

Faithful

Prayer

Hebrews 3:7-19 HCSB

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works for 40 years.

Therefore I was provoked with that generation and said, "They always go astray in their hearts, and they have not known My ways. "So I swore in My anger, "They will not enter My rest."

Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. For we have become companions of the Messiah if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start. As it is said:

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

For who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it really all who came out of Egypt under Moses? And who was He provoked with for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And who did He swear to that they would not enter His rest, if not those who disobeyed? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

When we consider the trip from Egypt to the promise land was an 11 day walking journey. Further, when we consider that God had his chosen people wandering in the desert for 40 years, it rapidly becomes apparent, that even though they were walking with the presence of God, there was still much for them to learn...

Hebrews 4:1,2

Therefore, while the promise to enter His rest remains, let us fear that none of you should miss it. For we also have received the good news just as they did; but the message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard it in faith.

Wow... The message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard the message in faith.

Friends to enter into the rest of God, to engage in Sabbath we must receive what God gives us in faith and in obedience. Clearly illustrated here is that if we are not obedient to God, we cannot be at peace and embrace that much needed rest in our lives.

What else becomes evident is that if we want to benefit from the good news we need to have faith in the one who sent the message. Yet, what I also noticed here, and derive much significance from is that we need to united in faith and not divisive with each other.

When we go through struggles in life these days often provoke a response from us. That response is either one of fear or of faith.

How many of us who live under the grace covenant with Jesus, have even considered that if we harden our hearts, if we are not obedient and if we are not unified that we provoke God. God is loving, forgiving and kind, yet he can be provoked... Did you notice that this passage is from the NEW TESTAMENT?...

You see the hardening of our hearts is the well-spring from which other sin is born. You see we live in freedom, forgiven and loved, yet friends as God professing, redeemed believers, when we sin it grieves God. It is true that when we repent, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. It is also true that the blood of Jesus covers us. But do we want to grieve God?

God is patient and his scriptures tell us he tarries in his return to give opportunity for people to repent and come to him. Let us ask ourselves this morning what God does with those of hardened heart, who are disobedient and who sin against him without repentance...

If we become complacent in our journey then soon we will allow ourselves to distrust God. This is what happened to Israel in the wilderness, despite the fact that the presence of God was physically manifest with them day and night... When we distrust God soon desert him.

What is my caution here... we who are strong in Christ Jesus need to recognize where our strength comes from, lest it fail. Tomorrow is not ours, so we must seize this day!

Sometimes we seize the day to be evangelists and other days we seize it to be obedient to rest in him...

Now not relying on God for your strength and falling prey to the concept of independence from God is problem one... It leads inevitably to problem two which is independence from each other. Friends today I declare that there is not one Christian here today, myself included that does not need the help of other Christians. God has commanded us into fellowship and told us not to forsake it.

That being said... Today, let us affirm not to grieve God!

We have the amazing privilege. Yes, privilege to be members of the body of Christ, moreover we are members of Christ Spirit, His nature, His righteousness, his testimony, his life. This is in all aspects of what he has done and what he will do.

Hope is the Substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.

Faith is hope in action...

Faith without works is dead...

So let us do the will of the Father, just as he did. I believe that perseverance in our faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith; which is to say that God know the intents of our hearts.

When we hear the Word of God we are given a divine opportunity to respond in fear or in faith. We can harden our hearts and be disobedient thereby grieving God or we can persevere in a life of faith obedient to God.

My dear friends, the privileges that we have due to the Gospel of Jesus are far greater than any of the privileges that were given under the Mosaic Law. But I want to point out here this morning; against the tide of apathy in the North American churches that the same gospel for the substance of our lives was preached under BOTH Testaments...

James 1:22-25 HCSB says:

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works — this person will be blessed in what he does.

I don't want to JUST be saved... I want to be blessed, empowered and be a friend of God!

When tested, Israel grumbled against God... When tested what will we do with our words. Will we grumble against God, will we grumble against each other or will we put our faith into action?

James 1:26

If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, then his religion is useless and he deceives himself.

Here is an example...

Let's say someone comes into the church and hasn't bathed, wears dirty clothes or is poor. Now say a successful businessman comes in with fragrance of "Acqua di gio", wearing an Armani suit and is well groomed... Search your heart... Would the words of welcome and our response be the same?

James 2:1-4

My brothers, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For example, a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor man dressed in dirty clothes also comes in. If you look with favor on the man wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here in a good place," and yet you say to the poor man, "Stand over there," or, "Sit here on the floor by my footstool," haven't you discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

The bible is as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago...

The God of Adam, Abraham, Jacob, Noah, Peter and Paul is the same God we serve today...

- Are we reading his Word?
- Are we applying his Word?
- Are we praying for Direction?
- Are we praying our thanks and praise?
- Are we being obedient when we receive his direction?
- Are we living our lives to please God or to grieve God?
- Are we choosing our actions in faith or in fear?
- Are we following his commandments regarding fellowship and relationship?

Finally, when we are going through the struggles of this life; struggles with ourselves, our circumstances or with others, are we being obedient to God and what he would have us do or are we wandering in the desert complaining and grumbling.

This morning, we need to embrace our lives from God's perspective. We need to include him. We need to look for ways to please him, not for what we will get, as he has already given us eternal life, but because of our love for him. He is our good Father. Will we be good children and harken to his voice. I say harken because I want us to understand we need to not just listen but we need to obediently respond.

Today, if you want to have the rest of God, and the peace of God in your life. If you want peace that surpasses all human understanding, if you want to live abundantly, joyfully and with a life full of promise, we need to turn once again to our savior. We need to allow the work of the Holy Spirit to take away hardness in our hearts. We need to turn once again to the one who made us in his image. The one who loves us,

the one who died for us, the one who rose again, the one who advocates for us daily, the one who covers us in the robes of his righteousness, the one who gave us the example and simply be like him.

In him I live and move and breathe and have my being

I want to rest in Christ so I **will** myself to be receptive to him, responsive to his words and his commandments.

... Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, with **all** your strength, and with **all** your mind; and your neighbor as yourself (Cf. Luke 10:27)

Most of all... and here it the whole crux of the message this morning... You need to have faith in the one who loves you.

Conclusion

This week as we go out and face the world, you may have an amazing week, but if you face hardship or trials, I offer to you the worlds of Paul to the church in Thessalonica...

1 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

Go forth in power and authority and take a hold in joy and faith of what the Lord is bringing about for you and in you. Don't be like the Israelites who - though they were walking in the presence of God, grumbled, complained and grieved God, rather look for God's love in your life and embrace what he will accomplish in you.

Finally, know this...

Romans 8:24 - 28

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

When you leave today, leave knowing that you are walking with God and his presence goes with you and as a church we stand UNITED in love for you... You are NOT alone.