

BRINGING THE BALANCE

INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago, I spoke about us being “real people”. Real people live real lives and deal with real problems. They even experience real struggles with the flesh and sin, even as Paul did, he wrote in Romans 7, “O wretched man that I am”. We sometimes get it wrong. I encouraged us all that regardless of our failures, Jesus loves us. The question was, “do we really believe that Jesus loves us”.

This is the essence of the grace message. Sadly it would be very easy to take this wonderful love, and grace we have in Jesus, and abuse it, choosing to live a life of sin and relying on the grace and mercy of God to carry us through.

But God is a just God, and we need to realise that there is a balance between the freedom we have in Christ, and God’s righteous and just nature. Some believe that once we are saved, we remain saved, no matter what we do or how we live? Some would argue that this is the case, but when I read God’s word, I don’t see the evidence of this. As we read in the book of Hebrews, we find that living in the Lord’s blessing and grace is not a guarantee that we will enter His rest. So today, I want to help you understand that we do have grace, but we still need to live a life that will enable us to enter God’s rest.

MESSAGE

ENTERING GOD’S REST

Hebrews 4:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’”

- We have a definite promise of entering God’s rest.
- What is God’s rest? It’s eternal life, but we can also experience a foretaste of God’s rest as we live our lives on this earth.

But there is a warning here, “let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.”

The writer then goes on to start speaking of those who came out of Egypt (Those saved under the Law). They heard the gospel, but it didn’t benefit them and God said emphatically, “They will not enter My rest!” They “came short of it”.

COMPARING GRACE AND THE LAW

Hebrews 4:2 says, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them".

The writer makes a comparison between those saved from Egypt and those saved from sin. In Hebrews 3, we pick up these similarities:

SAVED FROM EGYPT MOSES (LAW)	JESUS (GRACE)
Moses led them out of captivity – a type of saviour	Jesus led us out of sin – He is THE Saviour
Moses was sent to Israel - Their apostle	Jesus was sent to us - our Great Apostle
Moses first acted as High Priest before appointing Aaron	Jesus is our High Priest
He was faithful in all God's house	He is faithful to the Father
A servant in God's house	A Son in God's house
God met with the people in a tabernacle	We are Christ's house, indwelt by his Spirit
Moses led them out of captivity	Jesus saved and redeemed us from the captivity of sin
They saw the Red sea open, water come from the rock, manna fall, quails to eat, clothes that didn't wear out. The pillar of cloud and fire	Jesus gives us the living water. He is the Bread of life, He is our Rock, He is the glory within us and we see signs, wonders and miracles taking place
They hardened their hearts, complained and rebelled even though God was in their midst	We have it all, how are we behaving with Jesus Christ in our Midst?
They hardened their hearts	Is sin hardening ours?
They were not allowed to enter God's rest because of their unbelief and their disobedience	Do we truly believe? Are we disobedient?
God is just	God is just

The point I'm making here is that if those who came out of Egypt missed God. They actually worshipped an idol in His presence, and they were not allowed to enter God's rest, is it possible that we are doing the same thing – treating God's grace in an irreverent manner?

WHAT WAS THE ROOT CAUSE?

The root cause of the Israelite rebellion in the wilderness was an unbelieving heart.

Hebrews 3:12-13 & 16-19 (NKJV) Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief** in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was

He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

- An evil heart of unbelief! This was the root cause.
- This unbelief led to sin.
- The **deceitfulness of sin hardened their hearts.**
- And then they went into full scale rebellion!
- They actually worshipped the golden calf in God's presence!

Do not believe that if we sin in the freedom we have because of grace, it will not result in consequences!

- Continual and on-going sin will cause a hardened heart regardless of grace.
- This hardened heart state is a state of rebellion against the grace we have in Christ Jesus.
- A hardened heart does not respond to the gentle promptings and conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- A hardened heart leads to indifference and eventually, we can find ourselves worshipping false god's in God's presence!
- When I worship a false god, I have entered the realm of UNBELIEF! And then, I have moved out from God's rest.

Challenge: Is there on-going and un-dealt with sin in our lives? Is there a crust of hardness that has formed around our hearts? Have we grown indifferent to the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

If so, we are in real trouble and we need the Lord's help.

The first thing we need to address is the sin of unbelief!

DEALING WITH THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

But you may say I believe. We need to understand that believing is a heart thing, it's not a mind thing!

James 2:19-20 (NKJV) You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

- Those rebellious Isrealites believed – they must have, they saw what God did...but it was mere mind knowledge – that's what the demons have too. They know God is real and great and powerful, they even tremble, but they don't stop their rebellion!
- True belief is life-changing, it impacts every attitude of our heart and mind and results in acts of faith.
- **Dare I say that one of those acts of faith is turning away from repeated and on-going rebellious disobedience and sin?**

Challenge:

- ***Are you losing the war against sin? Could it be that you are walking in intellectual knowledge of God, but your heart has not changed?***
- ***Is it possible that you may have dipped too far into the freedom afforded by grace and allowed yourself to sin, resulting in a heart of unbelief that is hardened towards God?***

IT'S TIME TO START AGAIN

We serve a gracious, patient and merciful God. He has given us life today so that we will have an opportunity to start again. He even reasons with us:

Isaiah 1:18 (NKJV) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NKJV) Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Challenge:

- ***Has the Lord been reasoning with you, calling you back?***
- ***Have you possibly been dimming out His voice?***
- ***Is it time to have some spiritual heart surgery?***

Our Lord wants to remove our crusty, disobedient, sinful heart and give us a heart of flesh that will respond to Him. He wants to renew His Spirit in us and help us to walk right before Him.

CONCLUSION

It is possible to slip backward, out of God's grace and His rest. Unbelief is the root cause which will result in sin and a hardened indifferent heart.

This morning God wants to do some supernatural heart surgery and remove that crusty, sin-hardened heart, restoring to us a pliable, obedient heart of flesh and filling us afresh with His Holy Spirit.

I end with these verses:

Hebrews 2:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.² For if the word spoken through

angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,

We must make sure that we don't drift away and miss out on such a great salvation.

Hebrews 3:14(NKJV) For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said:

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

Let us hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Today we have heard the heart of the Lord, let us not harden our hearts, let us respond to the Lord's reasoning and His cry and let us be restored, refreshed and renewed in Him.