***The Reality of Eternal Life and Eternal Death  
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**The Destiny of Good**

Our subject this morning is, The Destiny of Good, number 4, based on Romans 8:28-30.

The Creator, sovereign, holy God of the universe, we have learned has provided a 3-tiered good for believers of the church age. These three areas are: the good of eternal life in heaven, the good of temporal fellowship with God the Father on earth and producing divine good works, and the good of producing rewards and crowns in heaven for one's service on earth.

The ultimate good of the third level, we have furthermore observed, is only for those that have developed the maximum capacity to love God through the intake of doctrine into their souls. And so, they have built and developed the spiritual maturity capable of receiving maximum blessings of the third level of good. This good from God is for all of us, the light at the end of the tunnel of trial, suffering, and death in a world under divine curse and under Satan's control.

It is, furthermore, the desire of God that every human being attains the divine good of level one. This is pointed out to us in 2 Peter 3:9, which says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 1 Timothy 2:3-4, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

It is the desire of God our Father that all men attain level one good. This level one good of personal salvation, however, can only be received from God by believing the Gospel of the grace of God and, thereby having believed it, being born again by means of God's Holy Spirit, to be born again spiritually.

And so, we read in John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [that is, born from above spiritually], he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him [trusting in Christ as Savior] should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him."

So, it is clear from these scriptures, and from many others, that a person must by an act of his own will accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who was made to pay for the moral guilt of all mankind. But, the individual at the same time must not compromise the gift-basis of the divine offer by adding religious rituals or human good works to it. Many people never seem to understand this, that they cannot compromise the basis on which God will give you eternal life.

And so, you well know, Romans 4:4-5 tell us, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt [If you work for your salvation, then it's not a gift; it's a payment.]. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." He who responds with non-meritorious faith (faith is not a work; it is therefore non-meritorious), that is the person whom God justifies. So that, Paul makes it clear to us that you cannot have both grace and works in the same package.

This is further reinforced in Romans 11:6 which says, "And if by grace, then is it no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace." It is amazing, therefore, in view of what the Bible has to say, that most of the world's religions and most of the Christian church denominations do not teach people that the Bible way of going to heaven via this grace method is the only way. And so, most of the religious people in the world today are not born again spiritually, and so most of the people who are breathing on planet earth at this moment are not going to heaven. Only those who do believe the Gospel (which is the word for "good news" in the New Testament, the good news of salvation), only those who believe this good news are in the hand of God and so safe in eternal life with no fear of eternal death in hell.

And for this reason, the Lord made the statement recorded in John 10, beginning at verse 27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them [I GIVE unto them. I do not pay unto them. I give as a gift unto them] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." It is clear that those who are in the arms of Jesus, when they pass into death, are only those that have entered that position of security through their faith in Him as Savior by an act of receiving a gift of grace apart from human efforts.

Most of the human race, therefore, is going to end up experiencing the eternal death of separation from God and suffering and pain of hell because they have rejected the grace invitation to salvation. In Matthew 22:14, we read the sobering words which say, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Christ died for the sins of the world. The call to eternal life is extended. Whosoever will may come. Many are called, but few out of that have been chosen and who will accept God's plan.

For the unforgiven sinner, then, who dies and goes out into eternity, he will face the tragedy of the lake of fire. He will face that tragedy because he has carried the guilt of his sin out there with him. There has been nothing done to justify him in God's eyes, that is, to declare him righteous. He has, in fact, carried all the guilt of the sins that characterized in general of the human race.

**Sins Which Characterize the Unsaved**

We have such a description in Revelation 21:8, a list of sins which characterize those who have never been born again. It says, "But the fearful." The word "fearful" means, "the cowardly," cowardly in hesitating to accept Jesus Christ as Savior because of concern or the consequences that you may suffer if you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Mark 4:40, 2 Timothy 1:7-8. These people are characterized by the fact that they are unbelieving. John 3:18.

Then, they are characterized by the word "abominable," that is, those who practice vile things. Then, those who are murderers. Then, the word fornicators, and then sorcerers (these who use drugs). And them, the idolaters (these who worship false gods), and those who are liars. These "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." People who are characterized by these things as a way of life and have not covered their guilt for these things will go into the lake of sulfur. This passage, of course, is not saying that one is saved by acting good, but it is rather listing works which characterize unbelievers who are left, then, outside of heaven.

You have another listing such as that in Revelation 22:15 which says, "For outside [that is, outside of heaven] are dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso loveth and maketh a lie." These things which are characteristic of unbelievers, and notice, it does not matter what your status and your position in life is - how nice a person you are. If these characteristics are upon you, and they are in some degree, and they have not been covered by the death of Christ through your acceptance of that payment, then you bear that guilt.

The Apostle Paul, in reviewing the past history of the Christians in Corinth, observed that they were characterized by all of the filthy, ugly things that characterize the unbelievers of their day, and that therefore, they should no longer act the way they once did. In 1 Corinthians 6, beginning at verse 9, Paul says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

**Forgiveness Through Faith in Christ**

So, you see, these things that characterize in conduct the unbeliever has also characterized many believers before the point of their salvation. But, having once come to the cleansing of the blood of Christ in their faith in Jesus Christ, these things are now a thing of the past, and they have no concern that these will ever be brought up against them when they face God. For, the Bible tells us that He puts our evil away from us. He sticks it behind His back where He cannot see it. He removes it as far as the east is from the west. He buries it in the deepest sea.

So, therefore, we have a very explicit statement in the Word of God that personal faith in Jesus Christ as one Savior is indeed evidenced by a change in lifestyle from sinful deeds to godly works, and it is one of the indications that one indeed has been born again.

James 2:14 and James 2:20 both indicate that our works will reflect the justification that we have. But, of course, those works in themselves may also be assumed by those who still have this sin guilt upon them. A person can be very moral, and he will still end up in the lake of fire because he is guilty of these kinds of evils, and they have never been placed under the forgiveness of God.

It is like somebody who has died, and you know what they do with a dead body. They embalm it. And somebody comes along and does a hair job on the head. Somebody comes along and does a cosmetic job on the face, and they make the person look wonderful. And often, people will come by, and they'll make some remark as they stand at the casket, "Why, he looks just like he's sleeping." But, I'll tell you, you can go ahead and shake that dude, and he's still dead. He looks beautiful, but he's dead. There is no life. And that's what human beings do not understand: that they can look beautiful as man looks upon him, cultured, respected, elevated, important. But they're still dead corpses with no life. And that is a serious condition for a human to be in.

Faith in Jesus Christ provides salvation. And for that person, there is imputed the absolute righteousness of God so that that individual stands as justified in the eyes of God. And that's what salvation is all about. It is receiving Jesus Christ as Savior so that you stand justified in the eyes of God. That means you have absolute righteous attributed to your credit. You're as good as Jesus Christ when God looks at you. It means that there's no more moral guilt at all that God will hold against you. It means that you have been adjusted to the justice of God so that there is no punishment for you to face after death.

Now, that review of the status of the human being relative to God in one's eternity is familiar ground to most of you. But it is ground which within American society today is an area of a dismal ignorance. The average American, now that America has cut itself off from the Word of God, is a pathetic creature when it comes to understanding what God thinks and what God does and what God expects. Without the Word of God, we have no guidelines.

**The Reality of Eternal Life and Eternal Death**

This past week, the seven astronauts of the space shuttle Challenger tragically experienced the death that awaits all who are in this world which is under God's judgment because of Adam's sin and which is controlled by Satan. The widespread public grief that all of us have been observing via the news media has unfortunately not voiced the real tragedy which potentially may have taken place with this event. The Christian which is well-taught in the Word of God and who understands the things which we have just reviewed will immediately wonder how many of the seven, if any, have attained the essential first level of good in salvation qualifying them for eternal life in heaven. This first level that God desired for each of the seven and which He in eternity past with them specifically in mind provided for them.

So, the real sadness potentially of this event could be much more than the physical death if the soul is lost and at this moment in the pain of hades awaiting ultimate transfer into the eternal death of the lake of fire. That is potentially the real tragedy of what took place on that launch pad. The sincere eulogizing of the victims may comfort the bereaved, but it can do nothing for these seven who may or may not have faced God without Christ.

People, of course, like to assume that all is well between God and the seven victims because of the noble aspirations and because of the untimely end of these scientists, these explorers of space. President Reagan has expressed this hope by saying of them, "You who flew so far and high now make your home beyond the stars safe in God's promise of eternal life," as he eulogized them at the Houston service.

Well, we would like to think, of course that that is true, that they do make their home beyond the stars safe in the possession of God's promise of eternal life. However, it is clear that many other people with uncertainty about the eternal status of the seven astronauts have tried to come to their assistance.

And so, I saw a sign one place that said, "Turn on your lights and say a prayer for the astronauts," implying that their praying would in some way affect God's dealing with them. Well, it won't help much to turn your car lights on now. It did help a great deal to have the illumination of the Word of God before the event.

In any case, the Bible is very clear that certain people will not receive the first level of God's good of personal salvation. For example, those who try to secure justification by means of good works will not receive it, such as the Roman Catholics do. Ephesians 2:8-9 say, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God [This whole salvation does not come from you, the salvation which he's been describing from verse 4 on. All of this is a gift from God.]: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

So those who try to secure justification by means of good works, as do the Roman Catholics, will not receive the first level of divine good of salvation. For those who reject the person of Jesus Christ as the only way into the Father's heaven as Jews reject him, that person cannot receive the first level of divine good.

Acts 4:12 makes that very clear, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," referring to the person of Jesus Christ. And 1 John 5:12 adds to this, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

And finally, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." So, if you reject Jesus Christ as THE way into heaven as Jews reject him, you will not receive that first level of good of eternal life in heaven.

Those who worship their ancestors as gods instead of the true God as, for example, Buddhists do, that person will not receive the first level of good in the form of eternal life in heaven. For the Bible is clear, again, on that point. In Exodus 20:2-3, " I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me [animal or human]." You will not have any other god except the true God before you.

In Deuteronomy 5:6-7, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me." And if you worship your ancestors in order to mollify them so they will not do you evil, if you worship the spirits of your ancestors as Buddhists do, you will not experience this level of divine good.

President Reagan at the Houston memorial service said, "We find consolation in faith." But the Bible has made it clear that the only faith that has value with God is the faith which is placed in His Son Jesus Christ, not in the groundless optimism that hopes for the best that is easy to use words to try to comfort people that all after all is going to turn out well. Not so.

One of the news commentators, I noticed, referred to one of the crew and expressed the confident opinion that, to use his words, whatever consciousness that victim might now possess, the person would be urging us to continue with the space shuttle program. Now, I can assure that that person has a great deal of consciousness at this moment, but I doubt that the space shuttle program is on that individual's mind. The Bible, in fact, being our guideline gives us a different direction as to the concern and the message that we might expect from these who have suddenly been thrust into eternity.

For those who may, of that seven, have been without Christ, there is now, I can assure you, the concern and the desire to warn the living to escape the hell that they have entered. Just consult the Biblical account of the historical event of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31, and you'll see what's on the mind of people who get out there and discover that there is a real place of suffering, that you did really have to accept Christ as your Savior. You couldn't just depend that God was somehow going to be a good grandfather type that was going to overlook your evil and take you in, that is it is indeed real.

And then, the first thing those people think of: how can I get the message back to people I love (as did the rich man who wanted his five brothers to escape the doom that faced him). But, as that incident indicates, there is no warning that can be given by those who have gone beyond the veil of death except that which we already have in the form of the record of God's Word in the Bible.

Furthermore, it makes it clear, in that case, that there is no second chance available now that these people have realized the enormity of their error. The living, thus, can do nothing to help the dead. Your masses, your prayers, your money, your ritual is not going to affect God's dealing with people. It's all settled this side of the grave.

For those, on the other hand, of the seven who may be resting in the arms of God in heaven, I can assure you that they, in all likelihood, have their minds preoccupied with something totally different than the future of the space shuttle program. For, in Revelation 5:13, we have an insight into what is going up there when we listen to these people expressing their adoration for God and for the Lamb, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'"

These people who have entered into the presence of God in eternal life are so exhilarated by learning that it was, after all, indeed true, they made the right move. They made the right decision, and now, all of the consequences of living in an earth under God's curse is behind them.

2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The only message that these who are in the arms of God would have is to confirm to us that the grace plan of salvation is the way to go, to urge people to abandon all of their religious systems and to go for it with the Gospel of the grace of God.

In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, Paul said, "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain [Don't play careless when God's grace gives you an offer and an opportunity to save your soul.]. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

Because once you die, it's all past. Those who are in the arms of God are praising Him now, and they are, if anything, calling back, indeed, to us a message: go with the grace of God, go with the Gospel, go with the salvation He has offered. Those who lose loved ones in death, if those who have died are born again, they have a hope for a happy reunion someday in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope." The Christian who has gone before is a Christian that in our bereavement we may find comfort. As 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." With what words? With the words that there is a hope. With the fact that we are not without any hope of eternal life. We have it. Those are the people for whom we may have a joy to look forward to.

But those whose loved ones pass through death who are not born again, these people have no hope. And if you know anything at all about the Bible, you can eulogize all you want. Without Christ, there is no hope. Ephesians 2:12 says, "That at that time ye were without Christ [describing their pre-salvation days], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of God, having no hope, and without God in the world."

We cannot, indeed, but wish that people would examine the authority for their religious beliefs and turn to the only trustworthy source, the Word of God, the Bible, before discovering their error the hard way and finding that they cannot reverse the decisions they have made while still alive. I just wish people would stop playing Russian roulette with their souls and come to a basis of authority, but that's hard to do. In our day, the Bible is held in such contempt and in such indifference. Who's going to think that this book has a message that we can understand, let alone that it is the last word? But there's no question about it in God's inerrant Word that it is the last word and that the consequences will be the last word.

Hebrews 10:31 makes a sobering statement, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Yes, death out in space is a tragedy, but facing God without justification is the real tragedy. Hebrews 10:38-39 says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Indeed, which category are you in? Are you certain that you are not one who faces the horror of finding yourself in the hand of a righteous and a living and a wrathful God because you are without Christ? Or are you one of those who have accepted the offer, and therefore your future is secure? That is the perspective upon which we must view death, not only the seven deaths that occurred out in space on the launch but all the other people who died that same day, all over this country, all over this world. They're all in the same boat.

**The Faith-Rest Technique**

The Bible directs the mind and the feelings of the believer, we have found in our study of Romans 8, then, away from himself to something outside of himself that can meet his problem, his need of salvation, and his need of living the Christian life, directing us not inward to ourselves but to God and to our neighbor for happiness and productivity in life.

Romans 8:28 is provided by God for the believer's use in a time of crises, the time when suddenly we find ourselves suffering may destroy the believer's ability for a moment. Something happens which is so disappointing, hits us out of the blue, something so painful, something so tragic we didn't expect, we weren't prepared for so that the Christian suddenly finds himself under this pressure, and now he's unstable. This is the time of disorientation that we fall back upon Romans 8:28. And that's what you must understand that this verse ultimately is put here in the scriptures for. Romans 8:28 is a verse to be utilized. But how do you do that? The only way you can utilize verse 28 is the faith-rest technique.

The faith-rest technique is so described and so named. It's a phrase which has been coined because it's a faith that results in personal peace. Faith-rest is simply the practice of simply believing what God has promised and then relaxing in the confident expectation of His fulfillment of what He said He will do. Faith-rest on the part of the believer is a great expression of his respect for God's integrity, and it is an expression of his confidence in God's Word, the Bible. Faith-rest has to do with knowing, believing, and applying the promises and the doctrines of scripture. The consistent faith-rest walk is characteristic of the mature Christian. The person who really loves God because He has a developed maturity is the person who will practice faith-rest.

Abraham in the Old Testament is a classic example which demonstrates the faith-rest principle. He demonstrates it in his success. He demonstrates it in his failure. God, as you know, made a promise to Abraham which we have contained in the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham believed the promise that God made to him, and there after the issue in his life was resting until God fulfilled His word. Abraham believed God, and then he stood at ease. When Abraham did not exercise faith-rest, which on occasion he did not, he slipped into human viewpoint, carnal actions, which is the opposite of faith-rest, and he came up with plans of his own to execute what he thought God wanted to do. He just couldn't leave it alone. He just couldn't believe God's promise and wait for God to execute.

And so, even though he left Ur of the Chaldees and started up across the Fertile Crescent toward this country that God said He would give him and his posterity forever. He got as far as Heron, and then he got sidetracked. And he stopped the journey to the Promised Land, and he wasted some years there. When things got tough finally, when he was in the land of Canaan, instead of waiting for God to provide him with what he needed in this time of famine, he went to Egypt and sought to meet the problem there and got into all kinds of difficulties.

When he was in Egypt, he thought that the way to handle the fact that Pharaoh was in the habit of taking beautiful women into his harem was to pass Sarah off, who was a beauty, as his sister so that Pharaoh wouldn't kill him. Because the best way Pharaoh found to take women who were married into his harem was to kill the husbands. That always seemed to work. So, Abraham said, "He's going to do that to me, so I'm going to tell him you're a sister." Sarah says, "But that's a lie, Abraham." Abraham says, "Well, not really. You know you're my half-sister, well, ok, you're my sister." But his intention was a lie.

And then, finally, when he was pushing toward a hundred years of age, he said, "Something is really bad. I'm just not going to have that heir God has promised. I must be missing the boat." And so, he came up with the idea through Sarah's instigation to marry the maid Hagar, the Egyptian, and to get a son through her. Well, he got a son alright, but God says, "That's not the boy. That's only a troublemaker. That's only a boy that's going to produce all the Arabs that are going to hound your real, blessed descendants from here on out, and you're going to be sorry you ever brought Ishmael into the picture."

But when Abraham functioned on faith-rest, he was a magnificent man. And this is why James 2:23 tell us that Abraham was called a friend of God. When you trust God, when you learn what He promised, when you lean upon it, and you wait upon Him, that is what makes you a true friend of God.

When we entered the rest of salvation, we did so, as you know, on the promise of the Gospel. This is the first promise that you ever will deal with in the faith-rest technique. You hear the Gospel, you hear this promise of what God will do for you if you believe it, and you do accept it. Then what happens? Now, you lean back and rest. Why is it that you are not fearful of dying, in terms of what's going to happen to you? Why is it that you do not have any concern of facing God but that you, like Paul and all the greats of scripture, are looking forward to it? Because you're resting in it, see. You believe the promise, and you've mixed the promise with the faith, and now you have rest for your soul.

But, you should remember that there are something like seven thousand promises in the Bible, seven thousand promises which are only good for time. They can never be used in eternity, and these are promises which God has also given us to be used in this technique of executing Romans 8:28 to bring the appropriate promise to bear. Believe it, and then lean back and rest upon God to execute. Some of the promises we have in the Bible, of course, as you know, have to do with salvation. Some have to do with promises that are going to be ours in eternity, but the promises that concern us are these that are here on earth. And Romans 8:28 is one of them.

These are the ones that Christians fail to utilize. These are the vast spiritual capital which we have, which is unused because we don't claim them by faith. So, faith mixed with God's promise while in temporal fellowship equals growth in spiritual maturity, spiritual stability, and rest in our souls.

It is the Christian who fails to practice the faith-rest technique who is characterized by being problem-minded, and he's always burdened. He's always worried about something. The guy's a drag. He's irritable. He's touchy. He's hot-headed. He's short-tempered. He's filled with worries, and he's determined with causes he's going to execute. He's in turmoil. The one thing that does not characterize him is the word "rest." The Christian who cannot operate on faith-rest is the sorry figure, indeed.

In Hebrews 4:1, in presentation of this important technique, we read, "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." The first verse of Hebrews 4 warns against the failure of not using the faith-rest technique. It warns against failing to realize the promise that God has given to bring us into peace and to rest and instead to move into an era of anxieties. The Exodus generation of Jews, those who had been released from slavery in Egypt, are used in this context as an illustration of what happens to a person who does not trust the promises of God.

And we need to look at that as a background, if you look in Hebrews 3:7. This is the background that the writer used in preparation for explaining the faith-rest technique. Hebrews 3:7, "Wherefore (as the Holy Spirit saith, 'To day if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works for 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 sware in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'')"

The background of this, as you know, was after four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, the Jewish people had finally been released by a supernatural act of God under the leadership of Moses. And God said, "Now we're going to put all that behind you, and I'm going to take you a journey that will take you a few months, and you'll be back in the land of promise, that land which I promised to Abraham so many centuries ago, that land which you will find is a prosperous land [and which God described as flowing with milk and honey]. You'll be back in your own territory, you'll be your own people, you'll be under your own control, and your souls will be at rest. You'll be in peace instead of under the slave master's whip."

But did they believe Him? These idiots did not. And so, God said, "In my anger, I said, 'Fine! You don't want to mix your faith with my promise to give you this rest and this prosperity, so you'll get nothing.'" And so, instead, He gave them forty years of empty desert wandering. That's the background of what the writer is speaking of.

Verse 12, "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 To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Now, he says, "Let's bring this down to our situation today," and you should learn from the terrible example of what happened to these people when they wouldn't believe God, that you do not do the same thing with the promises of God. And in fact, you ought to help one another as Christians with exhorting one another, to remind each other of the promises of God and to encourage each other to go with the thing that is the good thing to do. That's what we do when we encourage and exhort you to do certain things that are a good thing in the long-haul for you to do.

Verse 14, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, 'To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,' as in the provocation [as in the wilderness when they provoked God to anger]. For who, when they had heard, did provoke: did not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

And he closes this section by saying, "Now again, who was it that lost out?" It was the people who wouldn't believe God, as if He were going to be lying to them. So, verse 1 of chapter 4 picks up on that background, having established that the lack of faith-rest creates a condition of fear, of mental disorientation, of unhappiness, and of human viewpoint solutions to our problems. And, of course, the Jews of the Exodus generation demonstrated that very amply.

You and I, as Christians, face the angelic warfare daily, so we operate under much greater pressures than do the unsaved. Often, the pressures in life on a Christian are in proportion to his effectiveness and devotion in God's service. God has provided not only the personal salvation we need, therefore, but he has also provided the help that we need to make it in time, for happiness, for our temporal well-being, for our rest in the midst of the devil's world. The faith-rest technique is God's provision for moment-by-moment Sabbath day rest in the soul.

Now, this rest here in Hebrews 4:1 has to do specifically with the rest of eternal life. So, the warning here is that any of you should come short of the rest of eternal life that God has provided, be very careful that you do not do that. And, of course, that's the primary thing that we've been talking about this morning: the terrible, horrible, nonsensical tragedy of falling short of the eternal rest that God has provided. The promise of eternal life. You mix your faith with the promise of God, and out you burst as a regenerated, born again person, eternally destined for God's glory in heaven. But then, after that point, there is now a moment-by-moment rest, and that is where we will take it up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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