

Commentary on Hebrews Chapters 3 and 4, by Chuck Smith 9.22.24

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September Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15 (NKJV)

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

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Chapter 3

Wherefore, holy brethren (Hbr 3:1),

The word *wherefore* immediately leads us back to that which is immediately preceding, and that is the declaration of the superiority of Jesus over the angels. Because He is superior over the angelic beings being the Son of God.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus (Hbr 3:1);

Here we are called upon to consider Jesus, and that's what the book of Hebrews, really, is all about. And again later on we'll be called to consider Jesus.

Paul calls them, "holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling." He calls Jesus, "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

The book of Hebrews was written to Hebrews. Those who had grown up and had been thoroughly trained in the religion of the Hebrews, in Judaism, who were used to having a high priest; used to the ceremonies in the temple; used to all of the regalia and the worship of the priesthood. They were used to the high priest going in on the Day of Atonement and making atonement for the sins of the people. Now he is going to declare we have a high priest, and in time he is going to show the superiority of our High Priest over the priests who are after the order of Levi.

But for the time being in chapter three, he is going to show us the superiority of Jesus over Moses through whom the priesthood was established. In other words, God established His house, the spiritual house, through Moses. And it was through Moses that the tabernacle was set up and the dimensions and all declared. And so he's going to show the superiority of Jesus.

"Consider now the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, the Messiah Jesus."

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all of his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who has builded the house has more honor than the house (Hbr 3:2-3).

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The one who builds the house is greater than the house itself. It was the Lord who built the house; thus, He is greater than the house. He is deserving of more honor and glory.

For every house is builded by some man (Hbr 3:4);

Here's the house. And if you've got a house, you have to have a builder of the house. Here's the church. You have to have one that built the church. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." So he who has built the house is greater than the house itself.

and he who built all things is God. Now Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after (Hbr 3:4-5);

So Moses was faithful; he gave to us the laws of God. He was a servant and he declared unto us the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, the worship, the ordinances, which were all a shadow of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote in Colossians, "These things were all a shadow of things to come. The real substance is Jesus." If you go back in the law, if you go back in the sacrifices, if you go back in the ordinances and in those things, you will find that Jesus is behind it all. It is all pointing to Jesus. The offering for sin and all, they are all pointing to Jesus. So he was a faithful servant as he testified of those things which were to be spoken after. So there is the prophetic aspect to the writings of Moses that were fulfilled in Jesus.

But Christ as a son over his own house (Hbr 3:6);

Moses was a servant in the house, faithful, but Christ is as the son over the house.

whose house we are, [the house of Jesus Christ, the building of God, the church, the place where God has chosen to dwell] if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Hbr 3:6).

Here we have the exhortation towards perseverance. There was a danger and it was happening that some of the Jews who had come out of Judaism and all of its traditions, they were beginning to slip back into Judaism, going back to the traditions. So Paul is warning them... I believe it is Paul. Whoever it was that wrote Hebrews is warning them, and if I slip and say Paul, you'll know that that's my opinion. Is warning them to maintain their hope that they have come to in Christ and hold fast that confidence and the rejoicing of hope unto the end.

Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of the temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works for forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest (Hbr 3:7-11).

So he is going to make reference to this ninety-fifth Psalm a couple of times here in chapters 3 and 4, as he is going to be pointing out the superiority of Jesus over Moses.

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So they never entered into God's rest. Moses couldn't bring them into God's rest, and so he quotes from this Psalm. As the psalmist, talking about the goodness of God and the mercies of God and all, turns to the subject of their failure in the wilderness to enter into the rest. "Harden not your hearts," He said, "as in the day of provocation when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. And I said, They have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest.'"

Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Hbr 3:12).

And so they wandered for forty years as an example of what happens when we, by our unbelief, fail to receive the promises of God. So we are needing to take heed that we not depart from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end (Hbr 3:13-14);

Again, the exhortation towards perseverance three times within the text. "If we hold our confidence steadfast to the end."

While it is said, Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved for 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 the rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Hbr 3:15-19).

It is important for us to notice their failure was the failure of faith. They did not believe God was able to bring them into the land. They, somehow, were looking at their own resources and looking at the power of the enemy. They were saying, "We can't do it. We're unable to go in." Many times we find that it is our unbelief that keeps us from entering into that full rich life that God would have us to experience and to enjoy. Again, our problem is our looking at our own resources and looking at the power of the enemy. Always when we get our eyes off the Lord and onto the enemy, terror fills our heart, and unbelief. We've got to know that there is greater power with us than that which is against us. "Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

And so Jesus the High Priest of our confession, greater than Moses in that Moses was only a servant in the house. Jesus, the Son, ruling over the house, the builder of the house. Moses unable to take them into God's rest, whereas Jesus will bring us into God's rest.

Chapter 4

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 (Hbr 4:1).

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As you look at your own heart tonight, is it at rest? Have you entered into the rest of God? Do you have that deep peace of Christ tonight filling your mind, your heart, and your life? Or is there anxiety, strife, turmoil, unrest? What is the condition of your heart tonight? Let us beware, let us be careful. God has given us the promise of rest. Let's take heed that we enter into that rest, for it is very possible that even though God has a rest and is desiring you to come into that rest, it is possible that you don't know or experience that rest that God would have you to know and experience in Christ. Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). Have you found that rest for your soul? Are you resting in Jesus tonight? That's the issue, for there are many who are not. There are many Christians who do not know that rest in Christ, but are still laboring under a works ethic in order to be pleasing unto God. Or just who through unbelief have not made that total commitment of their life and the affairs of their life unto Him, knowing that He is faithful and will keep that which I've committed, but they haven't made that commitment. And thus, they do not know the rest

For unto us was the good news preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, because it wasn't mixed with faith in them that heard it (Hbr 4:2).

God has promised a rest. I've got to believe that. I enter into it by faith. If I don't by faith enter into it then I will remain in my mental turmoil and strife. Do you believe that God wants you to experience His rest? Do you believe that God is in control of your life? Do you believe that God loves you? If you believe these things then you have entered into that rest, because after all, why should I worry, God is in control. God will take care of it. The way we sometimes act, you would think that God has abdicated the throne, that He wasn't in control any more. But God is in control if you have surrendered and submitted your life to Him. You have to just believe Him and trust Him knowing that He is able to take care of you.

For we which have believed do enter into the rest (Hbr 4:3),

And that is the key to entering into the rest. It is the rest that can only come through faith.

Now, a lot of people say, "But it's so hard to rest in faith. It would be a lot easier to rest if God would just show me what He is doing. If God would just explain to me why He has allowed this to happen to me and what He is going to work out of it, the good that is going to come from it. If I could just see that, then I could probably rest more easily. It's hard to rest in faith." You may find it hard to rest in faith, but the only place you'll ever rest is in faith. You cannot rest in your works, in your skills, in your efforts. Never will you find rest until you come to that rest of faith. "Lord, I've committed it completely unto You. I can't do anything about it, Lord. I have no control over these circumstances, Lord. I turn it over to You and I place it in Your hands, God, and I'm just going to trust You and I'm going to watch and see what You do, knowing that You've promised that You will

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work. I'm just going to believe You, Lord, to just work out a perfect plan in my life and in the circumstances by which I am surrounded." And so, I rest. And in complete commitment is complete rest, that total commitment and abandonment to God is the place of perfect peace. And God will keep you in perfect peace if your mind is stayed on Him.

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 (Hbr 4:3).

Now, as far as the works are concerned, they have been wrought by God. All I am to do is to believe the work of God. "What must we do," they said to Jesus, "to do the work of God?" And Jesus said, "This is the work of God: believe on Him who He has sent." (John 6:28-29). It is a finished work that Christ has accomplished for us. You cannot add one thing to your salvation. You cannot add one thing to your acceptance by God. He has accepted you in and through the finished work of Jesus Christ. You cannot add to your righteousness. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should so soon turn from the truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3)

So, I am believing and trusting God to do it. I am resting in God, and as I rest in God, I have that glorious peace within. Hey! I'm not perfect, not by a long shot, but I'm on the way. God is working. He is able to do what I can't do for myself. Having begun in the Spirit, I must remain in the Spirit. Walking after the Spirit, yielding to the Spirit that God might work. But in the meantime, I am resting. So I fail, so I rest. God is able to make me to stand. He is able to keep me from falling. I am believing Him and trusting Him. Resting in Him and in His finished work.

For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all of his works. And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest (Hbr 4:4-5).

Now, God rested on the seventh day from all of His works, that is, His creative works, because the creation was finished. Once the creation was finished there was no longer the necessity for creative works, so God rested from His creative works on the seventh day. Now, God established, then, the Sabbath Day. He said, "Six days shalt thou labor and do thy work, and the seventh day is the day of rest" (Exodus 23:12), because the Lord rested on the Sabbath day.

But that Sabbath day was only a shadow of the rest that the people of God should experience in Jesus Christ. The substance is of Christ. "Therefore let no man judge you in respect to new moon, Sabbath days and so forth, which all were a shadow of things to come, but the substance is Jesus" (Colossians 2:16-17).

There are those today who would judge us because of the Sabbath day. There are those that would even introduce the Sabbath day worship to the church, and introduce

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the laws of the worship on the Sabbath day to the church. But if you are going to seek to be justified by the law, you better also realize the curse that is involved with it, because it says, "Cursed is every man who continues not in the whole law to do all of the things that are written therein" (Galatians 3:10).

Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached did not enter in because of unbelief: again, he limited a certain day, saying to David, Today (Hbr 4:6-7),

Notice through the text there has been today, today, today, today, today, some five times or so. The emphasis is upon today. So he limited it to a certain day. Through David in Psalms 95, he said, "Today." And this was a long time after their failure in the wilderness. They had still not entered into the rest. God was still speaking of the day that they could, long after their failures.

after so long a time; it says, Today if you will hear his voice, don't harden your hearts (Hbr 4:7).

So David was pleading with the people of his day. Today, hear God's voice. Don't harden your hearts. Don't follow the example of those in the wilderness.

For if Joshua (Hbr 4:8)

Now this is Joshua. It is a reference to Joshua who took over after Moses' death. Again, one of their great leaders.

If [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not have afterward have spoken of another day [in which they could enter into that rest] (Hbr 4:8).

Joshua, who brought them into the land, did not bring them into the rest. And that is an interesting thing. There are even those that have come into the Land of Promise who still haven't entered into the rest, the rest that God wants you to experience as His child. The rest in the completed finished work of Jesus Christ for our righteous standing before God. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name." I am resting in Him. He has done the work of salvation for me. He paid the price for my sins. He is the one who has made me righteous by my faith and trust in Him. It is a completed, finished work. There is nothing that I can add to it to compliment it. It is once and for all accomplished for me by Him.

Now, I have to by faith believe that, and enter into the rest. If I don't believe it, I can go on in my efforts, in my struggles, in my strivings, in my endeavors, and in all of these works that I seek to do in my fervid desire and activity to try to be better or to improve my relationship with God by my efforts. Or I can just simply believe that Jesus did it all and enter into the rest of faith.

"For if Joshua had given them rest then he wouldn't have spoken of another day."

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There remains therefore a rest to the people of God (Hbr 4:9).

There is a place of rest for God's people.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his (Hbr 4:10).

Once the work of creation was finished, God ceased. He rested the seventh day. Once the work of redemption was finished by Jesus Christ, God rested as far as man's redemption is concerned. Jesus said, "I came to do the will of Father, and to finish His work," (John 4:34) the work of redemption for man. And on the cross, it was finished. He cried, "It is finished." Man's redemption is complete.

Now, if we have entered into His rest and we have ceased from our own works, even as God did from His, there is nothing that God will do now to save you more than what He has already done in providing the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. And now it is up to you to believe and to accept that which God has provided, the perfect and complete work of salvation and acceptance before God, and our endeavor and labor to be accepted by God. We are accepted in Christ. As Paul said, one of the blessings is we are accepted in the beloved.

Let us labor therefore (Hbr 4:11)

And it sounds like a contradiction in terms.

Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest (Hbr 4:11),

Hey, there is a rest. Let us labor to enter into it. Let's work at it entering into it, because Satan is going to challenge you at every step. "You can't do it. You can't live that kind of a life. You can't live a life of purity and righteousness and holiness." That's His work in me as I believe and trust in Him. He is able to do for me what I can't do for myself. I must believe and trust in Him to do it. No, I can't myself, but through Him I can. I can be all that God would have me to be through the work of Jesus Christ within my heart and life. "Therefore let us labor." I have to really work at it because Satan is constantly challenging my position of faith and trust in Jesus. Satan would come along and bring turmoil again into my heart. He would keep me in a state of restlessness, as he would encourage me in my endeavors and works, because he knows that I will fail. Anything I try in my flesh is going to fail. I think that Satan is behind the incentives for every fleshly endeavor, because he knows that all you can do in your flesh is fail, and then you get discouraged and upset and you lose your rest and peace in Christ. Oh, how important that we labor to enter into that rest.

lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hbr 4:11).

As they did in the Old Testament. Because they were trusting in themselves, in their power to whip the giants, and they knew they couldn't. And so through unbelief they fell.

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For the word of God is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,

For it is the Word of God that is able to divide between the soul and the spirit. That's something that is hard for us to divide. Man's soul and spirit are so intertwined, there is such a crossover network between the two, that it's really hard for us to discern when it has really touched me spiritually or just touched me in an emotional way. In fact, the division is so fine that it is only the Word of God that can make that distinction between that which is soulish and that which is spiritual.

Then, "it is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." I'm going to trust in the finished work of Jesus, or I'm going to trust in my own works and my own efforts to finish this work of redemption in me, and perfection. If I'm trusting in my own works, I can't rest, because I'm not certain of my own works, of what motive they really are.

Now the judgment of our works when we stand before the Lord and our works are brought before Him, those works are going to be judged, but they're going to be judged not as to what I did or didn't do, but what motivated me to do it. And because that is the judgment, the motivation that prompted the work, a lot of those good things that we have done are going to be tossed out. My works will be judged by fire. If any of them remain, I will be rewarded for them.

I do many works, but the motive behind them is my love for Jesus Christ. I do not look to my works to make me righteous. I do not look to my works to make me accepted. I do not look to my works and point to my works when I come before God and say, "Lord, I've done this and that and the other." My works are just the response of my own heart for all that God has done for me. I don't look for any credit for the work that I have done. It's just the natural response of my heart in understanding all that God has done for me. I want to do something for God. I long to do something for God.

The true praise is that which rises spontaneously from my heart unto God when I realize how good He has been to me and His blessings upon me. "Oh God, You are so good. I love you, Lord. I know I don't deserve anything. Well, I know that I do deserve something, but not these blessings. I deserve a swift kick. And yet, look what God has done for me. Oh God, You're so good. I love you, Lord!" And just that which rises from my heart in spontaneous response to God. God is the initiator. God so loved that He gave, and now I respond to that gift. God has blessed me. I respond to those blessings.

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 ([Hbr 4:13](#)).

You're not going to hide anything from God. Your life is an open book to Him. There is not one single thought that you have ever thought that He doesn't know. You can't hide from God. David said to God, "You know my thoughts before I think them." Everything is open. Everything is naked before Him. God knows everything I do and He knows why I do it. That's why I don't want to depend upon my works. I want to depend upon the

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finished work of Jesus Christ. I'm glad that I can have my standing in His finished work, not my efforts or my works.

Verse 14: 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 confession ([Hbr 4:14](#)).

Seeing that we have this great high priest, not entered into the Holy of Holies, which was only a model of heaven, but has entered into heaven itself for us. This great high priest, let us hold fast to this new confession in Christ, that confession of Christ.

For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our weaknesses; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ([Hbr 4:15](#)).

We have in Christ a glorious high priest. He has passed into heaven for me to make intercession for me. But He is a sympathetic high priest because He understands my weakness, because He became a man and experienced the temptations that man experiences. He knows my problems. He knows my weaknesses, and thus, He can empathize with me. Oh, what a glorious high priest that we have.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace ([Hbr 4:16](#)),

How can I ever come boldly to the throne of grace except through Jesus Christ? Dare you come boldly to the throne of grace asking God to accept your works or to reward you for what you have done? "Lord, look what I've done for You this week. Now I'd like to receive my rewards today." No, I'll tell you, I can only come to God through Jesus Christ. I don't dare come to God on my own. But through Him I come boldly, because my great High Priest understands my weaknesses. He was tempted just like I am. That's why He is able to help me in my time of temptation.

that I might obtain mercy and find grace to help me in my time of need ([Hbr 4:16](#)).

And so I approach God on the basis of His grace and mercy towards me, not on the basis of my works and my deserving. And because I approach God on the basis of His goodness and His grace towards me, I can come boldly, and I can always receive the help that I need. I can find grace to help me in the time of my need, because I'm coming on the basis of God's invitation to me as His child.

So, how are you going to approach God? On the basis of your goodness, your efforts, your work, or on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ?

So here I am resting tonight, because I'm not resting in myself, in my righteousness, but I'm resting in His finished work for me. "Here I come tonight, God, not on the basis of I've had a good week and everything has been flowing well, but I'm coming on the basis that You love me, and You've invited me to come to receive of Your grace through Jesus. I just believe You, Lord, to help me, though I don't deserve it, to bless me, though I'm really not worthy of it. But just because You are a God of love and a God who is so gracious and merciful. Lord, bless me now."

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Many times my failures get in the way of my faith, because I am looking to my works rather than to His finished work. If God can help us to grasp this concept, then your life is going to rest and God is going to bless you. And as a result of the blessings of God, you're going to be responding to God in continual praise and thanksgiving and awe and wonder at all God has done for you. He is so great and so merciful and so marvelous that you're just going to be constantly rejoicing and praising Him. "Oh God, You're so good! I love you. You are so marvelous to me." And God will continue to bless and bless and bless and bring you into that rest that He has for His people.

God, help us tonight, we pray, to believe Your Word and to trust in Your Word and to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ our great High Priest, who has made the way for us to come boldly to the throne of grace to receive the mercy and grace in our times of need. Oh Lord, how thankful we are for Your grace towards us and Your goodness and Your mercy that endures forever. How thankful we are for Jesus Christ our Lord, our Savior, our great High Priest who has finished the work of our redemption so that we rest in His finished work. Lord, I'm saved because I believe in Jesus as my Savior. And because I am saved, I surrender my life to You as my Lord, that I might obey Thee and do whatever You want me to do. That I might be a servant that is pleasing in the eyes of his Master, because I love You, Lord, because You first loved me. Amen.

Now may the Lord be with you to bless you this week, to pour out upon your life the riches of His love and His grace and His mercy towards you through Christ Jesus our Lord. And may you abound and be rich in all things in Christ.