

Text: Heb 3-4

Today we will get back to our study of Hebrews. I am still working my way through a lot of background material. I did study on vacation! (But not as much as I would have liked...)

One of the themes we see in Heb 3 and 4 is the theme of rest. We talked about it a bit in our last message ("I Need a Rest"), but there is much more to say.

We won't get to that theme today, but we will prepare for that theme.

One of the challenges in studying Hebrews is the frequent warning passages.

The concern sincere Christians have with them is, "Can I lose my salvation?"

Some will say, "Yes, you can." However, from many clear passages in Scripture we can say without hesitation that you cannot lose your salvation.

Some will say that you gain salvation by faith, but keep salvation by works, which is what Hebrews is warning about. Again, I will say that salvation is by faith alone, plus nothing, minus nothing, so that can't be the answer.

Some will say that the warnings of Hebrews point to people who were never truly saved to begin with, so we who have true faith have nothing to worry about. But if someone has a false faith, wouldn't it be better for it to be exposed? I don't think that's what Hebrews is pointing to.

In order to solve this problem, we need to do some careful study. One part of that study involves understanding the spiritual condition of those involved in the discussion.

In Hebrews 3 and 4, the author spends his time discussing three generations of people:

1. The Exodus generation whom God prevented from entering "my rest"
2. The Davidic (Psalm 95) generation whom God warned against a similar fate.
3. The Hebrews generation (the readers) whom God also warned from turning back from their testimony

Since these generations are put in parallel in our passages, one aspect of our study must consider the spiritual condition of these three generations, especially comparing the Exodus generation with the Hebrews generation (and our generation).

Since the Exodus generation is the exemplar...

Heb 3.8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,

Heb 3.15 while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

In these two verses, the first point of comparison is the Exodus generation and the Psalm 95 (Davidic) generation.

Heb 4.1-2 ¶ 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.

Clearly here, the comparison is between the Exodus generation and the Hebrews generation.

- We must fear the same fate
- We have had the good news, just as they
- We, who believed, have a similar danger to them

There are three typical points made with respect to these comparisons:

1. The Exodus generation forfeited their salvation
 2. The Exodus generation never had salvation to begin with
- These first two views equate "rest" with the final reward of heaven.
3. The Exodus generation are true believers who lost something, but not salvation¹

A key to understanding is clarifying how the Exodus generation compares to the Hebrews generation.

Proposition: The penalty of the Exodus generation is a serious warning for the present generation of sincere believers in Jesus Christ.

¹ Summary of a description from Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7–4:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* : Dallas Theological Seminary 157, no. 627 (2000): 286–87.

I. The spiritual condition of the Hebrews generation

A. The terms the author uses of his readers

1. Us, we

Heb 1.2 ¶ in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Heb 2.1 ¶ For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.

2. Brethren

Heb 3.1 ¶ Therefore, **holy brethren**, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

Heb 2.11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason **He is not ashamed to call them brethren**,

Heb 3.7 ¶ Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, ... Heb 3.12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

3. Partakers

Heb 3.1 ¶ Therefore, holy brethren, **partakers** of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

Heb 1.9 "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR **COMPANIONS**."

a. Partakers = companions

b. The readers are companions of Christ, part of his company

B. The points the author is making

1. He is not evangelizing the lost, he is warning the converted
2. He assumes their salvation as a group, he isn't addressing individuals
 - a. Note: he is not implying that everyone who reads is a believer
 - b. He is addressing the group *as believers*
 - c. In the same way, I can preach to the church as a body of believers, even if individuals in attendance are not believers

II. The spiritual condition of the Exodus generation

A. Key indicators

1. They believed Moses and Aaron right from the beginning (Exod. 4:30–31)

Ex 4.30-31 and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshipped.

2. See Ex 14.30-31 for their belief following the Red Sea deliverance (Compare Gen 15.6)

a. The event

Ex 14.30-31 ¶ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.³¹ When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

b. A commentary

Ps 106.12 Then they believed His words; They sang His praise.

c. A corollary

Gn 15.6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

1) Exactly the same expression: they believed in YHWH (Ex); He believed in YHWH (Gen)

2) "Believed" is *aman*, they "amened" in the Lord

3. Song of Moses describes the exodus as "salvation" (Ex 15.2)

Ex 15.2 "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become **my salvation**; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him.

4. Despite their disobedience, God forgave them (Pss. 78:38; 99:8)

Ps 78.38 But **He**, being compassionate, **forgave their iniquity** and did not destroy *them*; And often He restrained His anger And did not arouse all His wrath.

Ps 99.8 O LORD our God, You answered them; **You were a forgiving God to them**, And yet an avenger of their *evil* deeds.

5. Heb 11.28-29, 39

Heb 11.28-29 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.²⁹ ¶ By faith **they** passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

Heb 11.39 ¶ And all **these**, having gained approval through **their faith**, did not receive what was promised,

B. The fallout from Kadesh Barnea

1. After the report of the spies, the people refused God's will
2. Moses, Caleb, & Joshua pled with them to no avail
3. God spoke against them (Num 14.11-12)
4. Moses interceded for them (Num 14.13-19)

5. The Lord pardoned them for their sin (Num 14.20-23)

- a. Their sin was pardoned
- b. Their entrance to the land was barred

Entrance to the land is not the same as entrance to heaven

- c. Exception: Caleb (Num 14.24) and Joshua (Num 32.12)

Num 32.11-12 'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully,¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the LORD fully.'

Should we assume that, ultimately, only Caleb and Joshua of the Exodus generation were redeemed?

6. Notice that *only* Caleb and Joshua were excepted from the decree

- a. Not Moses
- b. Not Aaron

Should we assume that Moses was not redeemed?

Why then did he meet with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration

C. Our conclusions about the Exodus generation

1. As a group, largely believers in the Lord
2. As a group, failed the test of faith at the border of the land
3. As individuals, many who failed nonetheless are among the redeemed as far as personal salvation is concerned

Thus the Exodus generation is a fit comparison with the Hebrews generation (and our generation)

III. The spiritual condition of our present generation

A. Bible believing churches are full of born-again people

1. Baptist churches work hard to have an “only regenerate” church membership (not perfect in this matter)
2. Christians today live in a threatening world, putting pressure on Christian standards and Biblical imperatives

Will you obey God or give in to the world?

3. The challenge to the Exodus generation is alive and real to our present generation

B. The warnings of Hebrews are for born-again people

1. Our study will examine further what these things are
2. Nonetheless, there is a real loss that Christians may experience, a real wilderness to face, if they fail the Lord

C. The warning for those in our generation who are not born-again

1. Not the loss of *rest*
2. Rather, the loss of eternal life, eternal condemnation in hell

By all means, those who aren't believers, ought to diligently press into faith and trust Christ for salvation.

Conclusion:

Those who are believers must pursue Christ faithfully, fearing failure, pressing into the Kingdom in victory.

Proposition: The penalty of the Exodus generation is a serious warning for the present generation of sincere believers in Jesus Christ.