

Imagine you were given a tremendous opportunity to do or be something that you have always wanted, and you just turned it down without thinking about it. Or imagine somebody you know came up with a huge present and said it was for you! But you just take it out of their hands and throw it on the ground? That'd be crazy, wouldn't it? You were given something in both of these examples but it wasn't profitable to you because you turned it down. It could have been the greatest news in the world but it wasn't profitable to you because you stood in the way. This is what the people we're going to talk about tonight did. The text for study today is **Hebrews 3:12-4:2**.

In **verses 12-15**, we can see the writer of Hebrews tells us to be careful of falling away from the Lord from unbelief. And to help each of us not to do that, we're told to encourage each other constantly. Every day to lift each other up so that none of us will have our hearts hardened. Then the writer tells us that if we "hold fast from the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" then we will have become partakers of Christ. So, in these verses the writer of Hebrews is basically saying we need to keep going! Persevere and be careful not to fall away and encourage others not to have hard hearts. Then in **verse 15**, the writer says just that, but he adds a phrase. "as when they provoked me." The writer is saying don't have hard hearts like these people did, but who is they?

Let's read **verses 16-19**. The writer says the "they" he is referring to is the Israelites! Those who were led out of Egypt by Moses and those who sinned and died in the wilderness. Notice what the writer says about the Israelites. He says in **verse 17** they sinned, in **verse 18** they were disobedient, and in **verse 19** they were not able to enter because of unbelief. The writer says you all need to be careful not to fall away like the Israelites did. They hardened their hearts and sinned because of unbelief.

Now let's read **4:1-2**. What I want to focus on is this good news or gospel that is mentioned in **verse 2**. When we think gospel or good news we immediately think of the NT right? But the writer of Hebrews is talking about the Israelites. Not only that, but in **4:2** it says that the "word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith?" What in the world is *this* good news? What is this word that didn't profit them?

The good news is that God had given them the Land of Canaan! God has given them rest! But what about the part where it wasn't profitable for them? God gave them the land so why wouldn't it be profitable? Look at **4:2** again. It's because the good news was not United by Faith. To fully understand how the Israelites' good news wasn't united by faith, we have to go to **Numbers 13**.

**Context:** You remember the story in **Numbers 13**, right? God tells Moses to send out 12 spies into the land of Canaan to spy out the land. 10 come back with a bad report and 2 come back with a good and hopeful report. They have seen that the land is flowing with milk and honey and they bring back massive grapes and some other fruits. But the 10 with the negative report swayed the people to believe they couldn't conquer the land. The people didn't have faith in God! In this text, we can see some specific reasons why. Let's look at these obstacles in their faith.

#### FEARING THE ENEMY (13:27-29, 31-33)

1. The people who live there are strong and their cities are fortified. They're saying these people are warriors! And they're huge!! If I looked like a grasshopper next to warriors, I would be pretty scared too! Not to mention Amalek had already attacked them once they got out of Egypt in **Exodus 17**. So, these 10 spies know this is a hostile and dangerous place! They say so in **verse 32**, they say it is a "land which devours its inhabitants." They know they can't win. And they're exactly right, they couldn't win... at least not on their own.
2. The problem is they are afraid of the enemy instead of being confident in the one who is on their side! That's exactly what Joshua and Caleb try to tell the people in **14:7-9**, They say at the end of **verse 9**, "...the Lord is with us, do not fear them."

#### LOOKING BACKWARD (14:1-4)

1. They have been doing this ever since they got out of Egypt! Once they think something is going wrong they started to grumble about Moses and Aaron and wishing they would just die already and start looking back at how great Egypt was. In **verse 4** they have pretty much decided they were going back, the only holdup was they needed to find a leader.
2. The problem is they were looking backward instead of looking forward to the promise of God's rest. Do you think if they had gone back to Egypt they would have been happy? I don't think so. Sometimes when we look back on something they don't fully remember all the details. They were slaves! They were begging to get out of Egypt! Now they are rebelling against God! Joshua and Caleb again remind them of this in **verse 8-9a** \_.

#### BEING IMPETUOUS (14:5-10)

1. We see Moses and Aaron fall on their faces and Joshua and Caleb tear their clothes and give this great defense for God, but what do the people do? In **verse 10**, they decide they are going to stone them! They didn't even think about what they were doing or saying or how it would affect God!
2. The problem is they were acting too hastily, they were impetuous. It's kind of a mix between being impatient and being quick to action. If they had given these issues a lot of thought before immediately springing into action, then maybe they would have made better choices! Joshua and Caleb were being very rational and logical about all of this, but when the people made up their mind before thinking it through, bad things happen.

#### Consequences (14:22-24, 39-45)

1. In **verses 22-24** we see that these people don't get to into the promised land. They don't get to enter God's rest, and the good news that the Lord had given them the land was not profitable for them. Except for Caleb and, we know, Joshua, none of the grown-ups will get to see it.
2. In **verses 39-45** the people have been told this news and they decide to go into the land that was promised anyway. Moses tells them not to do it because they will be struck down, but they do it anyway. In **verse 45**, we see that the Amalekites and the Canaanites beat them down to Hormah.

That's really rough, isn't it? Going back to **Hebrews 4:2**, the good news wasn't profitable for them because it wasn't United by Faith. But let's look at the first part of the verse again. "For Indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also..." What is our good news? We know this one pretty well don't we? The good news is that God has provided the way for salvation!" But can the good news, the gospel, be unprofitable for us? Well yes, we see the warning in **3:12, 3:14, 4:1, and 4:11**. But how can that happen? If the good news is not United by Faith. Let's discuss some ways we can Unite the good news with faith:

#### TRUSTING THE LORD

1. Our enemy could be the devil, it could be others around us, or it could even be ourselves. It's so easy for our fear to get in the way of us serving the Lord. The important thing to remember is that the one on our side is so much greater than anyone on any other side. **Hebrews 4:16**, in our times of need we need to approach God in confidence to receive mercy and grace.
2. **Romans 15:13**. When we believe in God, when we trust in him, Paul says we will be filled with joy, peace, and hope. The Israelites didn't trust God and had no hope when they saw the Canaanites. They were trusting in themselves and if we trust in ourselves then yes, we should be afraid. But if we put our faith, our trust, in God then we can't lose.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

1. Sometimes we look back on our lives and we miss the "fun" we would have before we became a Christian, or we get down on ourselves because of those lifestyles. Neither one of those attitudes are any good! We should be looking forward to how we can be better, how we can glorify God in our lives, and enter into God's rest because he is faithful and keeps his promises! **Hebrews 4:11**, we can't be diligent to enter rest if we're focused on the past, we have to look to the rest.
2. **Philippians 3:12-14**. Paul says he forgets about the stuff that is behind him. You know Paul had people killed because they confessed Christ? That includes men and women! He was terrible! And he says he is leaving that behind him and reaching toward what lies ahead. To glorify God and enter his rest!

#### BEING SENSIBLE

1. I'll tell you I really struggle with this one. I make up my mind about something and I am ready to defend it at all costs and then I find out later that I was wrong. We are so quick to action or quick to defending what may not even be the truth. We should take a step back and really think things through and think them through the word of God. **Hebrews 4:12**
2. **James 1:19-20**. This verse really says it all, we ought to be ready to listen first, digest it, and then speak. We will find if we do that, we will naturally be slower to anger. **Verses 18 and 21** talk about the word of God, so this passage we just read is about how we react to the will of God. We saw how the Israelites reacted to God's will and we don't want to be like that, let's formulate our opinions based on the word, not search for our opinions in it.

It is so easy for us to fall back into the same manner of thinking as the Israelites. We get scared, look back at our mistakes, or are too quick to act on our own judgements. That manner of thinking leads us down the same path the Israelites were on. They had so much potential with God on their side but since their good news wasn't acted upon because it was not United by Faith, it was unprofitable for them. When we start thinking this way the good news can be unprofitable for us if it is not United by Faith.

Look at **Hebrews 4:1** again. If anyone here feels that they have been coming short of God's promise to enter his rest we'd love to help. If we can assist you in any way in your walk with God, please come forward while we stand and sing.