

Hebrews

Chapter 3:14 – 4:9

¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we keep the beginning of our commitment firm until the end, ¹⁵ while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me."

We have become partakers of Christ > (Utlley) This is a (Greek grammar) ... this implies a finished progress that results in an abiding state of being.

If > (Strong's) ean

(Utlley) Psalm 95:7-11 has been quoted several times in the context of chapters 3 and 4. Each time a different part of the OT passage is emphasized (like a sermon).

1. Hebrews 3:7-11 (Psalm 95:8) emphasizes "do not harden your hearts" (94:8 > LXX) > To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness:
2. Hebrews 3:15 (Psalm 95:9) emphasizes "when they provoked Me" (94:9 > LXX) > ⁹ where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works.
3. Hebrews 4:3,5 (Psalm 95:11) emphasizes "they shall not enter My rest" (94:11 > LXX) > ¹¹ So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.
4. Hebrews 4:7 (Psalm 95:7) emphasizes "today" (94:8 > LXX) > To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness:

(Constable) The condition the writer stated here is the same as in verse 6. We must continue to walk by faith, and to trust and obey God daily, just as we began the Christian life by faith ("hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end").

(Tanner) "Failure to do so will not mean loss of salvation, but rather loss of reward (and possibly temporal judgment while on earth)."

(Hodges) "... A son who leaves home ceases to be an active partner in the home, though he does not thereby cease to be a son!"

Do not harden your hearts > (Wuest) *stop hardening your hearts as in the rebellion*

¹⁶ For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose dead 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 *And so we see that they were not able to enter because of **unbelief**.*

(Constable) These verses constitute an exposition of the passage quoted (**Ps. 95:7b-11**). The questions indicate the diatribe style of rhetoric, in which the speaker raises questions and provides answers ... they failed "to enter" into the blessings that could have been theirs, because they refused to believe that God would defeat their enemies and bring them into rest in the Promised Land.

Ps. 95:7b-11 (LXX 94:10-11) > ¹⁰ *Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.* ¹¹ *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*

The three questions ... and a clearly implied warning

- **Question #1** > *For who provoked Him when they had heard?*
Answer > *Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?*
- **Question #2** > *And with whom was He angry for forty years?*
Answer > *Was it not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?*
- **Question #3** > *And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest*
Answer > *but to those who were disobedient*
- **The Clearly Implied Warning** > *And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.*

For who provoked Him when they had heard? (NASB) > *For some, when they had heard, did provoke (KJV)* > (Vincent) render > "*who, when they heard, did provoke?*" The interrogative τίνας calls special attention to those who provoked God. The writer would say, "My warning against apostasy is not superfluous or irrelevant: for, consider: who were they that provoked God? They were those who had fairly begun their journey to Canaan, as you have begun your Christian course. They provoked God, so may you.

Indeed > (Strong's) *alla* > otherwise, on the other hand, but

(Stuart) This particle "in a series of questions, and standing at the head of a question, means "but, further." It serves to connect, and give intensity to the interrogation

Forty years > (Pink) Twice over the apostle reminded them (verses 9, 17) that the unbelief of their fathers had been continued for "forty years." Almost that very interval had now elapsed since the Son had died, risen again, and ascended to heaven.

Hebrews 3:18-4:1 > ^{3:18}And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ^{3:19}And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. ^{4:1}Therefore, we must fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Remains > (Strong's) to leave, leave behind (From *kata* and *leipo* > to leave down > Behind; by implication, to abandon, have remaining -- forsake, leave, reserve.

While a promise remains of entering His rest > (Utley) This is a continuing word play (i.e., "His rest," cf. Heb. 4:1,3,5,8,9,10,11) in which the author uses rabbinical hermeneutical methodology to talk about four parts of the people of God's history and hope.

1. Gen. 2:2, God's rest on the seventh day of creation
2. Num. 13-14, Joshua's rest which was the Promised Land
3. Ps. 95:7-11, God's rest was still available in David's day
4. Heb. 4:1, 10-11, the day of rest as a reference to peace with God and life with God in heaven.

Seem > (Strong's) to have an opinion, to seem. Usage > I think, seem, appear, it seems.

(HELPS) properly, *suppose* (what "seems to be"), forming *an opinion* (a personal judgment, estimate)

Come short > (Strong's) to come late, be behind, come short

(HELPS) properly, at "the end," i.e. coming behind (to "be posterior, late"); (figuratively) coming *behind and therefore left out*; left wanting (falling short).

(Precept Austin) relays a number of passages where the Greek word for *come short* > *hustereo* is used. The author relays, "In several of the NT passages *hustereo* means to *be in short supply, to fail, to give out or to lack*. *Hustereo* can mean to *experience deficiency in something advantageous or desirable and thus to be lacking, go without or come short of*." It would be good to see just a few of these (16) usages:

Matthew 19:20 > ²⁰The young man said to Him, "All these I have kept; what am I still lacking?"

John 2:3 > ³When the wine **ran out**, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

Luke 15:14 > ¹⁴Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing **without**.

Romans 3:23 > ²³for all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God,

²For indeed *we have had good news preached to us, just as they also did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who listened with faith.*

We have had good news preached to us > (Walvoord) (lit., “we were evangelized” or “we were given good news”). But this good news does not always refer to the plan of salvation from sin. In some circles the word “gospel” has acquired a sense too technical and narrow to do justice to the writer’s ideas here. *What was preached to the Israelites of old was, quite clearly, God’s offer of rest.* This, of course, was “good news” for them just as it is for people now, but it is not exactly what is meant today by “gospel.” The Greek verb used, *euangelizomai*, was fully capable of having a nontechnical sense in the New Testament (cf. its use in ***Luke 1:19; 1 Thess. 3:6***)

Luke 1:19 > ¹⁹*The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.*

1 Thess. 3:6 > ⁶*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,*

(Barnes) The discussion has reference only to "the promise of rest," and the assertion of the apostle is that this "good news" of a promise of rest is made to us as really as it was made to "them."

One NASB version reads *because it was not united by faith in those who heard ...* another NASB version has it as *because they were not united with those who listened with faith.* Apparently both readings have a basis in the Greek text. Regardless of the translation the main indictment is the same > the reason they did not benefit as it was not mixed with faith.

United > (Strong’s) to mix together, to agree with

Did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who listened with faith > (Swindoll) In 4:2-3 we find a very simple equation for entering into the rest God has for us: HEARING + BELIEVING = RESTING.

(Constable) The good news that the Israelites heard did not profit them because they refused to trust God and rebelled against Him.

(Wuest) translates this phrase as > *But the word of the report did not profit them, not having become mixed together with faith in the case of those who heard.*

³ **For we who have believed** enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My anger, they certainly shall not enter My rest," **although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.**

For > (Strong's) *gar* > properly, assigning a reason (used in argument, explanation or intensification; often with other particles)

² *For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who listened with faith.* ³ **For** we who have believed enter that rest,

Believed > (Strong's) believe, put in trust with

(Precept Austin) The other secular Greek meaning that is the more common use in the New Testament is the transitive or active use which means to "put faith in" or "rely upon" someone or something. Sometimes it has even stronger meaning: "To entrust something to another."

In classical usage it denoted conduct that honored a previous agreement, such as the honoring of a truce between opposing armies. An example of this use in the New Testament is **II Timothy 1:12**. Paul said > ¹² *For this reason I also suffer these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have **believed**, and I am convinced that He is able to protect what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

We who have believed > (Constable makes a correction noted by a number of the commentators) A better translation of "we who have believed" would be "we who believe" (Gr. *pisteusantes*, aorist (once and done) active (on-going) participle). The writer was not looking back to initial faith that resulted in justification but to present faith that would result in entering into rest (full inheritance).

(Pink quotes Bagster's Interlinear) "*For we enter into the rest, who believe.*" This is a literal word for word rendering of the Greek into English.

(Walvoord) The writer's concern was not about their original faith in the past, but their perseverance in it (cf. 3:6, 14). Faith remains the prerequisite for entrance into rest, since it was to those who failed to exercise faith that God declared by oath they would not enter into His rest.

(Weirsbe) The sin of Israel is stated in Hebrews 3:12—"departing from the living God." The Greek word gives us our English word apostasy. This is the only place this word is used in Hebrews. Does "apostasy" mean abandoning one's faith and therefore being condemned forever? That does not fit into this context.

Israel departed from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. Rather, He disciplined them in the wilderness. God did not allow His people to return to bondage.

Finished > (Strong's) *ginomai* > to come into being, to happen, to become

Foundation > (Strong's) *katabole* > a laying down (from *kataballo* > *kata* > down + *ballo* > to throw > to throw down)

(Precept Austin) The original idea was the laying down of the foundation of a house.

⁴For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; ⁵and again in this passage, "They certainly shall not enter My rest."

And God rested on the seventh day from all His works > **Genesis 2:2 (LXX)** > ²And God finished on the sixth day his works which he made, and he ceased on the seventh day from all his works which he made.

They certainly shall not enter My rest. > **Psalm 34:11 (LXX)** > ¹¹So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

(Vincent) Lit. if they shall enter, etc. A common Hebraistic formula in oaths. Where God is speaking, as here, the ellipsis is "may I not be Jehovah if they shall enter."

⁶**Therefore**, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who previously had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

Therefore > (Wuest) The writer now proceeds to show that those under Moses have failed completely of the rest in Canaan through unbelief, that those under Joshua had entered into the temporal, physical, and material rest in Canaan, and that the rest under Joshua was not a complete and final one since God invited Israel into rest during David's time (the passage from Psalm ... "David's time") ... The promise of rest had not been appropriated in the first instance, and in the second instance the character of the rest was not final, so that the promise of rest still holds good.

(Stop and think about this for a moment.

- Why did the Lord not let the first group cross the Jordan?
 - a. Determined unbelief
- Why were those that did enter Canaan constantly subjected to persecution?
 - a. Worshiped other gods

- What did neither group do?
 - a. Rest in the Lord)

Remains > (Strong's) to leave, leave behind

Preached > (Strong's) to announce good news

Disobedience > (Strong's) *apithiah* > from *a* > not + *peitho* > to persuade, to have confidence

(Wuest Translation of verse 6) *Since, therefore, it remains over that certain must enter into it, and they who were first the subjects of the proclamation of the glad tidings did not enter because of disobedience*

⁷ He again **sets** a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, do not **harden** your hearts."

Sets > (Strong's) *horizó* (do you see our word *horizon*?) to mark off by boundaries, to determine

(Walvoord) But the failure of the Israelites did not nullify the truth that some will enter that rest, and accordingly God renewed the offer (in Ps. 95) as late as the time of David. At that time God again set a certain day, calling it Today, thus presenting this opportunity to all readers of the psalm for whom the "Today" becomes their own "Today." Already the writer had applied that "Today" to his readers (cf. Heb. 3:14-15).

Harden > (Precept Austin) *skleruno* (do you see our word *sclerosis*?) means first to make dry, stiff or hard. In the active *skleruno* means to harden and in the passive sense, to grow hard.

(Wuest Translation of this verse ... **look at the last phrase**) *again, a certain day He designates, Today, speaking by means of David after such a long time, just as it has been said before and is still on record, Today, if His voice you will hear, stop hardening your hearts.*

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. ⁹ Consequently, there remains a **Sabbath rest** for the people of God.

(Walvoord) Behind this argument lies the undeniable fact that the conquest in Joshua's day did not lead to a permanent possession of the land. Such permanent possession of their promised inheritance had become for Judaism an expectation which would only be realized in Messiah's kingdom.

Sabbath Rest > (Strong's) *sabbatismos* > An entirely different word than what has been used to this point

(Precept Austin) *sabbatismos* > literally means a keeping of a sabbath or a keeping of days of rest. It is used in this passage not in the literal sense (meaning to keep a specific day, the "Sabbath" day) but to describe a period of rest for God's people which is modeled after and is a fulfillment of the traditional Sabbath.

(Wuest) The writer uses here a different Greek word for "rest."

- In his previous references to the idea of rest, he has used *katapausis*, meaning "a cessation from activity," thus "a rest," a general word for the idea of rest.
- Now, he uses *sabbatismos*, the word used of the Sabbath rest.
- The word points back to God's original rest, and speaks of the ideal rest. It is a Sabbath rest because the believer reaches a definite stage of attainment and has satisfactorily accomplished a purpose, as God did when He finished the work of creation. It is not the believer's rest into which he enters and in which he participates, but in God's unique, personal rest in which the believer shares.