

BAND of BROTHERS

SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 3

Hebrews 3:7-4:16: The Danger of Disbelief

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

– Hebrews 3:12-13 ESV

- **A call to faithfulness** (Hebrews 3:5-6)
 - Less about **perfection**, than **perseverance**
 - hold fast** – κατέχω (*katechō*)
 - retain, keep firm possession of, hold secure

*Rejoice **always**, pray **without ceasing**, give thanks **in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **Do not quench** the Spirit. **Do not despise** prophecies, but **test everything**; **hold fast** (*katechō*) what is good. **Abstain from** every form of evil. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 ESV*

- Paul is demanding the **impossible**
- Or is he?

*Now may the God of peace **himself sanctify you completely**, and may your whole spirit and soul and body **be kept blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.** – 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV*

- Our faithfulness is based on His faithfulness
 - We pursue **sanctification**
 - Based on the promise of future **glorification**
 - Holding fast **our confidence**
 - And boasting in **our hope**

Now faith is **the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**
– Hebrews 11:1 ESV

- **Divinely-inspired words**

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’*

*As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’” – Hebrews 3:7-11 ESV*

- He quotes from Psalm 95
- But He attributes the words to the Holy Spirit
- That renders them **timeless** and **relevant**
- They are a message from God

*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand. – Psalm 95:1-7 ESV*

- **A proper appreciation for God**

...the rock of our salvation... – vs 1

...worthy of our thanks... – vs 2

...our source of praise and rejoicing... – vs 2

...a great God... – vs 3

...a great King above all gods... – vs 3

...our maker and our God... – vs 6-7

- With all that in mind...
Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts... – Vs 7-8

- This is where the author of Hebrews starts
- But his audience knew how it began
- So, why not listen to this “great God?”

- **God has spoken – again**

- So, don’t harden your hearts

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **but in these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son... – Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV*

- The cycle of sin
 - The author reminds them of “the rebellion”
 - A black mark on their legacy as a people
 - Their ancestors heard God speak
 - But they failed to believe and obey
 - They doubted His goodness and greatness
 - And they paid dearly for it

- **Deuteronomy 1 – Israel arrives at Canaan**

- God had promised Canaan as their possession
- It was occupied, but God would give it to them
- “A land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:17)

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills. It is a land of wheat and barley; of grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates; of olive oil and honey. It is a land where food is plentiful and nothing is lacking. It is a land where iron is as common as stone, and copper is abundant in the hills. When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. – Deuteronomy 8:7-10 NLT

- Yet, they refused to enter the promised land
- They rebelled against the Promise-Giver
- But why?
 - The report of the spies – Numbers 13
 - ...the people living there are powerful! (28)*
 - ...their towns are large and fortified (28)*
 - ...We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are! (31)*
 - ...The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there! (32)*

- Moses had told them...
“Go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” – Deuteronomy 1:21 ESV

- But the **bad** report led to a **worse** decision

*Then the whole community began **weeping** aloud, and they **cried all night**. Their voices rose in a **great chorus of protest** against Moses and Aaron. **“If only we had died** in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” **they complained**. “Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us **die in battle**? Our wives and our little ones will be **carried off as plunder**! Wouldn’t it be better for us to **return to Egypt**?” Then **they plotted among themselves**, “Let’s choose a new leader and **go back to Egypt!**”* – Numbers 14:1-4 NLT

- **Ignorance of God’s ways leads to ignoring God’s will**

Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest.” – HEBREWS 3:10-11 ESV

- Despite all God **had done**, they couldn’t grasp what God **was doing**
- His **future promises** were overshadowed by their **present problems**
- God’s ways don’t always make sense
 - He doesn’t require us to **comprehend**
 - He asks us to faithfully **comply**
 - He demands **obedience** based on **trust**

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. – ISAIAH 55:8-9 NLT

- Circumstances clouded their view of God
 - Their perspective produced thoughts of
 - ...disbelief regarding God’s promises
 - ...denial concerning God’s power and goodness
 - ...God as their enemy and not their deliverer
 - ...returning to “the good old days”

- **A lesson worth learning**

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. – Hebrews 3:12 ESV

- Avoid their mistake of...
 - ...developing an unbelieving heart
 - ...allowing sin to deceive and harden you

...neglecting brotherly encouragement
...doubting God's goodness and greatness
...refusing to enter His promised rest

- **A far better rest**

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. – Hebrews 4:1-2 ESV

- Notice what the author tells them:

*...while **the promise** of entering his rest still stands...* – Hebrews 4:1 ESV

- So, God's rest must be more than **a place**
- Their rest was to be found in God, not Canaan
 - The next generation eventually entered Canaan
 - But they never experienced rest
 - Because they set their eyes on the wrong thing
 - They expected Canaan to deliver...
 - ...a trouble-free existence
 - ...their best life now
 - ...a constant flow of blessings from God
 - ...heaven on earth
 - But circumstances cannot bring rest

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. – Hebrews 4:8-11 ESV

- **The best rest is found in Christ**

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and **I will give you rest.**"* – Matthew 11:28 NLT

- This is the same promise God made to Moses

*"My presence will go with you, and **I will give you rest.**"* – Exodus 33:14 ESV

- Rest through our ever-present High Priest

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we

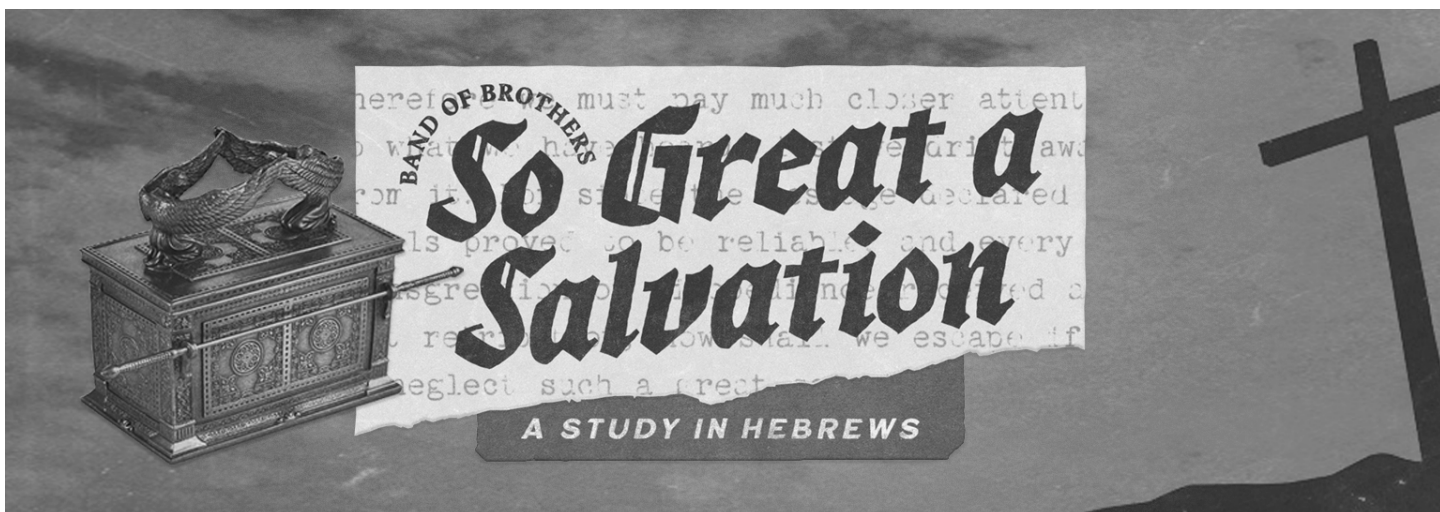
are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. – Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV

- **Discussion questions**

How do our lives exhibit a lack of rest or a wrong expectation of what it should be?

Discuss the following quote: “What will make the eternal kingdom great is not the absence of sin, but the presence of God.”

Why should the author’s mention of Jesus as our Great High Priest bring us rest?



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SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 4 HOMEWORK

WEEK 4 – Hebrews 5:1-6:12: Hope Until the End

In this lesson, we will take a look at the author's warning against apostasy. He accuses some in his audience of being immature and unskilled in the word of righteousness. They display a marked lack of spiritual immaturity and an inability to discern good from evil. These chapters contain strong words that demand a radical change among those who claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ. These controversial verses can be difficult to understand but seem to be fairly straightforward in their message. There were some who claimed to be followers of Christ who lacked any evidence or fruit that would back up their claim. Their lack of saving faith made them easy prey to those who were calling for a return to Judaism with all its rules and regulation.

- Read Hebrews 5:1-6:12. Write down any thoughts that jump out at you from these verses.
- Over the week, read pages 31-36 of Ken's Devotionalary™ on Hebrews.
- To begin, go back and look at Hebrews 4:14-16. What do these verses teach us about the high priesthood of Jesus? What is He doing on our behalf?

Now, read Hebrews 5:1-6. What do these verses add to our understanding of Jesus as our great high priest?

In verse 6, the author compares Jesus to another priest mentioned in Genesis 14. Take a few minutes to read that chapter and familiarize yourself with this somewhat obscure Old Testament character.

What similarities do you find between Melchizedek and Jesus?

- Go back and look at verses 7-10 of chapter five. The author emphasizes Jesus' activities while in human form. Why are these descriptions of Jesus' earthly activities important? What do they have to do with His role as high priest?
- In verses 11-14, the author has some rather unflattering things to say to his audience. In what ways do his statements strike a chord with you? What steps could you take to reverse the trend so that might experience an improvement in your own spiritual maturity?
- In verses 1-3 of chapter six, the author encourages his readers to "leave behind the elementary doctrine of Christ." It is important to note that he uses "Christ," the Greek word for "Messiah." Since his audience is made up of Jewish Christians, why is this point significant?

What could some of the elementary doctrines concerning the Messiah that they are holding on to?

- Verses 4-8 are considered to be some of the most difficult passages in the Bible. As you read them, what do you hear them saying?

What do you think it means to be "enlightened" and then "fall away?"

What does it mean to receive "a blessing from God" but bear only "thorns and thistles?"

- In verses 9-11, how does the author wrap up this somewhat difficult passage with a word of encouragement?

Why does the author put so much emphasis on maintaining an assurance of hope until the end? What would this look like in everyday life?