

Christ is Superior to Moses
Hebrews 4:1-2
Part Eight

As Christians, we understand there is no true rest for the soul apart from Christ. Augustine in the fourth century, gave this truth its eloquent, classic expression in his Confessions: **“Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thy self and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.”**

And how did we as Christians come to this understanding? We came to this understanding when we by grace through faith transferred our trust from ourselves, and our own so-called good works, to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, which immediately made it possible for us to be ushered into God the Father’s presence and into His blessed rest through Christ.

And this is our reality if we have in fact placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. And as long as we stay focused on this reality we will have this wonderful sense of well-being no matter what might be happening around us or to us, for we know having entered God’s rest that God is with us and is working all things together for good in accordance with His will and purposes.

And I would like to think that every person in this room has entered that rest and perhaps that is exactly what every person in this room this morning would profess. But now let me give you a word of caution. Even though every person in this room this morning might say they have entered this rest and in fact believe that they have entered this rest it does not necessarily make it so.

Really the only for us to know if we have entered this rest by grace through faith is when we in the midst of various trials and tribulations find ourselves at rest because of our faith.

And hopefully this thought will come alive for us this morning as we return to our study of the Book of Hebrews, which was written to a group Hebrew Christians who were suffering a great persecution and who under that persecution had begun to struggle in their faith. And some of them had

begun to struggle so much in their “faith” that they were even thinking about returning back to Judaism.

And how did the author seek to minister to them in this struggle? He sought to strengthen their faith. And how did he seek to strengthen their faith? He sought to strengthen their faith by focusing on the superiority of Christ, which has led us to the question that we are now asking. How did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior?

The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:5-2:18).

And now we are in the process of seeing that the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13). This section that we are presently examining began in **Hebrews 3:1** and will continue all the way down through **Hebrews 4:13**. So, what have we seen so far within this section?

First of all, we have seen that Christ, as an example of faithfulness, is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6). We saw this in **Hebrews 3:1-6**. And why would the author of Hebrews have considered Christ to be superior to Moses as an example of faithfulness? It was because the author saw Christ, the Son of the living God, as the faithful builder and overseer of the house of Israel while he only saw Moses as a faithful representative and servant within that house. This is why the author of Hebrews considered Christ as an example of faithfulness to be superior to Moses and his example of faithfulness.

So after the author of Hebrews had made this point in **Hebrews 3:1-6**, what did this lead the author to do next? Christ’s superior example of faithfulness led the author to warn his readers against the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). This is the section we are now examining. And we have divided this section into two parts.

The first part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief focused on Israel's past failure in the wilderness and subsequent judgment after they left Egypt (Hebrews 3:7-19).

In this section the author began with a basic overview of Israel's past failure in **Hebrews 3:7-11**. He then, in light of Israel's past failure, exhorted his readers to do certain things in **Hebrews 3:12-13** that he believed would promote perseverance and thus protect his readers from repeating Israel's past failure. And why was this so important to this author? The author, based on **Hebrews 3:14**, believed that perseverance in matters concerning the Christian faith is a necessary component in confirming whether or not a person is in fact a partaker of Christ or not in fact a partaker of Christ. And then how did the author conclude the first part of this warning section on the sin of unbelief? He concluded this section by once again returning to the failure of Israel and their subsequent judgment, which prevented them from entering the rest of the Promised land in **Hebrews 3:15-18**. And what did the author identify as the cause of their failure and subsequent judgment in **Hebrews 3:19**? He identified the cause of their failure and subsequent judgment to have been "unbelief." Let me now read for you **Hebrews 3:19** and see if this is not so. **"So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief."**

So this was the first part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief. We are now ready to move on to the second part of author's warning and therefore onto a different focus. So, what is this new focus in this second part?

The second part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief focused on the promise of rest "today" (Hebrews 4:1-13). This part starts in **Hebrews 4:1** and goes all the way down through **Hebrews 4:13**.

So now let me read these verses for you. **"Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. (2) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. (3) For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (4) For He has said somewhere concerning the**

seventh day, ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;’ (5) and again in this passage, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ (6) Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, (7) He again fixes a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.’ (8) For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. (9) So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. (10) For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. (11) Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (12) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (13) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

So, based on our quick reading of these somewhat difficult verses, can we say that it would seem that the second part of the author’s warning against the sin of unbelief focused on the promise of “rest” today? Yes! I believe we can.

So, what can we conclude from this? Just because Israel failed to enter the rest that had been promised them because of unbelief based on **Hebrews 3:7-19**, does not mean that there is still not a promise of rest “today” based on **Hebrews 4:1-13**.

So now let us begin to work through **Hebrews 4:1-13** and we will begin this morning with **Hebrews 4:1-2**.

So, what did the author provide his readers in these first two verses? The author in Hebrews 4:1-2 provided a transitional statement linking what he had said about Israel’s past failure to enter the rest that God had promised them and the ongoing promise of rest today. So how did the author within these two verses establish this link?

The author used the word “therefore” to establish this link. In other words, he told his readers, by his use of the word “therefore,” that what he was

about to say in **Hebrews 4:1-13** concerning the ongoing promise of rest was based on what he had just said in **Hebrews 3:7-19**.

So after he linked what he had said in **Hebrews 3:7-19** to what he was about to say in **Hebrews 4:1-13** through his use of the word “therefore,” what did he say next? He said this, **“Let us fear.”**

So, what did the author mean by this? Based on what came before in **Hebrews 3:7-19**, which recorded for us Israel’s past failure and subsequent judgment in the wilderness by God, He is now calling both he and his readers in light of that judgment not to play games with God, but rather to what? Fear Him!

So, what does this mean? Does this mean that we as professing believers, because of what happened to Israel, should live in terror of God? No! This is not what it means.

The word “fear” (PHOBETHOMEN) in this context should be understood as the reverential soberness that is produced when contemplating the awesomeness of God’s person and power.

This is the kind of fear that the author of Hebrews, in light of Israel’s past failure and subsequent judgment, was calling both he and his readers to exercise.

And why was this author calling both he and his readers to exercise this kind of fear or in other words this kind of reverential soberness toward God?

Let us once again go back and read the verse, **“Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.”** So why was the author calling both he and his readers to exercise this kind of fear or in other words this kind of reverential soberness toward God?

He wanted them to exercise this kind of reverential soberness so that they might stay alert to the possibility that even though a promise of rest still remained for them, it did not guarantee that all those among them would necessarily enter that rest, which was exactly the thing that happened with the nation of Israel in respect to the rest that had been promised to them.

They had come out of Egypt believing that God was taking them to the “Promised Land,” the very land that God had promised Abram in **Genesis 12:1-3**. And though they came to the very doorstep of that land at **Kadesh Barnea**, they were unable to enter that land because of unbelief. This is all recorded for us in **Numbers 14**.

Obviously the author of Hebrews did not want any of his readers to repeat that same tragic mistake; not in respect to the promise of rest that the children of Israel fell short of while in the wilderness when they, because of unbelief chose not to enter the Promised Land, but rather the promise of rest that is alluded to here by this author in **Hebrews 4:1**, which he considered to be still present and operational when he wrote these words.

So how did the author describe this promise of rest that he considered to be still present and operational?

The promised rest that both the author as well as his readers believed was still present and that could be entered by faith was described by the author as “His rest” or in other words as “God’s rest.”

So now let me ask you this question. What will we find if we by faith choose to enter into this promised rest that is described by this author as God’s rest? I can tell you exactly what will find? We will find rest for our souls.

Let me now read for you the words of Christ in **Matthew 11:28-29** and see if this is not so. And what did He say? **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heaven laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”**

So, what will we find if we by faith choose to enter into this promised rest that is described by this author as God’s rest in **Hebrews 4:1**? We will find rest for our souls. Hallelujah! For once we have found rest for our souls our sense of well being will no longer be dependent upon our circumstances but rather upon an abiding and unchanging personal relationship with God Himself.

This thought is captured very well by the lyrics of the hymn entitled “It is well with my soul” by Horatio Spafford.”

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials may come,
Let this blessed assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
and hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

And how would someone enter into this blessed place of God's rest or in other words how would someone take advantage of this present promise of rest?

The only person who can who can enter into this blessed place of God's rest is someone who has combined the present promise of His rest with true genuine faith in the gospel of Christ (Hebrews 4:2). Let me read for you **Hebrews 4:2** and see if this is not so? And what does it say? **“For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”** So based on this verse, can any person take advantage of this present promise of rest unless the present promise of rest is combined with true genuine faith in the gospel of Christ? No! Combining the present promise of rest with true genuine faith in the gospel is absolutely necessary.

So now let us look at this verse more closely and see if this is not so. And how does it begin? It begin begins with these words, **“For indeed we have had good news preached to us.”** And what was that “good news” that this author was referring to? It was the word of salvation or in other words the

gospel of Christ that first declared by Christ Himself according to **Hebrews 2:3-4**. And then what did the author go on to say? He went on to say this, **“just as they also.”**

So to whom is he referring here? He is referring to the exodus generation for they also had good news preached to them didn't they? But it was not the good news of the gospel of Christ but rather the good news of the Promised Land.

So did the good news of the Promised Land having been proclaimed to them profit them? No! And why was that? Let me read for you the last words of **Hebrews 4:2**. It **“did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”**

So should this concern us? Yes! If we are in fact going to fear God in response to the exhortation found at the beginning of **Hebrews 4:1**, we need to make sure that we, in having exercised true genuine faith in the gospel of Christ, have entered into His rest.

So how will we know if we have entered His rest by true genuine faith? We will know it when we are in enjoying this rest and sing, “It is well” in the midst of difficulties.

May God give us grace so that we, through the way we respond to difficulties, prove that we through true and genuine faith have entered into God's rest.