

Sermon Title: The Fear of the Gospel

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:1-10

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to avoid the danger of not entering God's rest provided by Jesus Christ.

Sermon Proposition: There are 5 dangers that may hinder Christians from entering God's rest.

Introduction: Today we are living in a period of time like in the days of Israel's wilderness journey when there is no fear of God before men's eyes. (**Romans 3:18** "There is no fear of God before their eyes¹."). The unsaved know the judgment of God is upon those who do such things as they do today, yet they not only do them but they have pleasure in them that do them (**Romans 1:32** who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.). They are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (**Romans 2:5** But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,).

What is even worse than this, is that the saved have no fear of God before their eyes. You do not love someone you do not respect. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (**Proverbs 9:10** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. cf.1:7). "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (**Proverbs 8:13** The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.). The early church had a correct godly fear of God, and this is the reason they were empowered to turn the world upside down and right-side up. (**Acts 2:42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. **43** Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **Acts 5:5** Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. **Acts 5:11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. **Acts 9:31** Then the churches¹ throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.)

The one controlling theme of Hebrews is that "Christ alone can qualify to provide perfect salvation. Why is this true according to the writer of Hebrews? There are basically 3 reasons offered.

- 1) He alone qualifies in His person to attempt salvation. (**1:1-4:13**)
- 2) He alone qualifies in His work to provide salvation. (**4:14-10:18**)
- 3) He alone qualifies in His position to effect salvation. (**10:19-13:25**)

The concern or fear that the writer has in our section of Scripture today is the failure of the believing Hebrew Christians to enter God's rest due to unbelief, a hardened heart, and disobedience. The author wants his readers to know that there is still a rest available to us, but there is likewise a danger of failing to enter the rest, for some reason that earlier Hebrew believing generations failed.

Hebrews has 5 basic warnings found in it.

I. The danger of drifting due to indifference. (2:1-4)

Hebrews 2:3 Neglect was taking place. Remember, you cannot neglect something you do not have. The neglect of salvation in the case of the believer is to have it and be completely indifferent concerning church attendance and fellowship with other believers, personal reading and studying of the Word and prayer, and so forth. It is the attitude "I'm saved, so I don't have to worry. I'm all right." The truth is just the opposite. You are all wrong. This so great salvation is not a mere ticket to heaven in which you can live any way down here on earth. (**Hebrews 10:38** Now the¹ just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him²." **Hebrews 10:30** For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay¹," says the Lord². And again, "The LORD will judge His people³." **31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.)

II. The danger of not entering into rest due to unfaithfulness. (3:7-4:13)

The point is this: A redeemed people may lose blessings which depend on continuing faith to enjoy. It is not enough to be saved by faith. "The just shall live by faith." If God's people cease to live by faith, they cease to live a life of blessing in time. (*Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have¹ peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **Matthew 11:28** "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.)*

The first is positional, the second is experiential.

Unbelief → Hardness → Judgment

The path is always the same. It begins with an attitude, manifests itself in action and culminates in God having to judge. There were 603,550 men of war. Of them 603,548 died in the wilderness. This meant that every day spent in the wilderness saw nearly 44 military funerals plus children.

III. The danger of not going on to maturity due to dullness of hearing. (5:11-6:20)

They had failed to make application of the knowledge in practical application. The great principle of the Christian life is use it or lose it. The uses or exercise of the knowledge about Christ in life situations to discern right and wrong, good and evil. Maturity is the ability to use the knowledge about Christ and His salvation work to solve the situations and problems in relations to daily living.

IV. The danger of willful sinning due to drawing back from salvations truth. (10:26-31)

V. The danger of backsliding to the point of denial. (12:25-29)

Conclusion: The point often missed in modern day Christianity, the greater the revealer, the greater the responsibility to what has been revealed, and the greater the penalty for not obeying. Revelation through the Son (Jesus Christ) carries with it, by the very nature of the revelation, a far more solemn obligation to its recipients than Old Testament Revelation.

John MacArthur writes:

"It may surprise you to learn that Scripture never once exhorts sinners to 'accept Christ.' The familiar twenty-first-century evangelistic appeal in all its variations ('make a decision for Christ'; 'ask Jesus into your heart'; 'try Jesus'; 'accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior'), violates both the spirit and the terminology of the biblical summons to unbelievers.

The gospel invitation is not an entreaty for sinners to allow the Savior into their lives. It is both an appeal and a command for them to repent and follow Him. It demands not just passive acceptance of Christ but active submission to Him as well. Those unwilling to surrender to Christ cannot recruit Him to be part of a crowded life. He will not respond to the beckoning of a heart that cherishes sin. He will not enter into partnership with one who loves to fulfill the passions of the flesh. He will not heed the plea of a rebel who simply wants Him to enter and by His presence sanctify a life of continued disobedience."

(John MacArthur, *The Gospel According To Jesus*, Zondervan, 2008, pp.116)