

Greater Than: A Better Rest

Hebrews 3:7-19, 4:1-10

Rest is used to refer to Heaven, but in this passage, it means victorious Christian living...

God was giving Israel the land of Canaan as their land of rest. Some say that the Promised land is illustrative of Heaven...not so. They spied out the land, saw the enemy, did battle, didn't fully conquer and claim the Promised Land...that's not a picture of Heaven...

So, it's illustrative of the rest we can have in God, the rest that is offered in Christ. We no longer have to rely upon personal merit (useless anyway) to gain favor with God.

If I am going to fully rest in Jesus, I need to...

Check the hardness of my heart

Moh's scale

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' 11 As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

The text we are looking at tonight is an exposition of Ps. 95.

To get the backstory on this, we have to go way back in the OT, all the way to Ex. 17:7 (cf. Num. 14-refuse to enter, God said 40 yrs. would pass; Num. 20:13-"Meribah" mentioned again)

We find that again Israel was without water, and Moses was told by God to strike a rock with his rod and water would come out, and it did. "So he called the name of the place Massah ["testing"] and Meribah ["strife"], because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted [tested] the LORD, saying, '*Is the LORD among us or not?*'" (Ex. 17:7).

Massah = tempted/tested

Meribah = contention

Ps. 95:8 quoted in Heb. 3:8 - "as in the rebellion" = *Meribah*
"day of testing" = *Massah*

It wasn't that they had a lack of water, they had a lack of faith.

Quick summary of Heb. 3:7-11...Hear the voice of God...rebel against His commands...even after seeing His works...go astray in your heart...no REST.

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 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. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

The Greek word for "hardness" in this passage is sklerotes. It is the same word from which we get our word "sclerosis," a medical term for the hardening of tissue.

Has your heart become hardened? Have you seen the hand of God upon your life and been a witness to incredible works in your past, yet now, facing the trivial, do you doubt His goodness? His mercy? His presence? Where have you hardened yourself against the word of God?

Hardness develops when a person sees the work of God, hears the word of God, and/or knows the will of God, and refuses. God tells Ezekiel:

For you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel, not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted (Eze. 3:5-7).

God says that had He sent the prophet to a foreign country, even *they* would have listened to the words of the Lord.

The Cure

The only cure for the hardened heart is brokenness. Brokenness is a word that isn't used too much in Christian circles. When it is used, few view it as a necessity for victory, revival, or growth. And oftentimes, even if it is seen as a requirement for living the life God intends for us, brokenness is looked at more as a passing stage in a process than a constant attitude.

Understand there is a brokenness that should be experienced over sin. When you repent, God does not intend you to continue to have sorrow over the sin of which you have been forgiven. What should continue though is the attitude of

brokenness. This attitude recognizes our indebtedness (1 Cor. 6:19-20), our frailty (2 Cor. 4:7), and our inability to accomplish anything of eternal worth apart from His mighty power (John 15:5).

Notice what the Scripture says about those whose hearts are broken by sin as well as by an awareness that He is God and we are not:

- HE COMES NEAR THEM.

The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit (Ps. 34:18).

- HE ACCEPTS THEIR ATTITUDE

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart-These, O God, You will not despise (Ps. 51:17).

- HE REVIVES THEM

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." (Is. 57:15).

Are you living with an attitude of brokenness? Are you willing to be broken by God? Are you willing to ask Him to "break" you?

Check my history with God

16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

The Egyptian sun burned the backs of those who worked under the watchful eye of the taskmasters. For years they had toiled, and grieved. They called out to God, who "heard their cry" (Ex. 3:7). He chose Moses to lead them out. Not only was Moses to lead them out of Egypt, but into the Promised Land. You are well acquainted with the story probably, but permit a brief review.

God told Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh, but then warned Moses that He would “harden his [Pharaoh’s] heart.” Moses went to Egypt and God sent plagues upon Egypt: water turned to blood, frogs, lice and flies were everywhere, livestock became diseased, boils erupted on man and beast. Hailstorms, locusts, darkness, and the death of all the firstborn children and animals close out the list. The children of Israel were exempted from deaths of their firstborn by keeping the Passover. The Israelites were released and followed the “LORD [who] went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people” (Ex. 13:21-22). As the Israelites “went out with boldness” (Ex. 14:8), the Egyptians pursued them. Arriving at the banks of the Red Sea, the Angel of God stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians as God miraculously parted the waters. They walked across “on dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left” (Ex. 14:22).

I am reminded of the little boy who was asked by his parents at Sunday lunch what he had learned in Sunday School that morning. He replied, “We learned about Moses and the Israelites and how they were being chased by the Egyptians. They got to the Red Sea and were stuck. But the Israelite engineers built a bridge for all the children of Israel to cross, and as they went over, Israelite commandoes swung down under the bridge to place explosive charges. When the Egyptians reached the center of the bridge, Moses pressed the red button on his detonator and destroyed the bridge along with the Egyptians!” “Now wait a minute,” said his father, “Is that really what your teacher said happened?” He replied, “No, but you wouldn’t have believed what she said happened.”

It was an amazing work, because it was a work of God. Even the children of Israel recognized God’s hand in all the events of the Exodus.

“Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses” (Ex. 14:31). The victory won by God is so great that Moses and the children of Israel sing of His strength and power (Ex. 15:1-18). The song ends in verse 18 with the triumphant proclamation: “The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

The picture is a wonderful one, people praising a merciful God who intervened for them. But then, in verse 23 of chapter 15 (only 3 days after the Red Sea crossing), when only bitter water was found, the complaints began. God made the waters sweet, and the people drank (Ex. 15:25). Then, a month and a half later, the Israelites complained again, this time about the lack of food. God sent manna and quail to feed them (Ex. 16:12-15), supplying a need that they were unable to meet themselves. One would think that these events would reinforce God’s power to provide, but then we come to chapter 17.

We find that again Israel was without water, but this time their reactions were so strong and heated that Moses feared that he was about to be killed, “So Moses cried out the LORD, saying, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!’” (Ex. 17:4). Moses was told by God to strike a rock with his rod and water would come out, and it did. “So he called the name of the place Massah [“testing”] and Meribah [“strife”], because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted [tested] the LORD, saying, ‘*Is the LORD among us or not?*’” (Ex. 17:7).

Ultimately, in Numbers 14, they refuse to enter the Promised Land.

Israel saw the plagues firsthand, were delivered from the bondage of the Egypt and their pursuing army, miraculously supplied with food and water in the wilderness, and traveled in the presence of the pillar of cloud and fire, *yet they questioned whether or not God was present*. This is resistance to the truth.

Even when given the answer long before the question was asked, they refused to receive the truth.

You will never have rest as long as you doubt the faithfulness of God.

Here are the people of Israel wanting to return to Egypt...back to bondage...and the Hebrews who were the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews were thinking of turning back to Judaism.

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

1 Cor. 10:1-5 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Check my hope for the future

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.

There's a promise remaining...don't come short of it...

2 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.

Revelation of God must be mixed with faith

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, 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.

Reliance upon God b/c we have done nothing to obtain the rest...it was accomplished at the Cross and planned before the foundation of the world.

4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."

David wrote of the rest in Ps. 95...Why would that be if Joshua's rest in the OT was enough for everyone?

6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

A life of resting in Christ is offered to us...

10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.