

EXAMINE YOURSELF

INTRODUCTION

Last weeks' message reminded us that there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. We learned that no-one has the right to either accuse, nor condemn us. The full price has been paid for our sins by Jesus.

With this in mind though, we still need to make sure we are preaching God's word in a balanced manner. Paul wrote in Romans 8 that no-one has the right to accuse or condemn us, but he also wrote this: **1 Corinthians 9:27** (NLT) "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. **Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.**"

Although Jesus paid for our sins in total and He is our Advocate before the Father, it appears that we can still miss it! We can't just sit on our laurels and live as we please. We still stand accountable before God and need to make sure we are on the correct track, loving and serving God in holiness and sanctification.

This morning I want us to examine ourselves, to do a spiritual health check and to make sure that amidst this grace in which we live, we are not somehow lulled into missing out on eternity!

MESSAGE

A WARNING TO HEED

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 (NLT) I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. 2 In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. 3 All of them ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, 7 or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." 8 And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. 9 Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. 10 And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. 11 These things happened to them as examples for us. **They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.** 12 If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. 13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Just think about it!

- These people were in the midst of God's blessings. They experienced miracle after miracle:
 - Deliverance from Egypt.
 - The cloud by day and the fire by night.
 - The Red Sea opening up.
 - Water from the rock and manna and quail to eat.
- As much as God's provision was physical, it was also spiritual! They enjoyed spiritual blessings! *"All of them ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all of them drank the same spiritual water"*.
- ...yet God was not pleased with them!
- And **we face the same temptations that they did** – sin however in the current day and age is **just so much more accessible!**

And these things happened to them as a warning to us! To us who live at the end of the age! Yes, we are not accused nor condemned, but we are warned that it is possible for God not to be pleased with us!

My question today is this? Are we willing to heed this warning? We face the same temptations... Or like the Israelites, are we going to enjoy and possibly even demand God's blessings, favour and protection whilst still choosing to live just as we please?

IT'S EASY TO FALL FROM GRACE!

The devil is crafty, he is a master deceiver. When he wants to make us fall to sin, he won't blatantly come with sin, he will ease it in, little by little so that he can crawl into the slightest little crack in our armour. That's his nature and little by little we become deceived and backslide, falling into sin and out of God's grace.

A new twist on the Prodigal son.

This young man had everything. He had grown up in his father's house. He had work, clothes, food, servants and a home, but he wanted more. He wanted everything, so when he asked his father for his inheritance before it was due, his father being a good man gave it to him...but then he turned his back on his father and left to a faraway land where he had a great life. He had girls, food, clothes, friends, accommodation. It was just great.

- But what he had was really a result of what his father had given him!
- It was there because of his relationship with his father.
- But with his father out of the picture, it wasn't too long until his father's blessings, money and wealth was no more, it all dried up.
- Then instead of living the good life, he found himself in the pig pen!
- **He had not realised where he was heading to, and before he knew what hit him, he got there!**

Here's another example:

God told Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman. She then ran after other lovers (symbolic of Israel). She was chasing the good life but the truth was that the good life would come from Hosea and not those lovers:

Hosea 2:8 (NLT) She doesn't realize it was I who gave her everything she has— the grain, the new wine, the olive oil; I even gave her silver and gold. But she gave all my gifts to Baal.

When everything goes well with us, we sometimes don't realise, nor acknowledge that it is God who is blessing us. Then the world calls and we spend all our time chasing earthly pleasures, wasting that which God has given us on earthly pursuits, and we forget about God...

- **And we lose the new wine and the oil – God's anointing.**
- **We even suffer financially because God is our source!**

Is it possible that we are like the Prodigal son this morning? Or like Hosea's wayward wife and we have drifted from our true source, Father God?

WHAT SIN?

Let's have a look at the sins of the Israelites that God is warning us about:

1 Corinthians 10:6-10 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, 7 or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." 8 And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day.9 Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. 10 And don't grumble as some of them did,

- They craved evil things – the things of the world.
- They worshipped idols – things were more important than God.
- Feasting and drinking and pagan revelry – drunkenness, wild living.
- Sexual immorality.
- Testing Christ – After all, He doesn't accuse & condemn us!
- Grumbling and complaining – it's never good enough, always wanting more like the Prodigal son!

Are there areas of sin that have crept into our lives? Are there sin-strongholds that we have been battling with?

SIN MAKES US HARD

When you lay cement down, it's soft wet and pliable, but the longer you leave it, the harder it gets and soon, there is no way it can be broken **except with very powerful tools**.

Sin is like that... it forms a crust around our hearts which grows harder and harder and we **become indifferent to God's word and the voice of His Spirit**. The bible describes this hardness as "fallow ground".

Jeremiah 4:3-4 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "**Break up your fallow ground**, And do not sow among thorns.

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; **Break up your fallow ground**, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Charles Finney said this about fallow ground:

Fallow ground is ground which has **once been tilled**, but has **gotten hard** and **now lays waste**. It needs **to be broken up and made soft again**, before it is ready to receive seed. If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your heart, you must begin by **looking at your heart** - examine carefully the state of **your mind** and see where you are. Many people never even seem to think about doing this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in their walk with the Lord or not - whether they are bearing fruit or are totally barren. Now you must draw off your attention from all other things and look into this right now! **Make a business of it, do not be in a hurry**. (Prov. 4:23 Above all...guard your heart!)

This morning the Lord is challenging us to examine ourselves:

We need to look into the state of our hearts and minds and break up the hardness that has grown there and the indifference to sin and God's word. He wants to give a beautiful, new, heart of flesh that is open and ready for spiritual seed so that we can bear a crop of righteousness.

- ***Is there fallow ground in our lives?***
- ***What will we do with that fallow ground?***

WE HAVE THE RIGHT HEAVY MACHINERY!

Sin does not have dominion over us (**Rom. 6:14**). The power of sin over our lives has been shattered by the blood of Jesus. It's time we addressed the strongholds of satan that may have found place in our lives:

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

- ***Let us put on that armour of God once more.***

- ***Let us pray, and repent, and tear down every stronghold of sin the enemy has tried to erect in our lives.***
- ***Let us break up the fallow ground and ask the Holy Spirit to move once more.***

CONCLUSION

This morning God has spoken to us and challenged us to examine ourselves:

- There is a warning to heed.
- It's easy to fall from grace.
- Sin makes us hard – we need to plow up the fallow ground.
- It's time to return to the Lord!

Hosea 6:1-2 (NKJV) Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight.

When we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. When we return to God, He will heal us, help us, revive us and restore us.

Ezekiel 36:26 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.

- We need to ask the Lord to renew us, to remove the hardness, the fallow ground in our hearts and replace it with a heart of flesh!
- He will restore us.
- Then He can work in our lives,
- Then seed can be sown in our lives that will produce a great harvest.