

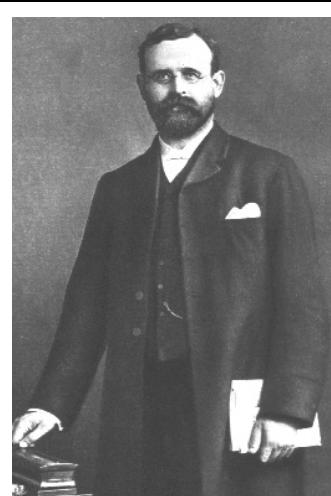
HEBREWS Fear to Faith

STUDY 5

Rest -- and Rebellion

A. Hearing, exhorting – and the hardened heart! [3:7-19]

3:7-9 What is the connection the Holy Spirit makes between hearing and rebellion? (read Psalm 95)



W.H. Griffith Thomas

"The root of the trouble is undoubtedly the 'evil heart of unbelief' (v.12), which leads to a failure to make progress until it is too late."

3:10,11 Note how the 40 year judgment on Israel is tied to lack of knowledge, but particularly knowledge that penetrates the heart (Jeremiah 17:1-10)

3:12,13 What solution does our writer offer to an evil heart of unbelief and the deceitfulness of sin? (Jer.17:9; Prov. 28:26)

[1] [3:13] It is unfortunately one of the sad experiences of daily life that sin is so deceitful as to lead to hardness. As it has been well said, sin is like Jael, who, when asked by Sisera for water, brought forth milk, "butter in a lordly dish," but had the hammer and nail behind! **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 45

[2] [3:13] An important means for withstanding the enticement to apostasy is that of mutual exhortation of admonition. Christians have a corporate as well as individual responsibility. Personal concern that is merely introspective and introverted is both selfish and unhealthy.

In practice as well as in theory, the truth should not be overlooked that "we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Mutual concern and encouragement are of constant value in the church, not least in repelling the menace of false teaching; hence the writer's desire that his readers should *exhort one another* not just occasionally, or in one particular situation, but every day. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 147

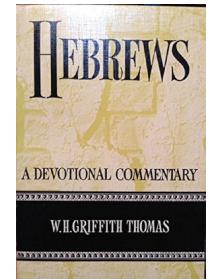
3:14,15 Why might we be deceived by sin even if we are presently confident of being partakers of Christ?

[3] [3:14] That which has been stated as a fact [gegonamen] is now made conditional in its permanence on the maintenance of faith. This is the ever-present antithesis of religion. That which God has done is absolute; but man's appropriation of the gift must be by continuous effort. Comp. Col. 3:3,5. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 86

3:16-18 See how the author uses heart-searching questions to force us to examine the condition of our own hearts and our Christian walk

3:18,19 What is the solution to disobedience and unbelief? (contrast v.13, 10:24,25, with the ominous having heard of v.16)

[4] [3:16-18] This shows that a good beginning is not everything; for the influence of the world, with the "lusts of other things," carelessness and sluggishness, will lead even the believer into failure and sin. There is scarcely anything more solemn than the awful possibility of backsliding, especially as Scripture nowhere indicates how far astray a Christian may go or how long he may continue in this backsliding condition. The root of the trouble is undoubtedly the "evil heart of unbelief" (v.12), which leads to a failure to make progress until it is too late. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 46



How to avoid "the deceitfulness of sin"

[5] The exhortation to mutual encouragement was wise: in isolation from his fellow-believers each individual among them was more liable to succumb to the subtle temptations that pressed in upon him from so many sides, but if they came together regularly for mutual encouragement the devotion of all would be kept warm and their common hope would be in less danger of flickering and dying. In isolation each was prone to be impressed by the specious arguments which underlined the worldly wisdom of a certain measure of compromise of their Christian faith and witness; in

the healthy atmosphere of the Christian fellowship these arguments would be more readily appraised at their true worth, and recognized as being so many manifestations of "the deceitfulness of sin." **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.67

B. Rest – and Receiving the Word [4:1-13]

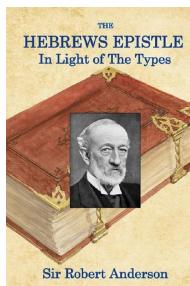
4:1-3 Who ONLY enter into God's rest?

[6] [4:1,2] As we review this solemn passage, we can see how the danger is to be met in seven appeals that are made: "consider" (3:1); "hear His voice" (v.7); "harden not your hearts" (v.8); "take heed" (v.12); "exhort" (v.13); "hold fast" (v.14); "fear" (4:1). **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 47

4:4-10 How do we enter the rest of God – "today"! (Philippians 4:6-9)

[7] [4:3-8] It is important to notice that instead of "Jesus" in verse 8, we should read "Joshua", Jesus being the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word. And thus, as Jesus Christ has already been shown in His superiority to angels and Moses, so here He is stated to be superior to Joshua as the leader into rest. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 49

[8] By the blood of the paschal lamb the Israelites were redeemed *in Egypt*, in all the hopelessness and degradation of their doom and their bondage. They were then delivered *out of Egypt*, and permitted to see the destruction of the power that had enslaved them. And finally, by the blood of the covenant, they became a holy people, and gained the right approach their Jehovah God. And all this before Aaron was appointed to the priestly office. ... God saves the sinner *in his sins*, as he is and where he is; He saves him also *from his sins*, and teaches him that sin has no longer the power to enslave him. No only so, but the sinner is sanctified by the blood of the covenant, and accorded the right of access to God. And all this, both in the type and the antitype, without the intervention of priesthood. **Robert Anderson** *The Hebrew Epistle: In the Light of the Types* p. 27



4:11-13 We find "rest" – but yet we must be "diligent"! Particularly in which area must we be diligently vigilant? (John 5:24,25)

[9] [4:12] The phrase "quick to discern" is one word, "critic," the only place in the Bible where this term is found. It is significant that with all that is heard today about Biblical Criticism, the passage suggests the Word of God as the "critic" of our lives, and it is more than probable that if we allowed the Bible to "criticize" us more, we should "criticize" it a great deal less. Thus the warning is pointed by this solemn statement concerning the Word of God, which, as it has been well said, "wounds the sinner, condemns the hypocrite, and rebukes the saint." It is too perilous to trifle with

the Word of God. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 51

[10] [4:12] If special significance is to be assigned to the details of symbolical language – and it is a procedure which is open to some question – it would be preferable to suggest that the word of God, like a sword with two sharp edges, always cuts with one side or the other, that is to say, either in a saving or in a judging manner. Thus, on the one hand, Christ proclaims, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63), and, on the other hand, he says of him who rejects him, "The word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day" (John 12:48). The same sword cuts both with an edge of life and with an edge of death (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15f). With this sword Peter cut his hearers to the heart savingly on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37) and shortly after pierced the consciences of another audience to their condemnation (Acts 5:33; cf. 7:54). **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 165

The place of the Word in "resting in God"

[11] In all this we see the vital importance of the warning against unbelief and the consequent necessity of true faith in the Word of God. It is not too much to say that the Bible as the Word of God is essential for every aspect of the spiritual life. It convicts of sin (Heb. 4:12); it converts the soul (Ps. 19:7); it cleanses the conscience (John 15:3); it consecrates the life (John 17:17); it corrects the wrong (II Tim. 3:16); encourages the heart (Ps. 119:50,54). The more, therefore, we can apply ourselves to the Bible, the better it will be for everything connected with our daily living. In particular, three things are essential: careful consideration; continual meditation; and close application. When it is said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart" (Ps. 119:11), it means that the "heart" in Scripture is equivalent to what we term today "personality," which, as is well known, consists of the three modes of self-consciousness – mind, heart, and will. With the Bible in all three, as truth for the mind, love for the heart, and power for the will, and the word of the Psalmist becomes true, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Ps. 37:31). **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 51