

# (Hebrews) ch.3:7-4:11

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of hearing God's voice today and protecting oneself and others from hardening one's heart through the deceitfulness of sin.*

**Duration:** 1:16:45

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:16, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 3:7-11, Hebrews 3:17-19, Hebrews 4:14

**Topics:** "Faith And Obedience", "Salvation And Endurance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not hardening our hearts when we hear God's voice. He refers to the example of the Israelites who rebelled against God and were not allowed to enter into His rest because of their unbelief and disobedience. The preacher warns believers against living in false security and thinking that God will ignore their sin. He highlights the threefold initiatory experience of the New Testament Christian: redemption by the blood of the Lamb, baptism in water, and receiving the Holy Spirit. The message is clear: it is not enough to start the Christian race well, but we must endure and hold fast until the end to receive the prize of salvation.

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## Transcript

We were looking at Hebrews in chapter 3 and verse 7, where we read these words, Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years, wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, they have not known my ways, so I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. One of the great topics of the book of Hebrews, particularly we see in chapter 3 and 4, is this matter of entering into God's rest.

Now this is a very important subject, and it's something that many Christians are quite ignorant of. It is not God's will that we should remain in perpetual unrest. God's will is that we shall enter into his rest.

And this passage indicates that in the Old Testament, the land of Canaan was a type of the life of rest that God has planned for his people. But just like in the Old Testament, the people who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and who came out of Egypt, did not enter into the land of Canaan, did not enter into that life of rest. In just the same way, today there are people whose sins are forgiven, who do not enter into this life of rest.

And it is to those who do not press on to perfection that these words are written, Today if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. Now that is a verse that we often quote to the unbeliever. We tell the unbeliever, God is speaking to you, and when he speaks to you, don't harden your heart.

And we have reduced that statement as a mere warning to unbelievers to turn from their sin and to receive forgiveness. But to whom is this chapter written? In fact, the whole letter. In the first verse, chapter 3, we read, it's addressed to holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.

That is obviously referring to born-again believers. To them, he says, the Holy Spirit says to you, today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. So, these words are addressed to believers.

And if you are a believer, this is God's word to you. The Holy Spirit says, today, when you hear God's voice, do not harden your heart. Yes, a believer can harden his heart.

A believer can neglect to hear God's voice and thus find that his heart is hardened. And when do we have to take heed? Today. Satan's great word is tomorrow.

God's great word is today. We read in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 2, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation.

It is now that you can receive forgiveness of sins. It is now that you can receive the Holy Spirit into your heart. It is now that you can enter into a life of victory over sin.

Salvation is now, today. It is now that you can turn from sin and believe in the Lord Jesus. But Satan's great word is tomorrow.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew, chapter 6? Take no anxious thought for tomorrow, for the morrow will take care of itself. But live one day at a time, Jesus was saying. Sufficient unto this day is the evil thereof.

And it is God's will that we as believers should live one day at a time and not be anxious and concerned even about tomorrow. Today is God's day. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself as I Am, that I Am.

That is in the present tense. Not I was, not I will be, but I Am. God always lives in the present.

And we, when we become children of God and we are to become more and more like God in our life, we are to live in the present. Today, this is God's great word. Of course, the reason why Satan says tomorrow is so that we never enter into God's will.

Remember when Paul preached to Felix, it says Felix trembled. God was convicting him through His Spirit. But he said, well, I hear you some other time, when it is more convenient.

Because Satan had whispered into his heart, tomorrow, tomorrow. And this is the word that he whispers to many, many people all over the world. Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.

And as we know, tomorrow never comes. But the Holy Spirit says, today, now. There is no hope tomorrow if you don't respond today when you hear His voice.

Call upon the Lord when He is near. Seek Him when He can be found. And if we can be found today and His voice is heard today, we must respond today.

Many, many people have missed God's best. Because when God spoke to them, they said, well, I'll think about it later. And so we have to be very careful.

God is merciful with us, and He was merciful with the Israelites in the wilderness for quite a long time. They rebelled against Him, they disobeyed Him for a long time. But one day, we read, when they came to Kedeshbarnia.

You read the history of that in Numbers, chapter 13 and 14. One day, when they came to Kedeshbarnia, and they rebelled against God at that time, then God said, now that is final. You are no longer going to have a chance to enter into Canaan's land.

This generation has rebelled against Me ten times now. God gave them nine chances. But the tenth time, when they rebelled against Him, you read that in Numbers, chapter 14.

Then God said, now you shall never enter into this promised land. This generation must perish. And so God condemned them to another 38 years, a total of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

And that is the example that is referred to here in Hebrews 3, verse 9. When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me and saw My works for 40 years, one day God spoke to them and said, enter into the promised land now. And when they said no at that point, when they wouldn't believe, when they looked at the giants and said it is impossible, then God said, all right, then you are going to wander in the wilderness. And they all perished.

This is the condition of many believers today. And this is why we are given this warning. As the Holy Spirit says, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

Because if you do, you may be like those people in the wilderness who hardened their heart and they did not enter into God's rest, as it says in verse 11. And therefore it says in verse 12, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, that is, in any of you holy brethren, any of you who are believers, take heed, brethren. He doesn't say, take heed, brethren, that these unbelievers who are around you don't get an evil heart of unbelief.

But He says, you brethren, verse 1, you holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, take heed, lest there be in any of you, not in the unbeliever, but in you, Hebrews 3.12, very plain and very clear, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. And as we look at that verse, we can ask ourselves this question, can a man who has come to faith in the Lord Jesus develop through a process of time an evil heart of unbelief? According to that verse, yes. For it says, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Is it possible for one who is a holy brother, partaker of the heavenly calling, to depart from the living God? Well, if we read that verse of scripture carefully, the plain and simple answer is yes. Even a child can understand it. And yet there are many believers living in a false security, living in sin and thinking that God is just going to ignore it.

To such people that word comes. Today, if you hear His voice, what is Canaan's land a picture of? It is a picture of a life of victory over all known sin, where the giants that defeated you in the past now come crumbling down at your feet. Take heed, brethren, that you do not perish in the wilderness.

Take heed, be careful, that you enter into this land of rest. Take heed that there not be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. Notice what it says.

Unbelief gives an evil heart. We could understand if that spoke of adultery or murder. But unbelief, no faith in God's promises, gives a person an evil heart.

The great aim of this letter is to call us to faith. And so let's take heed to that exhortation that we do not fall away from God's grace. We turn now to Hebrews 3. Verse 12.

We looked at this verse last week. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called today.

There you find that emphasis again. Today, this is the word of God, the word of the Holy Spirit to us. Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And again that warning, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now whom is he referring to? Whom is he speaking to? Is he talking about the unbeliever being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin? No. The unbeliever is already hardened.

He is not going to be hardened. He is already hardened. And so there's no question of his becoming hard.

His heart is like a stone. And it is already hardened. But he's speaking to believers.

He's speaking to people whose hearts God has made soft. In whose hearts God has done that work as it is prophesied in the book of Ezekiel. I'll take away their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

But to such people the warning comes. Exhort one another daily while it is called today. Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

We saw in verse 8, 7 and 8, where this quotation from Psalm 95 verses 7 to 11. The Holy Spirit says, today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Is given as an exhortation to these Christians.

Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Today if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. And it is the same thing referred to in verse 13.

Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Why is sin called a deceitful thing? Satan is called a deceiver. In Jeremiah 17 verse 9 we are told that the heart of man is deceitful above all things.

Satan is a deceiver. The heart of man deceives him. And here we are told that sin is a deceitful thing.

The meaning is that a man can be hardened and not know that he is hardened. Because he is deceived. That is a great tragedy.

If a man is sick and knows that he is sick, there is some hope for him. For he can take remedies that will lead him to recovery. But think of a man who is sick and he does not know that he is sick.

Above all men he is to be pitied. For he is sick and he does not know that he is sick. Like the Lord said about the people of Israel.

In the time of Hosea, through the prophet Hosea he says, Among my people grey hairs are here and there upon them and they do not even know it. Meaning that they are losing their spiritual vitality. And they do

not even know it.

Or like we read in the book of Revelation chapter 3. To the church in Laodicea. This is not to unbelievers, but to believers in the church in Laodicea. Jesus says, That is the great tragedy.

They do not know their real condition. You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Here were believers who were actually wretched.

But they did not know it. They were actually in a miserable condition. But they did not know it.

They were actually poor. They thought they were rich. They were blind and they thought they saw.

They were naked and they thought they were clothed. Now that is possible for believers in the first century. In the days of the apostle John.

How much more possible in our day. For a person and for a group of believers. And for churches.

Not to know their wretched spiritual condition. They can be miserable, wretched, poor, blind and naked and they do not even know it. We say, how is this possible? It is by the deception of Satan.

It is by the deception of sin. When a man tries to deceive you, say to pass on into your hand a counterfeit hundred rupee note. He would seek to give you something that looks exactly like the original hundred rupee note.

And the person who takes it does not even know that he is being deceived. If he knew it, he would not take it. And thus it is with the work of Satan and the work of sin in our hearts.

It is utterly deceptive. We can be hardened by sin and not even know that we are hardened. We can be poor and blind and naked and not know it.

Like the church in Laodicea. This is a very serious word that anyone who fears and trembles at God's word should fear and tremble at. Because, who is there to say that that condition is not true of you dear friend? How do you know that you are not being deceived? If you are glorying in your doctrines.

If you are glorying in the fact that once upon a time you accepted Jesus Christ as your savior. But the plain fact is that today you are defeated by sin. Your thought life is unclean.

Your home life is miserable. Your children are growing up wayward and for the world. Then you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

You are glorying in the fact that you have got the right doctrines. You are being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now there is only one solution for this.

There is only one way by which we can escape this. And that is through God's word. God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path.

Or as James says in James chapter 1. God's word is like a mirror. James 1.24 and 25. And I have often thought if James were writing in the 20th century he would have used a word like an x-ray.

God's word is like an x-ray. That looks into your heart and shows you whether you are hardened or not. Like the x-ray shows you a lump inside your body that you cannot see otherwise.

And tells you you have got a cancer there. But you may say well I feel quite healthy. You may feel quite healthy but the x-ray has shown you that there is a lump inside your body and that is cancerous.

It must be surgically removed. And that is how God's word works in our lives as we expose ourselves to it. The voice of the Holy Spirit.

Today if you will hear His voice. That is the context and that is what comes again in verse 15. While it is said today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts.

God's provision to keep our hearts from being hardened is His voice. And His voice comes to us through His word. And not just through a mechanical reading of the word.

So many people who say they have a quiet time in the morning. It is a mere mechanical reading of the word of God. The voice of the Holy Spirit does not come through to their hearts from that word.

And then of course they can be hardened. You can read your Bible in the quiet time in the morning and still be hardened if you do not long to hear the voice of the Spirit coming to you through that word. And so we need to come to God's word with reverence, fear and humility and longing and crying out.

For there are hidden treasures in God's word and these treasures are not on the surface. You do not find gold on the surface. You have to dig so many thousands of feet into the ground before you get the gold.

And so it is with the word of God. As we dig into it and yearn for the Spirit of God to speak to us, He will speak to our hearts and thus we are protected from being hardened. But we are also told that God's word can come to us through other believers.

Exhort one another daily, lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And so we need not only to hear God's word directly but open ourselves to exhortation from other believers. And it does not matter whether that other believer is younger to you in the Lord or older to you.

That does not make any difference. If we are open to receive exhortation from one another, then we shall be protected from being hardened, not otherwise. If you are a person who does not receive exhortation from others or one who gets offended when somebody tries to exhort you, then, dear friend, you are a certain candidate for hardening.

Yes, the devil can harden your heart and deceive you into thinking you are spiritual. Our only salvation is the word of God. Our only salvation is if we humble ourselves and remain open for other brothers to give us the word and exhort us and correct us, so that we are protected from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

We come now to Hebrews 3. This is following on from verse 13, where we are told, We are to exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now we have a responsibility there, as I said last week, of receiving exhortation from others, so that we ourselves are not hardened. We need to receive that exhortation.

Otherwise we can be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But the command here is addressed to us. Exhort one another.

This is a mutual responsibility. We have to receive exhortation from others as well as give exhortation to others. For we are not only to keep ourselves from being hardened, but we are to protect our fellow

believers from being hardened.

The first question that God asked man after he had sinned was, Adam, where are you? We read that in Genesis chapter 3. And that is the first question that God asks us too. Where are you spiritually? Where are you spiritually today? Are you being hardened? Are you being deceived? Are you wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked and not knowing it? Where are you? The second question that we find coming in Genesis chapter 4 is, where is your brother? This is the question that God asks Cain. He asked Adam, where are you? And he asks Cain, where is your brother? And Cain says, am I my brother's keeper? The answer of course is, yes, you are.

You are not just to think of yourself. You are not just to look after yourself. You are also your brother's keeper.

And so after having answered the first question, God addresses to us, where are you? We need to answer the second question, where is your brother? The person with whom you are working. Who is your brother in the Lord? The person with whom you fellowship in the assembly or church. Your brother there, where is he spiritually? And of course we can ask like Cain, am I my brother's keeper? How can I be responsible for my brother? And we can be just as hardened as Cain, thinking only of ourselves.

And we can be completely off track. And so we have a mutual responsibility to one another, not only to be saved from this hardening process ourselves, but also to do our best to protect others from being hardened. It is a responsibility that falls upon every true child of God.

To seek, he doesn't have to be a preacher, but he needs to seek to exhort others as God gives him opportunity, so that these others do not get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. This process of hardening is taking place all over the world. This deceitfulness of sin is spreading all over the world.

And we are called as the children of God, as the salt of the earth, to stop this rot, this corruption that is spreading over the world. That is the purpose of salt. We put salt on top of fish and other things to prevent it from going bad.

And Jesus said, you are the salt of the earth. You are to keep the world from growing rotten and from getting corrupted. But then we need to be like salt which has got its savor.

We need to be those who have got a living connection with God, where the life of Jesus is flowing and overflowing through us like rivers of living water continuously. And those rivers, as Jesus said, flow out from our innermost being. They don't flow in, they flow out.

God does a work within us that it flows out from us to other people. And this is a fairly good test of the spirit-filled life. Not how much you have experienced.

Not how much God has done in you. But how much is flowing out from you to others, bringing life to other people. Are you exhorting others? Are you encouraging others? Are you giving a word to others? Not just from the pulpit.

He doesn't say that we are to get up into the pulpit every day. We don't meet together in the fellowship of the church every day. No.

Where do we meet every day? For it says here, exhort one another daily. Not once a week. Not in the first day of the week.

But daily. Where do we meet one another every day? In our homes. Around our meal table.

In our sitting rooms. When we talk together. What do we talk about? Do we talk about the latest gossip? Or the latest scandal that you have heard? Some juicy bit of news that you would like to pass on to others who have itching ears? Then, of course, you do not fulfill your responsibility.

You are leading them further into sin by all your gossip and scandal and all things like that. But we are to exhort one another when we come together. We are to give God's word to one another so that we don't get hardened.

And then it says in verse fourteen, For we are made partakers of Christ. And Jesus Christ did not ever get involved in gossip and scandal and things like that. He was not a gossip monger.

When He got together with His disciples, He shared the word of God with them. And we are told, We are made partakers of Christ. It is of Him that we are partakers.

If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. There is a big if. And many believers do not see it.

We read verse fourteen. It is very clear. We are made partakers of Christ if.

Not we are made partakers of Christ full stop. But we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Here is the promise.

Being made a partaker of Christ. Here is the condition. Holding the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

And no promise in the Bible can ever be fulfilled without its condition being fulfilled. This is the mistake that so many Christians make. They seek for a fulfillment of the promise in their life without the condition being met.

Let me just give you one example. We are told in 1 John chapter 1 verse 7. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Now that is a tremendous promise. That we can have fellowship with God. And the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

But it is not a promise without a condition. There is a very important condition. And if that condition is not met, then the blood of Jesus does not cleanse anybody.

And so our duty is not to see that we are cleansed. That is God's duty. He is faithful and just to cleanse us.

We are told in verse 9. That is His duty. Our duty is to walk in the light. It is His duty to fulfill the promise.

It is our duty to fulfill the condition. And what is the condition? The condition is to walk in the light. God is light.

In Him there is no darkness at all. To walk in the light means to turn from all known sin. To have nothing of known sin in our life.

To have nothing of darkness in our life. Then the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from every sin that we may accidentally fall into. But if we are living in deliberate known sin, then there is no question of the blood of Jesus cleansing us.

For the blood of Jesus cleanses only those who walk in the light. In exactly the same way, we are told here in Hebrews 3.14 that we are made partakers of Christ if, here is the condition, we are to hold the beginning of our confidence in Christ and be steadfast unto the end. It is by faith all the way through to the end.

By faith we are to hold on. We are not to get hardened. We are not to get deceived by sin.

We are not to have, as it says in verse 12, an evil heart of unbelief in departing or falling away from the living God. No, we are to hold fast by faith the beginning of our confidence. It is not enough to start the race well.

There are many people who start a race very well. But the trouble is they don't finish it. And then, of course, we know in any athletic games there is no prize for those who start well.

No, not at all. If they fall by the wayside, the prize is for those who finish. And we are told in the New Testament that the Christian life is like a race.

We are to run with patience and endurance and reach the finishing line. We are not to give up. And so we are told to hold fast until the end.

He who endures to the end will be saved, Jesus said in Matthew 24. That's what we see here in Hebrews 3 verse 6 as well. Christ is a son over his own house.

And whose house we are if, again there is that if, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm until the end. And God help us to take these words to our heart. We come now to Hebrews 3 verse 15.

Again that quotation from Psalm 95 verse 7 is repeated. While it is said today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. The emphasis in this whole section is on hearing his voice so that we don't get hardened.

That voice can come to us directly through the word or through our fellow believers. We must be humble enough to receive exhortation from one another. Then we can hear his voice.

And that protects us from being hardened. And this was exactly the problem with the people in the wilderness. That when they heard God's voice, they did not respond.

They heard it, but they hardened their hearts. They did not go in to possess what God had promised for them. We are told in verse 16, For some, when they had heard, did provoke.

Howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. No, because there were two people, Joshua and Caleb, who did not provoke God to wrath. They were wholehearted.

They followed God wholeheartedly as God himself gave testimony concerning them. And so they entered into the land of Canaan. But just think of this, that out of 600,000 grown-up adults between the ages of 20 and 60, only two people entered the land of Canaan.

The rest, all the rest, 600,000 people except these two, perished in the wilderness because when they heard God's voice, they presumed upon God's grace. They presumed upon God's mercy. They said, Oh, God is a loving God and He will not treat us like that.

Like many believers do today. They live in sin. They live in disobedience to God's word and their excuse, even if it is only subconsciously, is, Well, God is so good and loving and merciful and kind and He is not going to turn us away.

That is a big mistake. Everything in the Bible speaks against any person adopting that type of an attitude. There is absolutely no excuse for anyone to adopt that type of an attitude.

And so when we hear His voice, we are not to harden our hearts. Otherwise we shall provoke God. It says in verse 17 that God was grieved and angry with those people for 40 years.

They rebelled against Him. And because they sinned in disobedience, verse 17, their dead bodies fell in the wilderness. And He swore concerning them, verse 18, they should not enter into His rest because they did not believe Him and they did not obey Him.

And so we are told in verse 19 that they could not enter in because of their unbelief. It was due to unbelief that they did not enter into the land of Canaan. Now when Moses had spoken to these very same people that they were to slay a lamb and put the blood of the lamb outside their doorposts when they were in Egypt, then they believed.

They were among the people who had believed for the shedding of the blood of the lamb and putting it outside their door. There were others in Egypt who did not believe it and who did not put the blood outside their doorposts and they perished. Yes, they remained in Egypt and their firstborn children died.

But these were people who had believed at that point. They had believed and put the blood of the slain lamb outside their doorposts. But after they came out of Egypt, then they did not believe to enter into the land of Canaan.

There were two parts of God's redemption for those Israelites. He said, I will take you out of Egypt. That is the negative part.

I'll take you out of your former state. And there was a positive part to that redemption. I will bring you into the land of Canaan.

That was God's promise to those people in Exodus chapter 3. I will take you out of this land, Egypt, and I will bring you into another land. And these people who came out of Egypt whom we read of in the book of Numbers they experienced the first part of that promise. They had been brought out of Egypt.

But they did not experience the second part. They did not enter into Canaan. There are two parts to our salvation.

Not just that God will deliver us from the penalty of sin. Forgiveness of sins is just one aspect of our redemption and salvation. The other aspect of our salvation is that we shall be freed from the power of sin.

That we shall walk in godliness and holiness. Walk as Jesus walked. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

In obedience to the word of God and free from all sin. This is typified in the Old Testament by the land of Canaan. And it is into this land of Canaan that they did not enter.

The children of Israel had many other things. They were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They had been baptized into Moses in the Red Sea.

They had been baptized in the cloud. But despite these three, they still came short of Canaan. And the warning given to New Testament believers is you may be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Yes, the blood of Jesus has brought you to the place of forgiveness. You may have been baptized into Christ in the waters of baptism. Symbolized in the Old Testament by their going through the Red Sea.

You may have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Symbolized by the baptism into the cloud that there was in the Old Testament that we read of in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 2. Here was the threefold experience that the Israelites went through. Redemption by the blood of the Lamb.

Baptism in the Red Sea unto Moses. And baptism in the cloud that brought the presence of the Lord into their midst. And this is the threefold initiatory experience of the New Testament Christian.

His sins are forgiven. And he is baptized in water. And he receives the Holy Spirit.

But despite this threefold initiatory experience, he can still perish in the wilderness. That is the message of this chapter. It is exactly the same message that you find in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

Given to the Corinthians. To the Corinthians, Paul writes these words in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 1. Moreover, brethren, again he is writing to believers, to the believers in the church in Corinth, I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, that double baptism. And did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink.

For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were examples for us that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

That is the whole point. The church in Corinth, the believers in Corinth, had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They had been baptized in water.

They had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. And to them Paul says, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant how the same thing symbolically was true of the Israelites in the Old Testament. They were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

They were baptized in the Red Sea. They were baptized in the cloud, just like you. But yet God was not pleased with them, because they did not enter into the life of victory.

They were overthrown in the wilderness, because they did not respond to the promise of God to lead them into the land of Canaan. And these things are written for an example for us, we are told in verse six, because these Corinthian Christians, despite their having come through these experiences, they were fighting with one another, they were quarreling, they had jealousy, they were carnal, and Paul feared, lest

they also be overthrown in the wilderness. Now the Hebrew Christians were in exactly the same condition.

They were spiritual babies, like the Corinthians, instead of pressing on to maturity. And so to them also, Paul gives the same warning, and that warning comes today to all believers who are content with forgiveness of sins, content with having been baptized in water, content with having been baptized in the Spirit, and who do not enter into the land of victory over sin. God was grieved with those people in the wilderness, and He is grieved with all such believers today.

Zach Ponen. We come now to Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 19, concerning the Israelites who came out of Egypt and perished in the wilderness, not entering in to God's full purpose for them. They did not enter into the land of Canaan that God had promised to lead them into.

We are told in this verse, we see that they could not enter in, that is, into God's rest, verse 18, because of unbelief. They did not believe God's promise. What was God's promise? God's promise was that He would lead them into the land of Canaan.

But no promise of God is automatically fulfilled without man fulfilling his condition. It's a great deception to think that God's promise is automatically fulfilled irrespective of my response to that promise. If that were the case, every single human being in the world would be saved completely.

Not one of them would go to hell, because it is not God's will that any man should perish. It's not God's will that any man should go to hell. It is God's will that all men should be saved.

And yet, why is it that very, very few people are saved? Because very, very few people respond to the condition that God has laid down for their salvation. That is the plain, simple reason. So, though God has promised salvation for all, it is only for all who believe, for all who obey, for all who submit to the Lordship of Christ.

It is only to them that salvation is promised. We are told in Hebrews 5, in verse 9, Hebrews 5, 9, that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. To those who do not obey Him, there is no eternal salvation, according to that verse.

There is a condition attached to eternal salvation, and that condition is obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the same as saying, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. For in the New Testament sense of that word believe, it means exactly the same as obedience.

As we read in Hebrews 3, verse 18 and 19, the word translated believe not could legitimately be translated obeyed not. For to disobey is the same as to disbelieve. To obey is the same as to believe.

Belief and obedience go together. They are like two sides of a coin. They are like two sides of a door by which we enter into the path of life.

Trust and obey, as we sing in the chorus, for there is no other way. There is no other way to live. Not only to be happy in Jesus, but there is no other way to live.

There is no other way to enjoy salvation except by a faith which produces obedience. And so, God's promise to them that I will lead you into the land of Canaan was not fulfilled because they did not believe. That is what we are told in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. Let us therefore fear, lest the promise being left to us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

For to us also the good news or the gospel was preached as unto them. What was the good news preached unto them? The good news was you can go into the land of Canaan. Not only you can come out of the land of Egypt.

That was fulfilled. But here we are told the gospel was preached unto those Israelites. But it says this gospel, the word of the gospel, did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Verse 2. Now those two verses are very important verses for us to have an understanding of what the gospel means in relation to us today. By comparing it with the gospel as it meant to them. For it is called the gospel in verse 2. Unto us the gospel is preached as well as unto them.

Now what was the gospel that was preached to them that did not profit them? We know that the good news that you can come out of Egypt was fulfilled in their case. But the word that was not fulfilled in their case was the good news that they can enter into the land of Canaan and be freed from all sin. This is the good news that was preached to them and did not profit them because they did not believe.

When they came to the place called Kadesh Barnea on the borders of the promised land of Canaan, we read in Numbers 13 that they sent twelve spies to the border of the promised land. And out of those twelve spies, only Joshua and Caleb came back with faith to believe that God would help them to overcome the giants in the land. Why did God allow those twelve spies to see the giants? There was only one reason.

To test their faith. To see whether they would look at the giants and grow discouraged and unbelieving or whether they would look at the promise of God and say, Yes, we can possess the land by faith. And there were only two people who had faith, Joshua and Caleb.

And those were the only two people who entered in. But the other ten did not enter in along with the six hundred thousand people who believed those ten. They did not enter in.

The voice of the majority was not the voice of God in that day and neither is it today. Just because the vast majority say we cannot enter into a life of victory over all known sin does not mean that is God's word. The vast majority said to the six hundred thousand that day ten out of twelve.

Think of what a majority that was. That was more than a two-thirds majority. Two-thirds majority is always wrong.

God's word is usually and has always been with the minority. There are few that find the way to life, Jesus said. The way to destruction is broad and the vast majority, more than two-thirds majority, go that way.

And it is a very, very small minority that find the way to life because it is a narrow way. And in that day in the borders of the promised land the vast majority, ten out of twelve, went the way of destruction. They did not believe God's promise.

They looked at the giants and they got terrified. But the minority, two out of twelve, about sixteen percent of the people among the spies, believed and they entered in. But the congregation listened to the majority.

Even as today, most Christians listen to the majority. They do not hear the God's voice. They hear the voice of the people.

They hear the voice of the majority of defeated believers who tell others, you cannot have victory over sin. You cannot have victory over sin until you leave this world. The vast majority of pastors and bishops and

teachers, so many people in the Christian church, have taught their congregations that all you can expect is forgiveness of sin.

All you can expect is to come out of Egypt. You cannot enter the land of Canaan. And the vast majority believe these people who are defeated.

There is a greater consolation for a defeated man who wants to enjoy his sin, to believe in such a false gospel that leads people out of Egypt and leaves them to perish in the wilderness. We are told here the word preached did not profit those Israelites because, in the margin it says, they were not united by faith to those who heard and believed. Who were those who heard and believed? Joshua and Caleb.

They had heard God's promise, I will lead you into Canaan. And they believed it. They did not look at the giants.

They looked at God's promise. But, six hundred thousand people were not united with Joshua and Caleb. They got united with the majority who said, we cannot go in.

And so it says, God was angry with them. They did not respond to the gospel. There we get an idea as to what the gospel is.

The gospel is, not only that we can come out of Egypt, but also that we can enter Canaan. And if we come out of Egypt and we do not enter into Canaan, we have not responded to the gospel. We have become exactly like these people who perished in the wilderness, defeated by sin.

And so, the thing that we need to ask ourselves is this. Your sins are forgiven, but are you still defeated by sin? Then something is wrong. You are still in the wilderness.

Are you still defeated by bitterness, resentment, an unforgiving spirit, irritability, getting offended, sexual lust, unclean thoughts? These things are still defeating you. Then most certainly you are in the wilderness. Are you still grumbling and complaining and murmuring? Most certainly you are in the wilderness.

And this word comes to you. Let us fear, lest a promise being left to us of entering into this life of rest, of victory over sin. We should come short of it.

We really need to fear. We come now to Hebrews chapter 4. We have been looking at verses 1 and 2. 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. Now we have to ask ourselves when we come to a verse like that, to whom is the apostle speaking? Is he speaking to unbelievers or to believers? That's a very important question for us to ask whenever we come to a verse of scripture.

We should not apply to the unbeliever what is written for the believer. And so, here is a warning. Many people have the mistaken notion that all the promises in the scripture are for believers and all the warnings are for unbelievers.

This is the philosophy and the theology of many, many believers. This is a great delusion to think that all the promises are automatically for every believer and all the warnings and conditions are automatically for the unbeliever alone. And when we have that philosophy and that theology, then whenever we come to a verse like this, we immediately, subconsciously first and then consciously, relegate that verse to the unbeliever.

We say that doesn't apply to us. But we need to read carefully. To whom is it written? Chapter 3, verse 1 is very clear.

Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. That could not be clearer. It is written to those who are holy brethren, people who have been made holy by faith in Jesus Christ, justified by faith.

Partakers of the heavenly calling. To them it is written. Let us therefore fear who? Holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling are to fear lest they having received a promise of entering into God's rest, into the life of victory over sin, they should come short of it.

And as we look around at people who profess to be believers around us, we find the multitudes of people who have come short of this rest, who have come short of God's spiritual land of Canaan, the life of victory. They have come short of it. And the reason they have come short of it is because they have not believed the promise.

Think of this promise, for example. Romans 6, verse 14. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

No words could be clearer than that. Sin shall not have dominion over you. Now that is the land of Canaan, where no man is able to stand before us, no sin is able to stand before us.

Sin does not rule over us. But how many believers have entered into this land? Very, very few. Very, very few.

People have believed for the forgiveness of sins, but they have not entered into the life of victory over sin. People have gone beyond forgiveness of sins and taken water baptism, but they still haven't entered into this land. Some have gone beyond that and received the baptism of the Spirit and spiritual gifts, but they still haven't entered into the land of victory over sin.

They also perish in the wilderness. Sin shall not have dominion over you. There is a promise left to us.

But, it says in verse 2, the word may not profit us, like it did not profit the Israelites, because it was not mixed with faith. And the reason why faith is not found is usually because believers are not wholehearted. When we do not seek God with all of our hearts, we shall not enter into victory over sin.

For Jesus said, It is those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who will be filled. Matthew 5, 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They shall be filled.

What about the man who does not hunger and thirst for righteousness? Who is quite content with having his sins forgiven, quite content with having taken water baptism, quite content with having received the baptism in the Spirit, but who does not hunger and thirst for righteousness in every area in his life. Is he going to be filled? No. And we cannot call such a person a spirit-filled believer.

No. The only people we can call spirit-filled believers are those who are living in victory over sin. Nobody else.

No one else is filled with the Spirit. No one else is living a spiritual life except the one who is living in victory over every known sin in his life. Who has entered into this blessed land, spoken of in Romans 6, 14, sin shall not have dominion over you.

Or described in 1 Peter 4, verse 1, He who has suffered in the flesh has seized from sin. That's what Peter says. A life of seizing from sin.

Or described by the Apostle John in 1 John 3, 6, whosoever abides in him does not commit sin. That's what Paul says in Romans 6, 14. That's what Peter says in 1 Peter 4, verse 1. That's what John says in 1 John 3, 6. All these three apostles speak of the same thing, of a life where we do not commit conscious sin.

That is the land of Canaan. Now how many are the believers who fear that they come short of it? We are told in chapter 4, verse 1 of Hebrews, let us fear lest we come short of this land. There are very, very few believers today who fear and tremble at the word of God.

They read the word of God and they have seized to fear. They read it not believing that it is for them, not fearing when they read these warnings, and so they remain defeated. It says here, let us fear.

I see in my own life how for many, many years after being a believer, being baptized in water and baptized in the Spirit, I did not fear lest I come short of this blessed promised land. But when I began to fear and when I began to be wholehearted, then I found that the word of God is true, that by faith we could possess the promised land. This promised land of sin shall not have dominion over you.

Praise God that it is possible if we will believe, if we are wholehearted, and if we fear and tremble at God's word, then we can enter in. Like it says in verse 3, we who have believed do enter into rest. Not shall enter into rest sometime in the future, in heaven, but do enter into rest right now.

We enter into this land of rest where the giants fall at our feet by faith, by faith, by a wholehearted faith in the promises of God, we enter into rest. But concerning the others, it is written in my wrath if they shall enter into my rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. God has made everything, every provision for us to enter into this life, but we may not enter into this life.

We are told in 2 Peter chapter 1, 2 Peter 1 verse 3, that God's divine power has made provision for us, has given to us everything. Now these are two important verses that every believer should know. 2 Peter 1 verses 3 and 4. God's divine power has given to us everything that pertains unto life and godliness.

There's not one single thing that's left out. Everything that pertains unto life and godliness has been given to us through the full knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and to virtue, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises. And what is the purpose of these promises? That by these we might become partakers of the divine nature.

The divine nature is a nature which does not commit sin. The divine nature is a nature completely free from worry, anxiety, fear, hatred, bitterness, everything like that. And we are told that we are given many, many magnificent promises.

Everything necessary, we are told in verse 3, for a godly life has been given to us in the Lord Jesus. Every single thing through God's mighty power, through the Holy Spirit, has been given to us. But we may not enter in, because we do not believe the promises.

We do not appropriate the power that becomes ours through receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We may not appropriate that power. We may not believe the promises.

Then we shall perish in the wilderness. But we can enter in if we are wholehearted and if we believe. We come now to Hebrews in chapter 4 and verse 4. The subject here is entering into God's rest, the rest which God has prepared for His people.

We are told in verse 9, there remains therefore a rest to the people of God, a Sabbath rest to the people of God. This is not a rest for the unbeliever, but to God's people. Very clearly said in verse 9. There remains a rest, not to the unbeliever, but for the people of God.

And in that context, He says in verse 4, He spake, that is, God spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works. That's in Genesis 2, verse 2, after the creation of the world and the heavens. In six days, we are told that God rested on the seventh day, obviously not from exhaustion, not because He was tired, but to lay down a principle, to teach man a lesson.

God did rest the seventh day from all His works, and in this place again, if they shall enter into My rest, that is in Psalm 95. Seeing therefore, verse 6, therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached, that is the Israelites, did not enter in because of unbelief. Again He limits a certain day, saying in David, today, after so long a time, as it is said, today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

It's amazing how often that emphasis on today comes in this passage. Chapter 3, verse 7, today if you will hear His voice. Verse 13, while it is called today.

Verse 15, today if you will hear His voice. And chapter 4, verse 7, today after so long a time, as it is said, today if you will hear His voice. Five times in that brief passage, this is the word of God, the word of the Holy Spirit, today, even as the word of Satan is tomorrow, some other time.

God always says today, now, there is no need to wait, there is no need to tarry, there is no need to wait for anything. Today we can possess, if we are wholehearted. Not that we shall become perfect in one day, but we can enter into the way of perfection in one day.

We cannot walk the whole way in one day, it takes a lifetime, but we can enter through the narrow gate right now, today. The way to life is narrow and the gate that enters into that way is narrow. We can enter through the gate in a moment, today, and then begin a lifetime of walking along the new and living way that leads to perfection.

But notice here, there is a reference made first of all to the rest of God in verse 4. We read in Genesis 1 that God made the world and all that there is in that, and the heavens and all that there is in that, and the seas and all that there is therein, in six days. And on the sixth day, He made man. Towards the end of the sixth day, He made man.

And the very next day, that is the seventh day, as per God's timetable, was a day of rest. But man, Adam, was made only on the sixth day. Towards the end of the sixth day, Adam and Eve were made.

And so, the seventh day of God was the first day for Adam. It was Adam's very first day of existence, for he had just been made at the close of the sixth day. And therefore, for Adam, his very first day was a day of rest.

And having entered into God's rest, he then labored for six days. Now there's a great spiritual truth here. Many people have misunderstood the meaning of the Sabbath.

There are people today who think that the Sabbath means we must not work on Saturdays, and we must meet together on Saturday, and keep the Saturday holy. That's a complete misunderstanding. That is going back under the law given to the Israelites in the Old Testament.

The Sabbath was a sign that God made between Him and the children of Israel alone. It was not between Him and the whole world. We must see that very carefully.

We are told that very clearly in Exodus 31 verse 13, that you shall keep my Sabbaths. Say this to the children of Israel. You shall keep my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between me and you, between God and the children of Israel.

Yes, it is between God and the children of Israel that that sign was made. Verse 17, it is a sign between me and the children of Israel. That's the plain word of God.

And so, the physical Sabbath of a day of rest at the end of the week, the seventh day of the week, has got nothing to do with the Christian church. Absolutely nothing. And it is also wrong to say that the Sabbath has been transferred from Saturday to Sunday.

It's got nothing to do with that either. There's no such teaching in the word of God. It is not a physical day of rest on the seventh day or the first day of the week or any such thing.

The Old Testament Sabbath was symbolic of a spiritual Sabbath that we are brought into by Jesus Christ. And so we are told in the book of Colossians, Paul's letter to Colossians, in chapter 2, verse 16 and 17. Colossians 2, 16 and 17.

Let no man judge you in respect of a holy day or of a new moon or of the Sabbath day, which are all a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ. In the Old Testament they could only look at the shadow. In the New Testament we have the body, that is Jesus Christ Himself.

And everything is fulfilled in Christ. In the Old Testament they had the shadow. They had to kill animals.

In the New Testament we have the reality, Christ sacrificed for us. In the Old Testament they had to offer grain offerings and other offerings at Thanksgiving. Today we have the reality, the offering of the sacrifice of praise.

In the Old Testament they had the shadow, a physical temple. In the New Testament we have the reality, the believer is the temple of God. In the Old Testament they have the shadow, the Sabbath day, one day of rest, one holy day and seven.

In the New Testament we have the reality, not one holy day and seven, either Saturday or Sunday, but a spiritual rest where we come into the life of victory over sin, inwardly. This is the rest which is spoken of in this passage. And we are told that God rested on the seventh day.

And as I just said, that was the first day for Adam. And so he entered into rest before he worked. For Adam, the timetable was not six days of work and then one day of rest.

No, it was one day of rest and then six days of work. For his very first day, after having been created on the sixth day, the very next day for Adam was a day of rest. So he first rested and then worked in the garden.

There's a great spiritual principle here that before we can effectively work for God, we must enter into God's rest. When we try to work for God before entering into God's rest, it's exactly like putting the cart before the horse. The cart cannot pull the horse.

It is the horse that must pull the cart. And so the horse must be put in front of the cart in exactly the same way. We have to enter into rest first and then labor for God.

So it was with Adam. God taught him, you first rest in my rest then labor for me. This is the lesson that the believer needs to learn.

We cannot effectively labor for God before we enter into his rest. And what is that rest? That rest is victory over sin. Entering into the land of Canaan.

It all means the same thing. All that symbolism means the same thing. We have to enter into God's rest first and then only can we labor for Him.

And that is why we are told in verse 9 there remains a rest for the people of God. That rest is there for us. Joshua, verse 8 did not lead them into that real rest.

That was all symbolic. But today as it says, we can enter into that rest. And so we need to be wholehearted and we need to fear lest we come short of that rest.

For if we do then all our labor will be in vain. So let us fear and let us wholeheartedly enter into that rest that God has for His people. Zach Foonan We turn now to Hebrews in chapter 4 verse 8 For if Jesus, that is Joshua had given them rest then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.

The word Jesus here in the King James Version refers to Joshua. They are the same word in the Hebrew, Jesus and Joshua. And it's referring to Joshua in this verse.

Joshua who led the children of Israel into Canaan. For if Joshua had given them rest then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.

Or as the margin says, a keeping of a Sabbath. And we saw last time that the Sabbath was not a day of physical rest as far as the New Testament Christian is concerned but a spiritual rest that He has to enter into. This is typified by the Old Testament Sabbath and also by the land of Canaan that the Israelites entered into in the Old Testament.

Both these typify the land and the life of rest that the New Testament Christian is called to enter into. In Joshua chapter 21 Joshua 21 and verse 44 we are told that the Lord gave the Israelites rest and there did not stand before them a single man of all their enemies. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

That is what it means to enter into rest. The Lord gave them rest it says in that verse. But that was by the fact that all their enemies were defeated.

This is how they entered into rest when they entered the land of Canaan. There were many enemies when they entered the land of Canaan but gradually they overcame their enemies and they possessed that land increasingly and not one of their enemies could stand before them. And this is the rest that remains for God's people today where none of our enemies the enemies in our flesh the many things the flesh makes us do or draws us to do.

The many things that the flesh tempts us with to seek the praise of men for example. This is a sin indeed. Many people cannot have faith because they receive honor from their fellow believers.

If you seek for honor and praise from your fellow believers you cannot have real faith. Those were the words of Jesus in John 5 and verse 44. In John 5 and verse 44 Jesus said to the Jews How can you believe who receive honor one of another and do not seek the honor that comes from God alone? Here is one of the great secrets of having true faith and here is one of the great hindrances to true faith.

What is the secret of having a true and a living faith? We have to seek the honor that comes from God alone. In other words we have to live before God's face. We should not care for the opinions of men.

The honor of men should have no place in our life at all if we are to have true faith. But here also we see the great hindrance to faith. How can you have faith? Jesus said who receive honor one from another.

Jesus said concerning himself in verse 41 I do not receive honor from men. He never received honor from men and this is the path that all his true disciples walk in. David Livingston that great man of God who went to Africa as a missionary said I make it a rule never to read anything that is written in my praise, in my honor.

I make it a rule never to read anything written in my praise. Here was one man who walked in the footsteps of Jesus who said I receive not honor from men. When we seek honor from men or when we receive honor from men we cannot have a living faith.

Those are the words of Jesus and this is the reason why many people do not enter into God's rest because they seek honor from men they receive honor from men. If we will finish with that we could come to the place of faith and we who believe do enter into rest it says in verse 3 of Hebrews 4 and this is the rest that God has for his people.

It is God's will just like he told Joshua in Joshua and chapter 1 God told him in verse 5 not one man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life not one man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life for I will be with you and this is the promise in the New Testament not one sin will be able to stand before you not one sin we are called into a life where all our enemies come below our feet where sin does not have dominion over us but we have to believe we have to be wholehearted then we shall enter into this life of rest what a word that is in verse 9 of Hebrews 4 that we could proclaim among all believers today there remains therefore a rest for you the people of God you are the people of God well there remains a rest for you that God wants you to enter

into there remains a Sabbath that you should enter into it's not just a question of Sunday being kept a holy day that's very easy to do a man can live in sin and say I go to church on Sunday but this is a spiritual keeping of Sabbath inwardly in his heart where he has entered into rest where no enemy can stand before his face he has victory over all sin victory over all temptations to tell lies for example victory over all temptations to get irritated with other people victory over all temptation towards unclean thinking there

remains this rest for the people of God of course the devil is quick to come and whisper in our ears such a life is not possible for you that's exactly what he told the Israelites the giants are too big you cannot enter the land of Canaan and they believed the devil

and they perished in the wilderness and that's exactly the condition of many believers today they don't believe God's word which says sin shall not have dominion over you they believe the devil's lie who tells them the giants are too big you cannot overcome these sins and they remain defeated and perish in the wilderness but there still remains a rest for the people of God those who are whole hearted those who believe the promise will enter in and then we read in verse 10 he that is entered into his rest he hath seized from his own works as God did from his what is our own works? our own works are our own effort to get victory over sin we struggle and try to live a good life and we fail the Bible says in Isaiah 64 verse 6 our righteousness is as filthy rags all our own effort to be holy

will end up like filthy rags all our own effort to please God are like filthy rags that is our own works they are called dead works they are dead works and in chapter 6 of Hebrews verse 1 we are told we have to turn from those dead works we have to turn from all our own effort to make ourselves acceptable before God from all our own effort to make ourselves holy we cannot do it we are told in Hebrews 9 then in verse 14 Hebrews 9.14 how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God purge your conscience from dead works of self to serve the living God in the spirit we are to be purged from dead works it is not by our own effort that we enter into victory over sin it was not by Joshua's cleverness but because he submitted to the Lord

the captain of the Lord's host that he entered and possessed that land and so will it be with us not by our own effort but by the power of the Holy Spirit and so when we enter into rest we seize from our own works we don't live under the delusion that we can get victory by our own efforts no, we seek God for the power of his spirit that we might live in victory this is the life of faith when it says the just shall live by faith this is what it means to live in dependence upon God and we are told in verse 11 let us be diligent to enter into that rest so that we do not fall like the Israelites in the wilderness what a blessed life God has called us to and we can enter into it if we are wholehearted and if we will have faith in God's promises

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