

The Danger of Unbelief



Faith (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today. In my previous talks this week, I've established the following facts concerning faith.

First, faith is the one thing that is essential in relating to God. Second, faith relates us to the invisible, eternal world. Third, faith is in the heart, whereas hope is in the mind. Fourth, faith is the only basis of righteous living.

In my talk today, I'm going to deal with the opposite of faith: that is unbelief. I'll be giving you some serious warnings about the danger of unbelief.

The main passage that we look at today, is found in Hebrews. It begins at Hebrews 3:7 and continues on into 4:3; so, I'm gong to be reading a substantial passage from Hebrews. commencing at 3:7, going on to chapter 4:3; the whole theme of this passage that I'm going to read is a warning against the dangers of unbelief. The writer of Hebrews quotes substantially from Psalm 95, and bases his warning on what the Psalmist says there, in Psalm 95. Now, I'll read the passage from Hebrews, and then, I'll give you some comments on it.

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice,

8 do not harden your hearts as when they [that's Israel] provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness.

9 where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.

10 therefore, I was angry with this generation, and said 'They always go astray in their heart; and they did not know My ways';

11 as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter My rest.'"

12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance 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."

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 bodies fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they should 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.

4:1 Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any of you should seem to have come short of it.

2 For indeed we have good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. [Another translation says, "Because it was not combined with faith in those who heard."]

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He hs said, "As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest..." (NAS)

Now let's look at some of the implications of what the writer of Hebrews says. Going back to verse 7, he says "Today, if you hear His voice," the central issue, the thing around which everything revolves, is hearing or not hearing God's voice. The key to faith is hearing God's voice. The reason for unbelief is not hearing God's voice.

Then it goes on, verse 8:

> "Do not harden your hearts..."

So, the result of not hearing God's voice is a hardening of our hearts in unbelief. And then, we see that, in verse 10:

> "Therefore, I was angry with this generation..."

Unbelief makes God angry, it provokes Him to wrath. And in verse 12, the writer of Hebrews says to us:

> "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart,"

In other words, all this applies to us; we're not exempt from these dangers. We need these warnings. And then, it says also, "...an evil, unbelieving heart..." Bear in mind that an unbelieving heart is an evil heart. It causes us to fall away from the living God. And then, in verse 13:

> "But encourage one another, day after day..."

So, we have an obligation to encourage one another to go believing, and to be continually warning one another against the dangers of unbelief. Watching lest anyone fail and fall into the same example—unbelief. And then, in verse 15, we notice the repetition of the word "Today," which goes like a theme through these words. "Today" means now; It's dangerous to postpone our response. The longer we put off listening and obeying, the harder it becomes to do. One of the remarkable things about Abraham was that whenever God spoke to Him, he obeyed promptly. It's much easier to obey promptly than to obey after a long interval.

So, remember, the message is today, today, today. Verses 16 & 17. We see again unbelief provokes God and makes Him angry. He was angry with a whole generation because they didn't believe Him. And then, verse 19. I want to read that:

> "So, we see that 'They [that's Israel] were not ableto enter their inheritance because of unbelief...'" (NAS)

The one basic cause that kept Israel from their God-given inheritance was unbelief. The same cause will keep us from our inheritance today.

Beginning at 4:1:

> "Let us fear [The writer of Hebrews applies it to us today. He says: Let's take heed to this lesson; let's not be careless or slack or indifferent. Let us fear. And then, he says, in 4:2:] The word preached did not profit them, because it was not combined with faith..."

In other words, it takes faith to bring out the benefits of God's words in our life. You could say that faith is like a catalyst. When it's there, it releases the benefits of God's Word into or life, but when it's not there, we don't receive the benefits of God's Word. God's Word can come to us, but it doesn't do us good. It doesn't accomplish God's purposes of blessing because it's not combined with faith. It takes faith to make

the Word of God do its work in our lives.

And then, the last point there. "For we who have believed enter that rest." True faith brings us into rest. Do you have that rest of faith, as I speak to you now? Have you met those conditions, or are you in danger of being like those Israelites who didn't hear God's voice, who hardened their heart; and because of their unbelief, they missed all that God had for them! What a tragedy if that should happen to you and me today! And yet, the writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that it can happen, and indeed that it will happen if we don't take care; if we're not diligent. If we read on a little further in that fourth chapter of Hebrews to the 11th verse, we come to what I might call the practical application of all that we've been saying. The writer says:

> "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience." (NAS)

You've probably heard me say, when you find a "therefore" in the Bible, you want to find out what it's there for... so, that verse begins with a "therefore." "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest." The point of the "therefore" is, let's not go astray the same way as the Israelites did in the Old Testament. Let's guard ourselves against unbelief; let's be very diligent; let's apply ourselves to walking in faith, conserving our faith, cultivating our faith, strengthening one another's faith, encouraging one another. Let's forever so much not make the same, terrible and tragic error that Israel made through unbelief, and notice that unbelief, ultimately, always leads to disobedience. In the end of chapter 3, it says "they couldn't enter because of unbelief...," but in chapter 4, it says, "they fell because of disobedience..." Bear that in mind; there is a direct connection between unbelief and disobedience.

As I bring this talk today to a close, I just want to reinforce for you the importance of hearing and obeying God's voice. This is one main theme of Scripture. I'm just going to read a few passages of Scripture that emphasize it. Exodus 15:26:

> "The Lord said to Israel, 'If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your Healer.'" (NAS)

I would say that's the basic requirement for knowing the Lord as your Healer. It's giving earnest heed to His voice.

Deuteronomy 28:1 & 2:

> "Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey [listen to the voice of] the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the Lord your God." (NAS)

What's the key to all the blessings? If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord. And then, in the New Testament, Jesus says precisely the same in John 10:27:

> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

What's the mark of being a follower of Jesus? What's the distinctive, basic requirement? It's hearing His voice. Only if we hear His voice, can we follow Him. So, remember, faith comes by hearing the voice of the Lord.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again at this same time next week, Monday through Friday.

Next week, I'll continue with this theme of faith. In my first talk of the week on Monday, I'll be sharing with you one of the most important secrets God ever taught me: How faith comes.

But stay tuned now for some important announcements. In particular, how you may obtain my book Repent and Believe. This book explains in simple, practical terms, the true nature of repentance and faith, and shows how these are essential to all ongoing growth and progress in the Christian life. The announcement that follows will tell you how you may obtain this book.

Radio Program

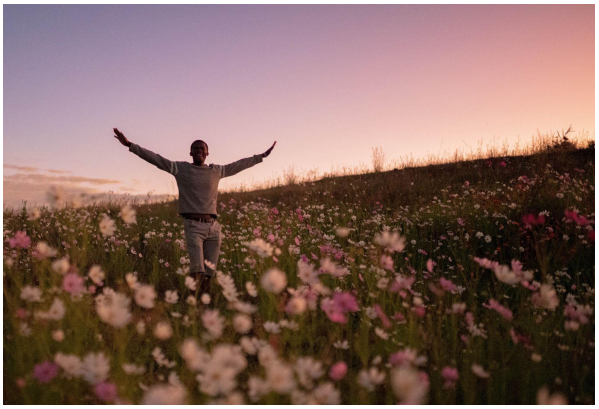
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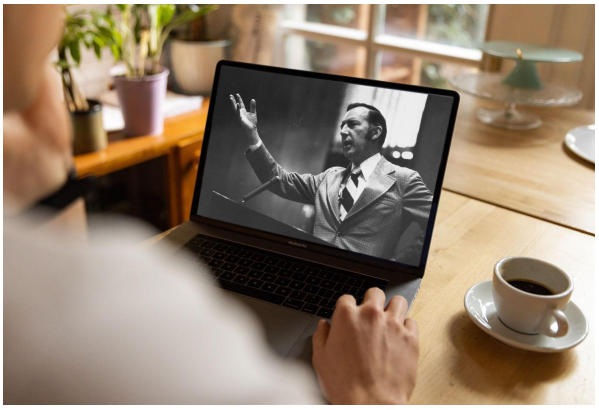
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