Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Examine Yourselves Whether You Be in the Faith, Part 2
Scripture: Hebrews
Code: 1378

As I mentioned to you this morning, we're going to take a little break in our study of the Beatitudes, because the Lord has really kind of pressed it on my heart to share with you from the book of Hebrews a special message. So if you'll look with me at the book of Hebrews we'll study together. Now as you know, some weeks ago now, I spoke on the subject examine yourself whether you be in the faith. It was on a Sunday morning prior to when we had our communion time, and I was greatly concerned that there were many people in Grace Church who came and listened and maybe even believed but who had never committed their lives to Christ, and would come up short on the Day of Judgment. And I'm continually faced with that fear.

I know that there are in the church wheat and tares. I know that there will always be the false among the true. It's so easy in a church our size with many thousands of people to hide and never really be confronted with the reality of whether you've committed your life to Christ or not. You can kind of get by with just the getting in the crowd and moving along with everybody else. And my heart is very deeply concerned over the reality that some of you very precious people for whom Christ died have been coming and you've been coming and you've been listening and you've been hearing the messages and maybe even believing that it is true but you've never really come to Jesus Christ. For some reason or other you're holding back.

A lady called me on the telephone and expressed that very thing. She said, "I, I come, but I'm not a Christian. But I'm interested." And if I've heard that from that lady and received letters to that effect, and I had one man who said, "I come. I don't believe in what you say, but I like the way you say it." If that's true, if that's true with the people who talk to me, there are probably even others who feel that way or who hear it all, and for some reason or another never make a commitment to Christ. They just kind of sit on the edge of the fence. They kind of hang in the balances. And maybe if you've been coming as we've been studying the gospel of Matthew, you understand that Jesus has set down the standards for being in His kingdom.

And you know by now that He says, "In order to be in My kingdom, you must be poor in spirit and mournful over sin, and meek. And you must hunger and thirst for righteousness and be merciful and be pure in heart and be a peacemaker. And you've probably heard that when you fulfill those qualifications and you reach out to God in Christ and you are redeemed, you become a possessor of the kingdom. You become a recipient of the blessings of all of God's…all of God's bounty. You become a son of God in the purest sense. But even though you know the qualifications and even

though you know the consequences and the blessings of it, maybe you still have not committed yourself to Jesus Christ. And I dare say this is true all over the land and all over the world. There are people who know, but they never make the commitment. They never take the step. For one reason or another their moment hasn't come. They just push it off and push it off and push it off.

Look with me for a minute before we examine the book of Hebrews to John chapter 12. And I want you to see what a dangerous delay this is. In John chapter 12 in verse 32 our Lord said, "'And I if I be lifted up from the heart will draw all men unto Me.' This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him, 'We've heard out of the law that Christ abides forever and how sayest thou the son of man must be lifted up. Who is the son of man? In other words, we've heard that the Messiah will live what are you talking about that He would be crucified? What son of man is this?' Then Jesus said unto them – " and listen – "'yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light lest darkness come upon you for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goest. While ye have light believe in the light that ye may be the sons of light.' These things spoke Jesus and departed and did hide Himself from them."

What an illustration. He says, "You better believe while you can believe." And then to illustrate that he went and hid where they could never find Him so that they might comprehend what it would mean not to have Him around. And verse 37 says, "Even though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who hath believed our report and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' "

Now notice, Jesus says, "You'd better believe when you can believe. You'd better enter the light while the light is available, for the time will come when it isn't around." And then He illustrated it that the prophecy of Isaiah came to pass. They wouldn't believe, therefore they couldn't believe, and God closed out the day of grace. That's what Isaiah is saying. This was Jesus' last appeal, by the way. A one last invitation in the Gospel of John. The day of grace was passing, and in the very next chapter He meets with His disciples the day before His trial and ultimately His death. This is His last invitation. He says, "I'm not going to be here very long. You'd better act while you can act before you are confirmed in the sovereignty of God in your unbelief."

In John chapter 8 and He here says the same thing at least three times. In verse…well, look at verse 12. "Then spoke Jesus again unto them saying, 'I am the light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.' " That's the first invitation. He's saying, "If you follow Me you can walk in light." But then He says in verse 21, "1 go My way and ye shall seek Me and shall die in your sins. Where I go ye cannot come." This is the second invitation, really. Because it's a warning that if they don't accept the light while the light is available there will come a day when

the light is not available. And then in verse 24 He repeats the warning a third time, “I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins, for if you believe not that I am He ye shall die in your sins.” You see, Jesus was always extending His love but always telling them there was a limit.

Go back to chapter 7 verse 33, “Then said Jesus unto them yet a little while am I with you, just a little while, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me and where I am there ye cannot come.” That’s the same idea. You know, before God sent the flood in Genesis chapter 6 in verse 3, God said, “My spirit will not always strive with man.” In other words, there comes a time when God runs out of patience. And then came the flood and the whole wide world was destroyed. In Isaiah chapter 63 we find it illustrated in verses 7 to 10. The prophet Isaiah says, “I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord and the praises of the Lord according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses.” What a verse. It talks about the loving kindness and the praise and the goodness and the mercy of God, “For God said, ‘Surely they are My people, children that will not lie,’ so He was their Savior.”

What a picture of God. He was so loving. He was so merciful. He was so kind. He was so gracious. He was their Savior. And verse 9, “In a11 their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them and He bore them and He carried them all the days of old.” Oh, what a picture. What a loving Savior. But verse 10 comes like an…like a shock, like a lightning bolt out of the blue to shatter the peace of the scene. “But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore, He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them.” Can you believe that kind of change? In one little three-verse section? God is patient, God is kind, God is good, God is gracious, God is merciful, God is longsuffering, God is not willing that any should perish. But God’s mercy has limits. You better come to the light while the light is available. That’s the message.

Now the book of Hebrews gives us a graphic look at this wonderful truth, this wonderful warning invitation of God. And I want you to look at Hebrews and we’re going to look at what it has to say. Now the book of Hebrews is basically written to Christians, Jewish Christians. That’s why its title is Hebrews. They were Jewish believers, but…now listen…interspersed throughout the book of Hebrews, which is written to Jewish Christians, are warnings, warnings; warnings to confront those people…now watch…who know the gospel, intellectually, who understand the call of salvation but never make the commitment. Okay. So as the writer goes along writing to the believers every once in a while he’ll stop and he’ll say, “Now, I Know that in this congregation some of you know this is the truth but you’ve never made the commitment,” and thus there are these warnings.

In the case of the readers of this letter to the Hebrews, they were Jews. They were intellectually convinced that the gospel was true. They were intellectually convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. But they wouldn’t commit their lives to Him. They wouldn’t take that simple act of childlike faith and

throw themselves on His grace and mercy. They wouldn't come to Christ. They were afraid they would be ostracized from their community. They are afraid they'd be alienated from their families. The price was too high to pay, and so they hung on the fence fearing that they would be persecuted or alienated or ostracized or that they would have to give up their current life style.

Now maybe you fit in there somewhere. You know the truth. You know Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. You know the gospel and you believe it's true, but you resist making the personal commitment to Christ because you're afraid of being alienated from your family, you're afraid of being ostracized from your friends or the people you run around with or work with. Or you're afraid that you might get persecuted and the price would be too high. Or maybe you just don't want to give up your current sinfulness so you hang there knowing it's true but never making the commitment. Well, if that's the case then Hebrews speaks directly to you.

Let's look at the five warning passages very briefly and see what they say. Chapter 2 verses 1 to 4 is the first one. Chapter 2 verses 1 to 4; "Therefore, – " what does therefore mean? Takes us back to chapter 1 and that's all about the majesty of Jesus Christ. All about the glory of Jesus Christ, all about the one who is ascended to be the one at the majesty, the right hand of the majesty of God. The one who is better than the angels, Jesus Christ Himself. Because we've learned what we've learned about Jesus Christ, because we now know who He is, because we now know how God has exalted Him, because of who He is in His majesty, "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them, – ", what? – "Slip."

Listen, if you know that He is who He is and if you've heard the message then the writer is saying, "You had better give earnest heed to what you have heard lest it slip away." I always think about the man who had reduced his entire fortune to a diamond which he put in his pocket to take to Europe. And while he was on board ship he was tossing it in the air and the ship lurched and it went over the edge and into the sea. Lest it slip. "For – ", verse 2 says – "if the words spoken by the angels was steadfast." Now what was the word spoken by angels? That was the Old Testament law. That was the law of God given by a God at Mount Sinai. That law was ministered by angels. So if the Old Testament law, if the Mosaic law, if the Ten Commandments spoken by angels was steadfast or binding on people and every transgression and disobedience of the Mosaic Law received a just recompense of reward. In other words, if God gave the Mosaic Law and demanded absolute obedience and judgment on everybody who disobeyed, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation as that which is in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ? Do you see?

If the people under the Mosaic economy never escaped the judgment of God what makes you think you will? If the people who lived in the Old Testament before Christ didn't escape God's judgment and God was more tolerant then, what makes you think you'll escape because you reject the great salvation in Jesus Christ? That's what He's saying. And the us here, "we ought to give"…He uses the word, "we," and he uses it again in verse 3. "How shall we escape if we – " The idea, this plurality is

Jewish in the context, it's national – "If we who are of Israel, who have heard the gospel, if we know that those under the old economy didn't escape when they denied God's Word, what makes us think we'll get away if we deny God's Word?" It's a powerful passage. Certain judgment will result. It says in verse 2, "Every transgression and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward." And it's a negative reward. Do you think you can turn your back on Jesus Christ? Do you think you can neglect so great a salvation as He offers and still escape? No. They couldn't even escape under the old covenant let alone under the new.

Let's look at the second warning in Hebrews chapter 5 and6. Hebrews chapter 5 and 6. And we don't have time to go into all of this in detail, but let me just…let's just look at chapter 6 and we'll skip some of the earlier part. But He's saying to them, verse 12, this is a warning, "For when for the time you ought to be teachers you have need that one teach you the first principles of the oracles of God." By the way, the oracles of God are the Old Testament laws. In other words, He says, "You people, you ought to be teachers of the gospel, you have enough information to be teachers of the gospel. But instead of that somebody needs to teach you the Old Testament laws again. You are primitive when you should be advanced. You haven't responded to what you've heard." Now go over to verse4, and He warns them, "It is impossible", do you see that word? It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, have tasted of the heavenly gift, were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance. Seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God and put Him to an open shame."

Now listen, this is a warning again, this is not to Christians and this is not to flagrant, blatant non-Christians. This is to the fence sitter. This is to the person who says, "I know it's true but I never have made the commitment." And what he's saying is this, Look if you have been enlightened, in other words, enlightenment is a mental comprehension, mental understanding. If you have tasted the heavenly gift, and who is the heavenly gift but the Spirit of God. And how had they tasted the Spirit of God? Because the gospel preached to them had been confirmed by signs and wonders and gifts of the Spirit, it says in chapter 2 verse 3 and 4. So they had had the Spirit of God working in their midst. They had tasted of it. They hadn't really eaten and partaken; they had tasted of it. And in a full sense they needed to partake. But they were sort of partial partakers and partial tasters. They even tasted the Word of God. They tasted the power of the age to come.

You see the miracles that were done in the early church and the miracles that were done in the apostolic time were like a forerunner to the miracles to be done in the kingdom. And the miracles, of course, that Christ will do when He returns. So He says to them, "You've had your mind enlightened, you've had a taste, and you've been in on what the Spirit has done." And, you know, many Jews had, why this…the Holy Spirit was the power through Christ that fed the 5,000. And everybody who ate the fish and the bread that day when Jesus fed them was taking in what the Spirit had done. They had partaken of His miracles, they had partaken of His teaching, they had partaken of His word, but they never made it their own. And what He says is "If you've had all of this revelation and you've tasted

and you've heard and you've seen it, and the power has been displayed and you turn your back on it and you fall away, it's impossible to get you saved. The point being this, if you reject when you have full revelation, you're hopeless. Because what else can God do, right?

By the way, no term in verse 4 or 5, not the term enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good Word or the powers of the age to come, none of those terms is ever used anywhere, anytime in the Bible for salvation. They are not salvation terns. They are terms talking about exposure to the gospel and exposure to the power of God and exposure to the life of Christ. And they had seen enough and heard enough, and if will all that information they would fall away they could never be saved. Because listen, beloved, if you don't accept Jesus Christ when you have full light, you'll never accept Him. Because He can't do anymore than that. And so it's a severe warning, certain judgment.

Then He gives an illustration in verse 7 and 8, "For the earth," He says, "which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is tilled." In other words, the crop is produced and it's a blessing from God when the rain falls. And you know what the picture is? It's the picture of a ready heart and the rain of the gospel falls. And the ready heart takes in the rain and it brings forth the fruit of salvation. But verse 8 says, "But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected and is near unto cursing whose end is to be burned." The rain is spiritual truth. The rain is the gospel. The rain is spiritual enlightenment. One piece of ground produces good herbs; one produces thorns, and thorns are the fruit of religious effort. You see, it's a works righteousness system. They don't produce nothing, they produce the wrong thing, you see? They're very busy, very productive but it isn't herbs to eat; it's thorns, and al you want to do with thorns is stay out of their way. They're useless. Religious self-effort is cursed.

And so He says to these Jews, listen, "You can stay in your Judaism and you can crank out your self-righteousness and when it's all said and done you're going to have thorns. Or you can take in the rain of this enlightenment, you can hear the gospel and you can believe it in your heart and let it go into the soil of your life and produce the thing that God wants it to produce. The choice is yours. The choice is yours. That's another warning.

Let me take you to the third warning in the tenth chapter. The third warning is in the tenth chapter in verse 26. And here's the same thought. He's going to hit these fence sitters again. These people who keep coming but never make a commitment, these people who hear it all but never do anything about it, these people who say it's all wonderful and I believe it and I'm going to do it someday, I'm going to do it…He hits them again. And He says, "Look, for if we sin willfully – " and the sin here is the sin of rejection. If you willfully reject after you've received the knowledge of the truth, you haven't received salvation; you've received the knowledge of it. You know what it is. You understand it. And if you willfully reject it, then there is no more sacrifice for sin. He's saying to the Jew, "You can kill a11 the lambs you want; you can slaughter all the goats you want; you can kill all the bullocks you want; you

can slay all the turtledoves you want, but there is no more sacrifice for sin if you reject Jesus Christ. There's nothing. If you know the truth and you turn your back on Christ, you do nothing about Christ. There is no other thing you can do. There is no other sacrifice.

And you see, these Jewish people didn't want to come to Christ they were afraid of being unsynagogued, you know, put out of the synagogue, losing all their friends and all their family. And so they would go on and on in their Judaism and they wouldn't come to Christ, but they'd keep up their sacrifices. And He says, "That's ridiculous. If you turn your back on Jesus Christ, if you sin willfully after the knowledge of the truth, you're damned because nothing can do for you what only Christ can do." And what will happen, verse 27 says it, "A certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." In other words, God is going to come down on judgment.

Now you say, Well, you know, I think - I think that God will probably be easier on the people who really knew the most and came to church the most and got the most information. You want to know the truth? He'll be harder on them. The less you know the better it will be for you in eternity. And if you have exposed yourself, by God's grace, to the fullness of God's truth you are the most responsible of all. And the fiery judgment is waiting for you, if you reject Jesus Christ. And that's exactly what He says, verse 28 and 29, "He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."

Listen, if you just despise the Mosaic Law, the law that was given on the earth, the law that came from Mount Sinai, if you just despised the tables of stone, you were slain. Why? "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God." If you violated Moses and you died what do you thinks going to happen if you violate the Son of God, you see. That's the point. If you have "counted the blood of his covenant some unholy thing, if you've done despite to the Spirit of grace." You see, to disobey law was to die. To treat that covenant with disrespect was to die. To violate that law was to die. Oh how much more severe is the punishment for the one who turns his back on the Son of God and counts the blood of His covenant an unholy thing and despite…does despite to the Spirit of grace. "For we know that He has said vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense saith the Lord." And then verse 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Boy, that's pretty strong stuff. That's a warning that if you know the truth and you turn your back on to it, "vengeance is Mine I will repay. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such a serious problem. And so He warns again that if you know the truth and you don't receive it there's a deeper and greater responsibility because you're trampling under your feet the Son of God. Can you imagine that? You say, "I would never do that, I just haven't made up my mind yet." No, that's not how the Bible looks at it. You may see it as not making up your mind. God sees it as treading underfoot the Son of God.

There's fourth warning in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 25. And it sums up basically the same thought; it's the same thing. It says, "See that you refuse not Him that speaketh." By the way that's God, that's God. He's the main speaker in this chapter. You better refuse not God. Now listen, "for if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, whose voice, then, shook the earth but now He hath promise saying, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven.' " You know when God spoke from the earth? At the giving of the law. And God uttered His voice from Mount Sinai, right, on the earth. God spoke from the earth and the mountains shook and rocked and reeled and He says, "If they didn't escape when they refused the one that spoke on earth what makes you think you're going to escape when you refuse the one who speaks from heaven?" You say, "Who is that?" That's God. God said from heaven several times, and the voice came out of heaven saying this is My Beloved Son, hear ye Him. Do you see that?

In the Old Testament God spoke out of an earthly mountain and said, "Do this law." In the New Testament God spoke out of heaven and said, "Hear My Son." And if they didn't escape when they refused the voice of God on earth what makes you think you'll escape if you refuse the God who has spoke from heaven? He sums it up in verse 29 by saying, "For our God is a consuming fire." He is a consuming fire and some day He'll shake not only a mountain, but He'll share the very heavens in His judgment. What a warning.

Final warning I want to share with you is in chapter 3 and4, chapter 3 and 4. Now I want you to think with me as we go through this rather rapidly. Because it's the longest warning in the book, I'm just going to read some verses and make some comments. Chapter 3 verse 7, here again the Holy Spirit stops and says to the person sitting in the congregation, "Hey, you who know the truth, you who have heard it all, you who had it all given to you, you who want to be religious, and you who know it's the truth, please while the light is still available before it's too late, before God's grace is over, before God's mercy runs out, please say yes to Jesus Christ." Look at verse 7, "Wherefore, – " and then there's a parenthesis all the way down to the end of verse 11 – "as the Holy Spirit saith today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." See that. Today, He says. Sounds like Paul in Corinthians, II Corinthians 6:2, "Today is the day of salvation, now is the time."

Today, He says. It's now and here and now. I always think about D.L. Moody, the night he preached in Chicago and said, "I want you people to go home and think about what I've said and come back tomorrow night ready to make a decision for Christ." And that night the Chicago fire broke out and a great portion of his audience was dead. He said, "I never told anybody tomorrow again." Today, if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts. And then He gives an illustration, "As in the temptation," or provocation. What was that? In the day of trial in the wilderness, he says, "I want to give you an illustration. There was a people who hardened their hearts; there was a people who had a day of testing who had a time of trial, a time in the wilderness. And instead of saying yes to Me and instead

of responding, instead of hearing My voice they hardened their hearts. When was it? Verse 9, “When your fathers put Me to the test, proved Me and saw My work forty years.” Now we know where we are. Right? We got the wilderness in verse 8, and the forty years in verse 9. This is Israel’s forty years in the wilderness.

And verse 10, He says, “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.’ So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.” The word rest there means Canaan. Those people aren’t going to Canaan. And that’s what happened, isn’t it? What happened to the whole generation in the wilderness? They all died, didn’t they? God swore, “They will not enter into My rest.” And every last one of that generation died in the wilderness and never entered the promise land. And so He says, verse 12, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God.” You better look at your own life and make sure you don’t do the same thing. Here God is ready to lead you into His rest; here God is ready to lead you into His kingdom; here God is ready to usher you into salvation, but you harden your heart and you are caught in the evil act of unbelief, departing from the living God. “Oh, don’t let it happen to you,” He says, “like it happened to them.”

You see, there was a day of God’s patience running out. He was patient for a while and then He said, “That’s enough.” And they died in the wilderness and never came to the land which was to be their rest. Four hundred years of slavery, forty years of wandering. Oh how they longed for Canaan the land of milk and honey and they never got there. They died in the wilderness because of unbelief. They didn’t believe God. It’s that simple. And I’ll show you why in a moment. But rather, He says in verse 13, “Exhort one another daily, every day exhort.” And that’s why I’m doing this message. Exhort people every day and say to them today, today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Today is the day. Don’t go another day. If you reject Christ today it will be easier tomorrow. If it’s easier tomorrow it will be easier the next day, and so it goes and you harden yourself.

For verse 14 says, “We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” That’s the proof if we’re really redeemed. And so while it is said, “Today if you will hear His voice, – ” and all of this is quoted out of Psalm 95 – “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the wilderness temptation or testing, 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 carcasses fell in the wilderness, and to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? Verse 19, “So we see that they could not enter in because of -– ” what? – “unbelief. And unbelief is the final reason you don’t come to Christ.

You don’t believe. You just don’t believe enough. You don’t believe you can really transform your life. You don’t believe it’s worth it. You don’t believe you can make your life what it ought to be. You want to hang on to what you have. You don’t want to throw yourselves in faith on Him. You want to protect

your reputation; you want to protect your occupation; you want to protect your family relationships. You don't want to be persecuted. You're not ready to take a step of faith and give your life to Jesus, and so because of unbelief you wind up dying in the wilderness and your carcass falls there, and you never enter into God's rest. Well, this is a vivid illustration, isn't it? Vivid. Can you imagine how vivid it was to see all the carcasses of a couple of million children of Israel lying all over the desert? Pretty vivid. They died there because of unbelief. They never entered His rest. Now that whole thing is a picture of what the writer of Hebrews wants to say in chapter 4, and I want you to look at it with me. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He that being oft reproved and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

Now listen, God offers a rest to people. It's available. And we enter God's rest by faith. I believe the rest He's speaking of here is salvation. I'll show you as we go, as clearly that is it. I believe it's salvation. And we've been looking at the Sermon on the Mount and we've seen that it's a very narrow way, isn't it? And not too many people find it. It's a hard way and it's a narrow way, but how wonderful to realize that God also calls it a rest. Isn't that great? You say, "Well, how can you equate those, a hard and narrow and compressed way with a rest? It's this, it's so hard and so narrow that you can't do it, and so you give yourself to Jesus. You rest in Him and He does it for you. See, that's the rest. And so He says, "I want you to enter My rest." It's not a works system. You enter it by what? By believing, just as you're kept out by not believing. It isn't what you do or don't do, it's what you believe or don't believe.

Now I want you to understand this as we look as chapter 4. I want you to see, first of all, the availability of rest. I want you to hear the invitation that He gives to the people sitting in the…right on the fence. Listen, verse 1, "Let us," and again it's the us of the Jewish congregation that He's speaking to and so I use it to speak of you. "Let us therefore fear, -– " Oh, you better fear –"lest a promise being left of entering into His rest any of you should seem to come short of it." I mean, what He's saying is, "Oh, wouldn't it be fearful to know that God had given us the promise of rest but we fell short of it?"

Can you imagine if you were one of those children of Israel living in the bondage of Egypt how you would be oppressed and how you would be pushed as a slave from one thing to the another and try to make bricks without straw, and you would be beaten and abused and bruised. And for years and years your family had gone through that for century after century after century after century. And finally God sends a deliverer, a mighty deliverer by the name of Moses. Moses had an available life and he gave it to God and God has him lead these people out. And can you imagine how the Red Sea split and they walked through, turned around, and watched the army of Pharaoh drown? And they went on, rejoicing, ready to meet the thing that God had laid before them, the land of Canaan, the flowing with milk and honey, coming out of incredible slavery and bondage, and they all never saw it, see. They dropped dead, carcasses wasted in the desert.

And he says, “You better fear lest God has laid out in front of you the same kind of a promise, the same kind of a Canaan, the same kind of a land of milk and honey, but you never get there. Even though in a sense you’ve escaped from the bondage. It’s like Peter talks about. “You have escaped the corruptions of the world, you’ve been brought out of the corruptions of the world, but you never enter into the kingdom of God,” you see? You got reformation, not regeneration. There’s a lot of people who want…they want Jesus as Savior, they want a deliverer who will take them out of bondage. They just don’t want a Lord they have to trust to lead them into Canaan, see. And you know what happens to people who only want a savior, they die in the wilderness, they never know God. He is Savior and Lord.

And so He says, “There is a rest left for us,” in verse1. You know, that was just a picture back there. Canaan, that was a picture. There’s still a rest. It isn’t too late, He says to these Jews. It isn’t too late. God has another rest. Not a Canaan rest but a spiritual rest and it’s salvation. And it’s still available and it’s still there. And oh, what a tragedy if you should come short of that, as your forefathers came short of Canaan. The rest that He talks about is salvation, so the availability of rest. People, God has extended His love to you. God has reached out His arms and said there’s a rest for you. It’s rest. Rest from your self-righteous activity. Rest from your fears. Rest from your anxieties. Rest from your frustrations. Rest from the guilt of sin. Rest. And it’s available. And Jesus said, “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise, – ” what? “Cast out.” It’s available for anybody who comes. “Whosoever will, let him come.” It’s a rest.

But, you know, you can know about it and believe it all and sit here and listen to it and come short of it, and your carcass would die in the desert of unbelief and you never enter the promise land. That’s the way a lot of people are. They want a savior to get them out of bondage. They want a savior to deliver them from bondage. But they don’t want a Lord they have to trust with their life. Look at the basis of rest, verses 2, and following. You say, “Well, how do get this rest?” Very simple. “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them – ” the good news was preached to them – “but the word preached did not profit them because it was not mixed with – ” what? – “Faith. You know, it doesn’t matter what God says if you don’t believe it? You know what God said to those people? He said, “I’m going to take you into that land, I’m going to take you into that land; I’m going to lay that land out at your feet; I’m going to give you that land from top to bottom, from Dan to Beersheba; I’m going to give you that land from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean. That’s your land. It’s given to you by Me. It’s My gift to you, your land.” He laid it all out.

And you know, Numbers chapter 14, they got to the end of the land and Joshua said, “Well, let’s go check it out.” So he picked out twelve men. He said, “Alright, you go in and find out about the land. Twelve men went in ten men came out and said, ‘Joshua, we have never seen such big people in our lives. They’re giants in the land and we’re like grasshoppers. They’ll step on us Joshua. We can’t hack it.” Ah rather, they said that to Moses, I got my men mixed up. Joshua and Caleb came out and

they said, “It’s okay. We can do it. We can handle it. God on our side, no problem at all.” And of course, who did the people believe? They believed the ten spies, didn’t they? They believed the ten rather than the two. And you know what happened? Because they didn’t believe God, they died in the wilderness. God gave them all the information. God told them all about it. God told them what the rest was, but because they didn’t believe they were doomed to wander for forty years and then die, see. You know, the only reason they wandered was just so they’d all die off. Their carcasses dropped in the desert because they didn’t believe.

They were ready to be saved out of Egypt. They wanted a savior, they weren’t ready to obey in faith and have a Lord. And what’s he saying? Look, he’s saying the availability of rest, it’s offered. The basis of rest, you must hear the gospel and mix it with what? Faith. You have to believe it. You have to believe it. Every preacher in the world could preach till he died. Jesus Himself could be here and preach the gospel to you. You could read it; you could hear it until you die. But if you never believe with your heart and put your life in God hands you will die without God. I don’t know how much time you have, frankly. “Life is a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away,” James says. I don’t know how much time you have. I don’t know how many days you’ll live. I don’t know how long the light will be available. I don’t know how long it will be before you’ve hardened your heart so many times, God will harden your heart and it will be over and you’ll be an apostate. I don’t know that.

Bit He says, if it’s not mixed with faith it doesn’t matter. Verse 3, “For we who have believed do enter into rest.” It’s just those who believe who enter in. The next one says, “As I have sworn in My wrath they shall never – ” this is a better translation – “they shall never enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” You know, God from the beginning of the world was creating a paradise. That’s right. Verse 4, “He spoke in a certain place and seventh day when God had created everything He created, He rested.” He said, “Now it’s going to be like this, I’ve made a paradise for man.” He rested from all His works. And He says, “Here is the rest I offer man.” But man chose to believe the devil instead of God and man forfeited that rest.

Some will enter, verse 6 says. “Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter into it but they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.” And what’s that verse saying? Oh, it says this. God will always have a remnant, won’t He? God will always have some who enter. There will always be a few. And then comes the plea again in verse 7. It says, and get this one, “Again, He limiteth a certain day.” Did you hear that? He limiteth a certain day. Saying through David…back to Psalm 95 again, “Today after so long a time as it is said. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” You see? It’s the same message again. So He says, “It’s available. You say, “Well, how? What’s the basis of this rest? The basis is that you mix it with faith, that you believe it. If you don’t believe it God swears that you’ll never enter into His rest. even though He created the world that it might be for rest. Even though He created you that you might enter into His salvation. And even though many do reject, verse 6 says, “Some will believe.”

And so he's right back to His same premise. Today if you'll hear His voice, harden not your hearts. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." Oh, what a great statement. If Israel had entered into rest then, Joshua wouldn't have had to talk about a future rest. You know they never knew rest? They never did. Even the few who went in the land never knew rest, because when they got in the land they disobeyed God and they never killed the enemies in the land, right. So they never knew rest. Some of them died in the wilderness and never entered the rest. Those who entered the land never knew the rest because they never killed the enemy. They never dealt with it in the way God told them to. The whole generation. So God took the whole idea of salvation for Israel and postponed it. And as Romans 11 says, "Someday Israel will be saved."

There is still a rest. God is still offering a rest. It isn't the physical one like Canaan, it's a spiritual one, and the writer of Hebrews is reaching out and saying, "Right now, right today, this moment, you can enter into God's rest by faith in your heart." And I love verse 9. What does He say? "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." In other words, that wasn't the end. God just didn't say, "Oh, curse you human race. That's it. It's all over. No Salvation. No more rest. I quit. I give up. I've done everything for you. You turn your back on Me, that's the end of it. No, He didn't say that. He said, "Well, if you won't take the rest here in Canaan that I offer you in a physical sense, as a symbol of the salvation that I offer you spiritually, I'll keep My arms of grace open until you do. Isn't that great?

And so in a general sense, God's grace has always been extended to Israel and to the Gentiles, the whole world. God's arms are still open, and "there remaineth – " verse 9 – "a rest for the people of God." I think the people of God here is a technical term for Israel. He's really saying there's still an opportunity for the Jew. And we can say that today, can't we? You know, even though Israel never entered the Canaan land the way God intended, even though they never took the land away God intended, even though they crucified their own Messiah, God said to them through the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, He said, "And you have killed the Messiah." On the next line He says, "But you're still the sons of the covenant." It didn't break God's promise there is still a rest remaining for Israel.

Isn't it wonderful today that we can go to the Jewish people and call them to Jesus Christ to know that there still is a rest for them? Isn't it wonderful that when we failed God in the garden He didn't turn His back on us? When we failed God at Canaan He didn't turn His back on us? When the whole world gathered together, Jew and Gentile alike, to crucify His own Son, He didn't turn His back on us. When the church has been apostate, He didn't turn His back on us. He still holds out His arms with love. There is a rest for the people of God. And then in verse 10 he says, "He that has entered into His rest is ceased from his own works as God did from His." Oh, what a great statement. You enter by faith not by works.

You enter by faith not by works, and you live by faith not by works. It's not a works system. It's a rest in the work of Christ. And He works it through us. We don't do it in our flesh. Therefore, verse 11 says, "Let us labor to enter into that rest." Now there's a dichotomy. He just says, "It's a rest and you don't enter by works," and then he says, "Let's labor to get in." What does he mean by that? What kind of labor is he talking about? It's not the word labor it's the word *spoudaz*, and it means to hurry. Listen, he says. "This is a rest that God wants you to enter into. "Hurry and enter in, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. After the example of Israel, don't fall.

Well, I've tried to show you the availability of rest, the basis of rest. Verse 11 gives us the urgency of rest. Hurry. Hurry and enter. You say, "Why? Because of verse 12 and 13 and we'll close with these. You got to hurry. Why? "For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Stop right there.

Now listen to this. He's saying, "Hurry, *spoudaz*, hasten, make haste to enter the rest." And the rest is salvation, people. He's saying, "Come on, come on." How are you going to escape if you neglect so great a salvation. What are you going to do if you willfully sin after the knowledge of the truth? It's going to be impossible for you to be renewed unto repentance, once you have crucified the Son of God and put Him to an open shame. If they didn't refuse who said no to the God who spoke out of an earthly mountain, how are you going to escape if you do not hear the voice of God who spoke from heaven? All of these warnings are summed up and he says in verse 11, "Let's hurry to enter into God's rest. Don't put it off, don't neglect, don't procrastinate. Don't say, "Tomorrow." Don't say, "When I understand more." Do it now. Give diligence. Why? You say, "Why?" "For the Word of God is a sword," that's why.

Now sometimes you hear people use this verse to talk about how comforting and how lovely and how wonderful the Bible is. That's not what it's talking about. The Word of God is a sword of vengeance. The Word of God is a sword of wrath. And the two edgedness means you can't escape. It goes both ways. Whichever way you move it will get you. You see, it will pierce you and it will divide asunder your inner being, and it will reveal your motives and it will tear you wide open. That's what He's saying. It's all a picture of a sword plunged into an individual that rips open the joints and the marrow. It discerns the thoughts. It discerns the motives. Listen, the Word of God will penetrate the heart of an individual. And even though they've been religious, and even though they've gone to church and hung on the fence and even believed with their mind, the Word of God will diagnose the true condition of the heart, it will show whether the profession is a real one or a sham, and it will split you wide open before God.

Now, you see, here the word is presented as a sword wielded in judgment. It is alive. It is powerful. It is sharp. It divides. It discerns. And nothing escapes. You'll never escape this. That's what verse 13 says. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight and all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." You'll never escape because He'll know. He'll know. Listen, that little phrase, powerful, "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." In ancient times when a criminal was led to judgment a dagger with its point up was fixed under his chin, tied around his neck so that his face was pushed up by the dagger and it couldn't be moved down. Why did they do that? Because it was common for a criminal before a judge to bow his head in shame and concealment and hide his face.

What the writer of Hebrews is saying. In that day Your face is going to be propped up to look eye to eye with the judgment of God. You will not be able to conceal anything. And the Word will unmask the truth of whether you know God or not. Now, this isn't an easy message to preach, and I'm not trying to destroy anybody's hope. I just want you to know Jesus Christ. I want you to enter God's rest. You know, I know what's going to happen. The Bible tells me. There's going to be a whole lot of carcasses in the desert and they're going to be very religious people, very religious.

They may believe Jesus died and rose again, and they may have wanted someone to take them out of the bondage of their life. But they never took a Lord in whom they put their faith, and so they'll die in the wilderness, religious people. Oh, they think it's going to be alright but it isn't. It isn't going to be alright in the end. It's going to be terrible in the end when the judgment sword of God falls. Today, today is the day to enter His rest.

Listen to this. Explorer Edward Parry was exploring the North Pole. He took his crew to the extremities of that white wilderness, and they endeavored to walk as far North as they could. The days were long, as far North as they were. So while night was going on they charted the stars and determined their exact position, and then they walked for hours and hours and hours and hours until it finally became dark again. They had walked across the white tundra for hours. As the stars came out, they examined the stars and rechecked to see how far they had gone. To their shock, they found out that they were further South than when they started. The truth of the matter is they were walking North on an ice flow going South.

And I dare say that there are many people who are walking vigorously on the ice flow of works that are going to find themselves further South than when they started. Listen, if you're trying to get there on your own, or if you think that just knowing it's true is enough, you're wrong. Until you cast yourself on Jesus Christ, you are living in eminent danger of the judgment of God. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the clarity with which You speak to us in Your Word. Oh, how it penetrates. Father, I just pray so much right now, with all my heart, for those who may be here in this situation. Lord, I don't know how many there are. And I don't know who it is that sometime will listen to me

preaching this same sermon on tape, but Oh God, if there is somebody who knows it's true but hasn't yet opened their heart to Jesus Christ, may this be the moment when they do that.

While your heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me just ask you something in closing? Would you just open your heart to the Lord tonight? And would you say, "Lord, I want to know if I'm a real Christian?" Just examine yourself. You shouldn't be afraid to do that if you really know Him. If you have some doubts about whether you've really made that commitment to Christ, then you probably haven't. And maybe you need to say, "Lord Jesus, I've sat on the fence long enough and I've known the truth long enough, and now I want to take Jesus Christ and crown Him King in my life. I want to yield to Him. I want to accept His salvation. I want to walk beneath His Lordship." Maybe, you just need to say, "Christ, come into my life. I believe and I receive You as Lord."

I really don't know what went on in your heart, obviously. The Lord does. Oh I hope you don't go away tonight and say, "tomorrow," and say, "Well, I'm going to do that." There may not be a tomorrow for you. This may not happen. And the tomorrow may be worse than today. Because you've said no one more time, it will be easier the next time. If you know you need Jesus Christ and you know it's the truth, in simple childlike faith say, "Lord, I believe. I receive Jesus Christ. Cleanse my sin and reign as Lord."

Father, we thank You tonight for Your Word and we thank You so much for its tremendous truth. Lord, how it touches life. It's so obvious that it's Your book because no one could ever know all these things that go on in our hearts but You. Thank You for speaking to us. Bless every person here. May not one person rest his head in sleep tonight who hasn't received Jesus Christ and been born anew into His Kingdom. We pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

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