

We're climbing mountains here at MPBC.



If you weren't here...let me tell you...you missed something powerful and that's always a possibility when you choose to skip church. You risk missing what God has for you. You choose sleep or recreation or some other excuse over being in God's presence then you stand a chance to miss out.

Two weeks ago we talked about wanting to be in the presence of God and experiencing life through Jesus with a keen sense of awareness that He is with us throughout our days. If we had nothing but Him...that would be enough! We agreed there is no one or nothing better in this life than to experience the ongoing awareness and presence of Jesus in our lives. And let me say this again...whatever we try to put in His place or use to make us happy or fulfilled outside of Him is like placing a golden calf (an idol) in our lives. And idols don't fulfill...they leave us (as we'll see today), wandering in the wilderness.

So, for many of us, we started a journey with Jesus... backpacking...mountain climbing...seeking heights we've never experienced...and what a journey it will be...and you see...the views along the way from the heights we'll climb will be "out of this world-amazing!!" BUT!!!...if you choose NOT to follow Jesus...there is a warning...a very serious warning! Listen...if you choose NOT TO FOLLOW JESUS...you do NOT get to lounge around at the bottom of the mountain (to use our analogy from last week) and party and live it up and do your thing... No there is great danger in rejecting what Jesus has done for you. Watch...

Hebrews 3:7-19

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest.'" ¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." ¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked 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 would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is full of warning signs and these warnings are meant by God to deter humankind from choosing spiritual death because they have rejected His mercy. Understand this: God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked...those who reject Him. The New Testament tells us that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. And because of this desire...God warns us...and that's what we've seen here in Hebrews 3. Warnings...

And so, another warning has been levied by Paul to these Jews... Remember, this letter to the Hebrews is to Jews now turned Christians... But there are obviously those who Paul realizes will be in the audience of listeners that have yet to choose Christ. They're still on the edge... They've yet to believe. And what they need is a supernatural nudge to commit to Jesus before it's too late.

You see, Paul is scared for these people...because they are teetering on the edge of oblivion...and so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...he warns them: DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS! And what he does is he goes back to yet again a familiar scene in the history of the Jewish people to remind them of what happened to their ancestors who hardened their hearts. It's a very familiar illustration...what we call the "Wilderness Wandering."

You remember the story...the nation of Israel had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years...



Making bricks for the Pharaoh's to build their pyramids and their empires. And they cried out to God for a deliverer and God heard their cries and He sent them Moses. And God, through Moses, brought them out of slavery and bondage after 10 plagues...miracle after miracle after miracle...which culminated in the parting of the Red Sea...



where 2 million + people were saved...while Pharaoh's army was destroyed. The Lord God even provided mana every day for food...their clothes and sandals grew with them and never wore out...but, the people still rebelled... Remember when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to meet with God and received the 10 Commandments and when he got back down the mountain the people were worshipping what?



A golden calf!! That's what the Egyptians worshipped! And that was only the beginning of their disobedience and that brings us to Paul's reminder of their rebellion in verses 7-11. See it again...

Hebrews 3:7-11

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest."

Paul is quoting here from King David's psalm...(Psalm 95). A Psalm that described the rebellion of the people which we find in Exodus 17.

Exodus 17:1-7

¹All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Are you kidding me? **Is the Lord among us or not?** Didn't they remember this...



Oh how easily we forget what the Lord has done in our lives when we're staring at our new challenge! Listen, God had delivered them out of Egypt by fantastic miracles, bringing them right

through the jaws of the Red Sea...then provided manna every morning and a cloud by day and a fire by night... IS GOD AMONG US? That's ridiculous!

But you see dear people...**that's what happens when you begin to develop a spirit of unbelief**. That kind of spirit never has enough proof. But, I'll say this, "You don't need more proof, you just need to believe the proof you've already been given!" BELIEVE! And that's what Paul was saying... "Don't be like our forefathers...they hardened their hearts and didn't believe!" And we know that they would eventually try to overthrow Moses and indeed they even wanted to go back to Egypt.

But I'll tell you...the straw that broke the camel's back is when the people sent 12 spies to go scout out the Promised Land...their homeland...and they refused to believe the account of Joshua and Caleb, who said, "We can take it," but instead believed the other 10 who said there were giants and they felt like grasshoppers and we'll never win! Moses described the people this way...

Deuteronomy 9:7

Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.

So what did God do? He said... "This generation is rebellious and filled with unbelief and they will not go in...they'll die here in the wilderness because I told them to go in and they won't...they won't trust that I'll be with them...so they'll die in their unbelief." And that's what happened...all those over the age of 20 died in the wilderness. See this map...

Israel's
Exodus
from
Egypt
and
Entry
into
Canaan



Do you see that circle to the right...that circle that's just right beneath Canaan? That's where they died out and GET THIS!! Look hard... at that map... Do you know how far away the people were from the Promised Land (from that circle)... Scholars tell us about 11 days. That's it. They were 11 days from the Promised Land and they wouldn't go because they had the GRASSHOPPER COMPLEX! They went with the majority of 10 of the 12 spies with the 83% and not the 2 (Joshua and Caleb) the 17%. Hey...can I tell you something...as a believer in this pagan world, you are almost ALWAYS going to be in the minority...the 17%. Get used to it and don't be afraid! I teach my kids this...don't be afraid to be in the minority and seen as different!

Oh...let's not be like so many Christians today who **want God** to keep proving Himself faithful, but never do these people have any expectation of their own lives to prove themselves faithful to Him. We want God to do all the work. Be our heavenly butler! Listen...we said this last week...**He expects us to go after Him**. He expects us to seek Him! And the only way you and I will know peace and joy in our lives is when we're absolutely focused and concentrated on Him. Consider JESUS!!!

Church family, do you know what's so sad about the majority of people who SAY they believe in Jesus...they would actually rather die in the wilderness than go to the Promised Land! Why? Because they are afraid of the price to be paid to go to the Promised Land...to grow closer to the Lord. They're happier with the golden calves of this world. Yes...growth and climbing mountains...seeking the Lord usually hurts...

Why? ...Because throughout Scripture you seldom find anyone growing without having to exhibit faith...and to show faith means we have to be brought to the end of ourselves, our resources and our abilities. Because growth might come through a losing your job, a losing your house, or using your health, your family. But even in those experiences...what happens...we find power and strength in the Lord within areas of our souls that perhaps we've never known. There's a peace and presence of God that passes all understanding!

Listen...let me give you some symbolism here...leaving Egypt is choosing to leave sin behind...and when you get saved...you cross the Red Sea and leave sin...Egypt...for the Promised Land...not on dry ground...but by the bloody ground offered as a path by way of the cross of Jesus. We're called to leave Egypt (sin) and embrace a Savior (Jesus)! And this was what Paul was imploring the Hebrew people to do! See it in verse 12...

Hebrews 3:12-14

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

"Firm to the end." What does that mean? Well, it's the same thing Paul said in verse 6...

Hebrews 3:6

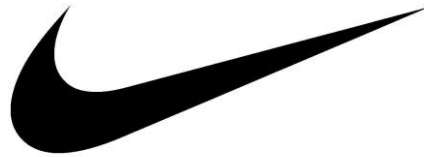
But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Are you listening? Listen carefully...You and I show we are part of the "house of God"... "children of God," if we continue to follow Him throughout our lives. No...this doesn't mean we're perfect, or sinless...but, it does mean we will remain in Him...we will not abandon the faith... The Apostle John said it this way...

1 John 2:19

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Listen, if you are truly a follower of Jesus Christ...you are a going to fight to the end. You will not abandon the mountain! Let me show this to you. This is fascinating. As you are turning, let me ask you a question... what is this symbol? ...



That's obviously the Nike logo...the swoosh... See the word "Nike?"



I shared this a while back on a Wed. night... The word "Nike" comes from the Greek word NIKAO which means: "finisher or conqueror." It's the one that sees it through to the end. And it's this Greek word that's used by Jesus when He is talking to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3. These are the last words He offered the churches in the Bible. Watch...

1. **Revelation 2:7, Ephesus:** To the one who **conquers** I will grant to eat of the tree of life.
 2. **Revelation 2:11, Smyrna:** The one who **conquers** will not be hurt by the second death.
 3. **Revelation 2:26, Pergamum:** To the one who **conquers** I will give some of the hidden manna.
 4. **Revelation 2:26, Thyatira:** The one who **conquers** and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.
 5. **Revelation 3:5, Sardis:** The one who **conquers** will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.
 6. **Revelation 3:12 Philadelphia:** The one who **conquers**, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.
 7. **Revelation 3:21, Laodicea:** The one who **conquers**, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.
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Listen to me this morning. True Christians FINISH...



yes...they may stumble and fall along the way...but, they get back up and finish! They don't turn around...they don't go back... They finish. And you see, that was what Paul was saying to these Hebrews...don't be tempted to turn around and go back to Egypt...go to the Promised Land! Why? **Because Egypt is slavery!** It's so easy to be tricked by Satan...listen...for the Hebrew people...going back to Egypt was not going back to "FUN"...it was going back to this...



It's bondage...slavery...misery... No it's not fun...it's pain!!

Are you being tempted to turn around? Are you being tempted not to climb?



Oh...keep climbing and if you haven't started...start NOW...

Listen...Paul was imploring these Hebrews to accept Christ...TODAY!!! 3 times he said it... Oh, we've got to get this. We can almost brush past this...

Hebrews 3:7

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice..."

Now jump back down to verse 13...

Hebrews 3:13

¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

What does "today" mean? It means...right now...at this moment...before the opportunity passes you by...before it's too late! Have you given your life to Jesus...have you started that climb to great heights with Him? If you haven't, I'll tell you what's holding you back. YOU MIGHT SAY, "You don't know what's holding me back..." Yes, I do... One word... UNBELIEF! The same thing that kept the nation of Israel out of the Promised Land. They listened to the majority...they were afraid...intimidated and didn't take God at His Word.

Let me ask you something as we close. Are you climbing...or are you living in unbelief. Do you know what unbelief looks like? One word...**disobedience!** You see, if you're living in disobedience, it's because you don't believe God, because ALL DISOBEDIENCE is unbelief...not trusting God. Listen, if you steal...you are not trusting God for your provisions...if you hold a grudge...you have made yourself God because you won't forgive and He does. Oh listen...you cannot live in disobedience and say you truly believe in God and you cannot be in conscious communion with God when you're living in disobedience and unbelief. What's He saying to you today? TODAY!!!

Oh, TODAY is the day of salvation... Oh, please...I implore you...TODAY, hear his voice and do not harden your heart! Believe and climb!

But if you don't believe...I promise you and warn you...you will waste away in the wilderness!
Believe while it's still TODAY!
