

“Jesus is Better” – 4 Meditations from the Book of Hebrews

Meditation 3: Christ is our Greater Rest - Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Introduction

I recently listened to an interview with a man named Colin O’brady who was the first man ever to cross Antarctica solo on foot. Others had tried to do it before him and died. It took Colin 56 days total, and he talks about his journey in great detail – his preparations, his training, his diet, and his incredible journey that was met with lots of doubts, trials, and dangers. - 60-degree weather, 60 to 90 mph winds, and btw, he had to pull a 375 lb. sled with supplies w/ him day after day. At the beginning he was dropped off by a helicopter, and he said one hour into his journey he was already having doubts about his ability to make it. Eventually, he pressed on and made it.

1. The book of Hebrews tells us we too are on a journey, it may not be across Antarctica, but it is through the wilderness of life which can also be difficult. And on this journey, we can grow weary, uncertain about God, and we too can be tempted to throw in the towel altogether.
2. God’s Word warns us about giving up on the journey and encourages God’s people to press on!

A Warning for Those in the Wilderness (v.7-19)

1. **Context** – Hebrews tell us that the Christian life is a life lived in the wilderness
 - a. In the OT – the wilderness was the place that God’s people had to pass through on the way to the Promised Land.
 - b. In the NT, we are reminded that we are on a difficult pilgrim journey to our eternal home. **1 Peter** calls the people of God “*sojourners*” and “*exiles*” on the earth. And in our own wilderness journey we too are met with difficulty.
2. **Warning** - The preacher of Hebrews brings a word of *warning* to those who are in the wilderness. Like a good doctor, he warns them about certain actions that will bring about spiritual heart disease for them.
 - a. When a doctor sees a patient going down a bad path physically, they exhort them to live a better life - exercise, eat a healthier diet, get more sleep, manage stress better, etc. “Do this or else!” The preacher here is like a good doctor, & he warns the people about their spiritual heart condition.
 - b. First, he says in v.8, “*Don’t harden your hearts*”, and again in v.12, “*take care brothers, lest there be in you an evil and unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.*” What does it mean to harden our hearts to God?
 - i. It means you close your heart to God’s Word. The preacher quotes Ps.95 in the *present tense* (v.7) - “The HS says” – God speaks to us even now through his Word. Not only to David’s generation, but he speaks to the church. To harden one’s heart is to close one’s heart to God’s revelation.
 - ii. In the OT, the people of God not only heard God’s Word, but **v.9** reminds us that they saw God’s mighty works for 40 years in the wilderness.

1. They saw the Red Sea *parted* before their eyes.
 2. They saw Pharaoh's armies *destroyed* in those waters after they passed on dry ground.
 3. They *ate* Manna from heaven & *drank* from the Rock God opened to them. God miraculously defended and provided for his people.
- c. But in the end, the people hardened their hearts to God's revelation. They complained. They grumbled against God and against Moses. Eventually, their unbelieving and evil heart manifested itself in **outward disobedience**
 - d. Like Israel, we can focus too much on *our problems* and minimize God's promise & presence with us.
 - e. Like Israel, we can find ourselves *complaining* against God and *forget* how good God has been to us.
 - f. Like Israel, we can be overly concerned with the *things of this life* – food, drink, clothing. We need to remember the words of Jesus, to “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.*”
 - g. When we fall into these things, we are hardening our hearts against God. And if someone persist in this, and all they do is grumble, complain, and manifest a life of disregard for God, the end is judgment.
 - h. This path of unbelief and disobedience leads only to **destruction** – v.12, “Beware” (“take care”) lest there be in you an *evil a heart of unbelief departing from the living God.*”
 - i. That word “fall away” is – where we get our word **apostasy**. It doesn't mean a true Christian can fall away from God. But apostasy refers to a person who is outwardly identified with the people of God & who falls away, because their heart was never changed. Think of Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, who betrayed him. Apostasy begins with **unbelief** in the heart, then eventually that shows itself and there is a falling away from God. This path leads to judgment.
3. There is a **personal call** to faith here v.12, “*Beware or take care.*” In other words, look after your own heart before God. **Prov. 4:23**, “*above all guard your heart, for from it flows the springs of life*”

A Promise for Wilderness Wanderers (4:1-13)

4. Ch. 4 opens, “*since a promise remains of entering His rest.*” There is held out to these wilderness wanderers the promise of REST. Don't you love that?
 - a. ILL: After a long journey, or a busy season of work our home life, we long for those times of rest. That man Colin O'brady who traveled across Antarctica talked about enjoying a big burger when he was all done, and just sleeping in a warm bed. We are in the wilderness, but REST is ahead of us. What is this REST?
5. In the very **beginning**, God created all things in the space of six days and rested on the seventh **Genesis 2**. He ceased from his work and entered into communion with his creation. The symbol of the rest, that place of ultimate blessedness was the Tree of Life.
 - a. For Moses and Joshua rest was held out to them. The land of Canaan was a *symbol* of that rest. It was the Land *flowing* with Milk and Honey. A place of abundant provision with no enemies, and God's presence.!
 - b. In scripture, this rest is equivalent to the GOSPEL. It is speaking to the rest God desires us to have *with* him and *in* him - where our hearts find contentment in him, and we live our lives out of this communion with God.

- c. Jesus spoke of this rest and offered it to the world when he came saying in **Matt. 11**, “*come to me all you who are wear and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*” Jesus promised rest for the soul. Rest for those carrying heavy burdens.
 - i. Jesus a Savior who can *sympathize* with wilderness wanderers. He also traveled through wilderness. Although Jesus was faithful to God, he took upon himself our sin and experienced the awful *unrest* and *agony* of the cross. This is so that that we might find rest today in him!
- 6. Again, the preacher says, there **remains** a rest for the people of God. Today **is** the day of salvation, the day to respond to God’s word rightly so that we might enter that rest in Jesus Christ. ***When we repent of our sins, cease from our evil deeds, and put our faith in Jesus Christ, we find that rest in God.
 - a. Now as we go through the wilderness, Jesus is the **Rock** we *drink* from in the wilderness, he is the **bread** of life we eat from. He is the faithful guide and **Good Shepherd** who guards us and protects us until we finally reach our final rest. We have become partakers of Christ if we holdfast our confidence firm to the end.

Conclusion

- b. If you are restless, tired, or even hard of heart today, call upon Jesus Christ today. Ask that he might give you rest, give you life, and a soft heart to the things of God today. May God help us to *examine* our own hearts, to fear the Lord, and to be diligent in entering that rest. And may we encourage one another daily all the more as we see the Day of Christ’s return drawing near.