing. They are "out of Egypt" but they are not yet "in Canaan."

One of the key words in this section of Hebrews is the word **rest** (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3-5, 8-11). The writer mentions **two different "rests"**: (1) **God's Sabbath rest**, when He ceased from His Creation activities (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4); (2) **Israel's rest in Canaan** (Deut. 12:9; Josh. 21:43-45; Heb. 3:11). The writer of Hebrews saw in these **"rests"** illustrations of the spiritual experiences of believers today. The **Sabbath rest** is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation (Heb. 4:3; see Matt. 11:28). The **Canaan rest** is a picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ (Heb. 4:11-13). The first is the rest of salvation; the second is the rest of submission.

There is a third rest that all believers will experience that is the **future rest** that all us will enjoy with God. **“There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God”** (Heb. 4:9). This word for rest is the Greek word that means — “a keeping of a Sabbath”—and this is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. When the saints enter heaven, it will be like sharing God’s great Sabbath rest, with all labors and battles ended (Rev. 14:13).

With this background of Israel’s history and the “rests” involved, the writer gives us **a three step warning**:

Step one We Need to...

1. Learn – Be Careful not to make the same mistakes as Israel – Let us “Take Heed” Vv. 3:7-19

A. What do I mean by the same mistakes as Israel?

- 1) Simply this: Even though they had received the blessings of God they did not believe he was all sufficient.
- 2) Their sin was **“Disbelieving the sufficiency of God.”**
- 3) **ILL:** At the heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.
 - (a) The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) **erred in their hearts** (Heb. 3:10), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word.
 - (b) They also had **evil hearts of unbelief** (Heb. 3:12); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan.
 - (c) They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt – yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

B. When a person has an **erring and disbelieving heart** the result will be a **hard heart**.

1) The Hard Heart of the Children of Israel can be easily seen...

- (a) The children of Israel watched as the Power of God delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and yet they doubted His sufficiency.
 - 1) They watched as He demonstrated His power over every single god of the Egyptian religion
 - 2) They realized the exemption from many of the plagues
 - 3) They benefited from their obedience when their first born were spared when the death angel came by.
 - 4) They saw God’s power over nature when they faced certain death at the Red Sea
 - 5) Their hunger was met with heavenly food
 - 6) Their thirst was quenched by water from a rock
 - 7) Yet, when they heard the report of the 12 spies, they chose to listen to the pessimistic report rather than listen to the optimistic report from Caleb and Joshua to step out by faith to take possession of the land of milk and honey.
- (b) That generation paid the price by not being allowed to enter in to the **Canaan Rest Promised** them.

2) The same is true today someone with a hard heart is someone who is insensitive to the **Word and Work** of God.

(a) **Someone with a hard heart...**

- 1) Reads their Bible but it rarely has any affect on them – they kind of read and ask “so what?”
- 2) Hears a sermon preached and when the invitation is given they wouldn’t dream of going forward even if there were some points in the sermon that may have moved them at the time.
- 3) Is more willing to debate the doctrines of scripture than to do the clear teachings of Scripture.

(b) **Someone with a hard heart...**

- 1) Find it hard to see God’s hand involved in their daily lives.
- 2) Can sing the song count your blessings name them one by one but find it all but impossible to do what the song says.
- 3) Cannot give a testimony of what God is doing in their lives because they see everything in human terms not spiritual terms.
- 4) Has no idea of what “walking by faith” really means.

3) But what message does this bring to a believer today?

- (a) No believer today, Jew or Gentile, could go back into the Mosaic legal system since the temple is gone and there is no priesthood.
 - 1) But every believer is tempted to give up his confession of Christ and go back into the world system’s life of compromise and bondage.
 - 2) This happens every time we are faced with a choice and we make our decision based on worldly standards rather than Scriptural standards.
- (b) This is especially true during times of persecution and suffering.

- (1) The fires of persecution have always purified the church because suffering separates true believers from the counterfeit.
 - (i) True believers are willing to suffer for Christ and they hold firmly to their convictions and their confession of faith (see Heb. 3:6, 14).
 - (ii) We are not saved by holding to our confession.
 - (iii) The fact that we hold to our confession is proof that we are God's true children.
- C. It is important that we take heed and learn the dangers that exist.
- 1) It is also important that we encourage one another to be faithful to the Lord (V. 13).
 - 2) Reading book of Hebrews we get the impression that some of these believers were careless about their fellowship in the local assembly (Vv. 10:23-25)
 - 3) Christians belong to each other and need each other
- D. It is clear from these 13 verses that God was grieved with Israel during the entire 40 years they wandered in the wilderness.
- E. The sin of Israel is stated in verse 12, "...*departing from the living God*".
- 1) We get our English word *apostasy* from the Greek word for "departing"
 - 2) This is the only place this word is used in Hebrews.
 - 3) Does apostasy mean abandoning the faith and being condemned forever?
 - (a) No, that doesn't fit the context
 - (b) Israel *departed from the living God* by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt.
 - (c) God did not permit them to return to Egypt.
 - (d) He disciplined them in the wilderness.
 - (e) God did not allow His people to return to bondage.
- F. The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Savior who constantly intercedes for His children.
- 1) Remember Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer's present spiritual inheritance in Christ.
 - 2) Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God; but will never be allowed to return to the bondage of sin.
- G. *So, we need to Learn - Be Careful not to make the same mistakes as Israel*

Step Two We Need to...

2. Lounge – Be Careful not to Miss our Rest – "Let us Fear" Vv. 4:1-8

- A. Believers today may enter and enjoy their spiritual inheritance in Christ.
- 1) We must be careful lest we fail to believe God's Word, for it is only as the Word is "*mixed with faith*" that it can accomplish its purposes.
 - 2) The argument in this section is given in several propositions:
 - (a) God finished His work and rested, so that His rest has been available since Creation.
 - (b) The Jews failed to enter into their rest.
 - (c) Many years later (Ps. 95), God said that a rest was still available.
 - 3) That "today" is still here!
 - (a) This means that Joshua did not lead Israel into the true rest, because a rest still remains. (*Note that the name "Jesus" in Heb. 4:8, kjv, ought to be "Joshua." "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua."*)
- B. The Canaan rest for Israel is a picture of the spiritual rest we find in Christ when we surrender to Him.
- 1) When we come to Christ by faith, we find *salvation rest*
 - (a) Jesus said in Matt. 11:28, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"
 - (b) This rest Jesus is talking about is the rest we receive when we repent – turn to Him for our salvation.
 - 2) When we yield and learn of Him and obey Him by faith, we enjoy *submission rest*
 - (a) Jesus said in Matt. 11:29-30, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"
 - (b) This is an illustration of *submission rest*.
 - 3) The first is "*peace with God*" (Rom. 5:1);
 - 4) The second is the "*peace of God*" (Phil. 4:6-8).
- C. It is by believing that we enter into rest (Heb. 4:3);
- D. It is by obeying God by faith and surrendering to His will that the rest enters into us.

E. Step one, we need to Learn - Be Careful not to make the same mistakes as Israel; Step two we need to Lounge – Be Careful not to Miss our Rest

Step Three We Need to...

3. Labor – Be Diligent in Following God's Word – “Let Us Labor” Vv. 9-13

A. He says, **“let us labor therefore to enter into that rest...”**

- 1) He isn't saying work for salvation's rest but submission's rest.
- 2) Labor under the yoke Christ rather than the yoke of the world.
- 3) It is work to not follow the world's ways

B. “Give diligence” is a good translation of this admonition **“Let Us Labor.”**

- 1) Diligence is the opposite of “drifting” (Heb. 2:1-3).
- 2) How do we give diligence?
 - (a) By paying close attention to the Word of God.
 - (b) Israel did not believe God's Word, so the rebels fell in the wilderness.
 - (c) **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”** (Rom. 10:17).

C. In comparing the Word of God to a sword, the writer is not suggesting that God uses His Word to slaughter the saints!

- 1) It is true that the Word cuts the heart of sinners with conviction (Acts 5:33; 7:54),
- 2) And that the Word defeats Satan (Eph. 6:17).
- 3) The Greek word translated “sword” means “a short sword or dagger.”
- 4) The emphasis is on the power of the Word to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man.
- 5) The Word is a “discerner” or “critic.”
- 6) The Israelites criticized God's Word instead of allowing the Word to judge them.
- 7) Consequently, they lost their inheritance.

D. Of course, God sees our hearts (Heb. 4:13); but we do not always know what is there (Jer. 17:9).

- 1) God uses the Word to enable us to see the sin and unbelief in our own hearts.
- 2) The Word exposes our hearts; and then, if we trust God, the Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises.
- 3) This is why each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God's Word.
- 4) In the Word we see God, and we also see how God sees us.
- 5) We see ourselves as we really are.
- 6) This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him.

E. All of this is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

- 1) The two “He's” in Heb. 4:10 refer to Jesus Christ.
- 2) God rested when He finished the work of Creation.
- 3) God's Son rested when He completed the work of the new creation.
- 4) We may enter into His rest by trusting His Word and obeying His will.
- 5) We can do this as we listen to His Word, understand it, trust it, and obey it. Only in this way can we claim our inheritance in Christ.

F. Before Joshua conquered Jericho, he went out to survey the situation; and he met the Lord Jesus Christ (Josh. 5:13-15). Joshua discovered that he was second in command! The Lord had a sword in His hand, and Joshua fell at His feet in complete submission. It was this action in private that gave Joshua his public victory. We too claim our spiritual inheritance by surrendering to Him and trusting His Word. We must beware of an evil heart of unbelief.

Conclusion: The safety campaign of years ago to **Stop, Look and Listen**, helped kids get home safe. The message from the Holy Spirit of God today is that we step out by faith and enter into the Canaan rest. We can have a **joyful, peaceful, restful, and victorious** Christian life today if we **Learn from Israel's mistakes** and step out by faith and begin to **Lounge in the promised rest** by surrendering totally to Christ. That will become obvious as we **Labor to enter that rest** by being diligent to follow all of His teachings.