

Christian Pilgrimage: Beware of Unbelief

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3. I'm going to begin reading at verse 7. And then verse 7 says, So as the Holy Spirit says, That is why I was angry with that generation.

And I said, Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my way. So I declared on oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest.

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

We have come to share in Christ, if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first, as has just been said. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for 40 years?

[1:45] Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest, if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter because of their unbelief.

Good morning to all of you again. It's a joy to be with you. And as we study Hebrews this morning, I want to remind you that tonight we will come back to Hebrews in a different focus.

But this whole passage in Hebrews beginning in chapter 3 all the way to 4.11 is really about Christian pilgrimage.

And I believe that we are all on Christian pilgrimage. I believe in pilgrimage. Maybe you remember when Martin Luther was a Catholic priest and when he was so excited to visit the city of Rome and go on to a pilgrimage that he had thought about and dreamed about for I'm sure many years.

And when he got there, he was so dissatisfied and even disgusted with the corruption that he saw there. That's not the pilgrimage that we believe in. We don't have to go to an earthly city.

[2:59] We're not going to the Hajj to Mecca. That's not the purpose of why we discuss pilgrimage and why the author of Hebrews discusses pilgrimage. But the Christian life is one long pilgrimage to heaven.

That's why the Pilgrim's Progress was written, I believe. John Bunyan, the English pastor who wrote it, I believe, from prison, and he wrote about the progress that Pilgrim had to make once God saves him by his grace.

He called him to persevere, doesn't he, throughout the whole book. And even after he is justified by God's grace, after that burden is gone and he comes to faith in Jesus Christ, he still faces many, many dangers, doesn't he?

For really the rest of his life until he makes it to the celestial city. That's the true Canaan that all of us who profess faith in Jesus Christ are on holy pilgrimage to.

And so the author of Hebrews repeatedly throughout this book is calling those that profess faith in Jesus Christ not to turn back. Don't fall in the wilderness as they fell in the wilderness.

[4:07] And he is reminding them over and over repeatedly of their need to persevere in the grace of God. And that is what I hope to do this morning. And here is this passage. We look at Hebrews 3, verses 7 through 19.

It's really part one of the pilgrimage teaching in Hebrews. It's quite strong. It's a warning passage in Hebrews. And the following verses are very positive and encouraging.

But this reminds us, this passage, that our Christian pilgrimage is a lifelong process. And there's a very real warning here. All of us, including myself, who profess faith in Jesus Christ, we could fall in the desert.

And that's a tension I will just simply leave there. The book of Hebrews leaves it there. I do not believe we can lose our salvation. I believe that once God justifies a sinner, you are secure forever in the arms of Jesus.

And yet I do not believe, on the other hand, that we can lose our salvation. Some people look at a passage like this and they say, this is proof that you can lose your salvation. I don't believe that you can lose your salvation.

[5:12] But I do believe that many people will profess faith in Jesus Christ. They could be good church members, even ministers or missionaries. And they may fall in the desert. It may have been just a mere profession of faith.

And again, this is a serious warning. If you hear God's voice today, do not harden your hearts. And that applies to every person in this room. It applies to me. It applies to every person who is a professor of faith in Jesus, a member.

And if you have not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ, this especially applies to you. Because if you hear the message today, because God speaks in his word, if you hear this message and go away, you are evidencing the fact that you are hardening your heart to the voice of God.

And that is an interesting passage. If you've noticed in your Bible, where is that a quotation from? It's a quotation from the Old Testament. And Hebrews is filled with these Old Testament quotations. Psalm 95 is where he is quoting from. A psalm of David, he tells us here in chapter 4. And of course, Psalm 95, when you read that passage and think about it, it begins with our call of praise to God.

[6:25] And then it turns into that warning. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as what happened in the rebellion. And that whole incident is looking back to Numbers 13 and 14.

And so keep those three passages in mind this morning. Numbers 13 and 14, the great rebellion that took place there. Psalm 95. Psalm 95 looks back to Numbers 13 and 14 as Moses wrote that. And then it looks forward to Hebrews 3 and 4. And it's taken the same basic lesson in applying it to them as they came out of Egypt to the people in David's day and to us today in the church.

And so let's keep that in mind. Just two simple points. First of all, don't repeat the past rebellion of Israel in the wilderness. And secondly, remain faithful to God every day of your pilgrimage.

You may have a Bible map, and you can look in your map in the back where Kadesh Barnea is.

That's the background to what happened in Numbers 13 and 14. And it's right on the border, isn't it?

[7:30] The southern angle of Israel. They're right on the border, just inches away from possessing the promised land. The rest God had promised to give to them. When you read on further in chapter 4, and the word rest appears over and over again, I think ten times in this section.

It becomes clear that the rest was never intended to be exhausted by inheritance and possessing of a physical land. That itself was a shadow of a far greater rest.

A rest that Adam lost at creation from Genesis 2-2, which the author will quote. This rest is God's rest. It's the eternal Sabbath rest which the sinners of this world are called to enter into.

The seventh day is an eternal day. Today, that's the definition I think of today, partly in this text.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

Notice as you begin verse 7, when we consider not repeating the past rebellion of Israel in the wilderness. Who is speaking this quotation? David wrote it, but he says, The Holy Spirit says.

[8:39] And he's not speaking about said to them. He says, says to us today. He continues to speak the same warning to us. As he quotes Psalm 95. If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

On the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works. For 40 years, therefore, I was provoked with that generation and said, They always go astray in their heart.

They have not known my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. I'm only aware of three times in Scripture where God swears to Abraham. He swears here in his anger and he swore an oath to Jesus Christ.

And so this is a very solemn, serious warning that we can all take into our lives to consider. Unbelief in God's word could result in the loss of your inheritance.

It happened to the people long ago and we need to wake up and think that it can happen to people today. People that think they are going to heaven. The greatest inheritance of all where Jesus is.

[9:42] It can be lost through unbelief and rejection of God's word. And again, sometime go home and read Numbers 13 and 14 when God sends out the 12 spies.

And God promises repeatedly to bless the people. And this is nothing short of mutiny on the border. Past blessings are not a guarantee of future faithfulness.

How many times have we witnessed that in Scripture? The past blessings that God gives to us, it's not a guarantee of future faithfulness. That first generation X, the Exodus people of Israel, they seem to forget all about their redemption.

And yes, it was a political liberation. It was not necessarily redemption from sin. They were taken out of a state of oppression. It's a sad story of rebellion against a loving God who did so much to save them.

Kent Hughes talks about the exigent event. It started so well. Stop for a moment to think about what God did and if you were there. Maybe over a million people. I don't know.

[10:50] Maybe two million people. One of the greatest migration events of history. People who had been in bondage for centuries are now freed miraculously. And God twice on that night delivered the people of Israel.

At the Passover, he delivers them out of the land. And then he delivers them later at the Red Sea. And they were praising God. The song is recorded in the Old Testament. They were so thankful. They were no longer illegal immigrants in an oppressive society. But they were free. And they broke out into spontaneous praise to God.

They started so well. And yet in just a few days, as you read through the events of Exodus and what Numbers records for us, rebellion begins to creep into the camp extremely fast.

What began so well ends in tragedy. And the same lesson needs to be applied to our life as well.

When we hear God's word, we should not harden our hearts against him.

[11:53] Unbelief is natural to us, isn't it? Failure is natural to myself and to all of us. We all know about it a little bit. Some of us make New Year's resolutions that we keep for about 14 days, maybe two Sundays, and then they're gone.

Diets, reading books, all kinds of things. The dropout rate for the Navy SEALs is 75%. We know a lot about failure. We know a lot about unbelief. A lot about not completing things in our life.

And yet here it appears that perhaps 90 to 99% of the people that were brought out of Egypt began to act just like Pharaoh. They began to be filled with unbelief.

And only a few of them in that generation were able to enter into the land. Moses himself, because of his unbelief that is recorded in the Old Testament, was prohibited from entering into the land of promise.

And it wasn't because they lacked resources or ability or whatever that was. God was giving them all that they needed. And so they had no excuse to have unbelief in their hearts.

[13:01] But their unbelief led to disobedience. So, brothers and sisters, it isn't simply starting well in the Christian life that is necessary. It is continuing and finishing well that God expects of us.

And we finish with Jesus. He is with us to the end. Their unbelief is unbelievable. And the same thing has happened. And I've witnessed this.

And I hope that it never happens to me. I've seen people that are ministers, that are missionaries, that are faithful church members, that have walked away from the gospel in Jesus Christ. I don't know if they have gone to the point of no return.

And I hope they all come back. But it's very sobering to see a seminary student leave his wife for another woman. Or a pastor leave his wife and his family for another woman.

It happens, my friends. And it happens not simply with the Catholic priest abusing boys where they're at. It happens in our churches as well.

[14:03] And we need to ask God to help us not to have a heart of unbelief. Jesus destroyed those he redeemed, the Bible tells us. In Jude 1 verse 5, a shocking verse that says, That's a sobering verse.

The people that Jesus redeems out of Egypt, he caused them to fall in the wilderness. And so again, we apply that warning with this lesson in Hebrews about challenging the word of God and doubting the word of God.

That is why Meribah and Massah are called that. They are names for contending and complaining and bitterness. Exodus 17 records that problem when the people thought they had nothing to drink and nothing to eat, and God provided for them miraculously.

And yet they continued to complain and grumble against God and his word and his promises if they would inherit this land. And so there they are in Numbers 13 and 14.

They're on the border at Canish Barnea, right there, ready to cross. And they demonstrate, again, a heart of unbelief, a heart of disobedience, a heart of rebellion against God.

[15 : 26] They turned against the God who gave them victory over their enemies. And they chose to reject him in the end. And this was a generation that saw some of the greatest miracles in all of history.

There is no problem of evidence in their generation. They saw God do some amazing things. And yet in light of all of that, they chose not to believe. This, I think, is where we have the first two youth group leaders come from.

Joshua and Caleb, right? The only two spies that believed, and they are instantly made youth group leaders of the younger generation. As they see their equal peers and the older people all die off because of unbelief.

And God started over with a new generation 20 years and below. And so throughout those 40 years in the wilderness, Joshua and Caleb are the only two mentioned in Scripture that believed in what God said.

And this is the covenant people of God that we are talking about here. We are not talking about the Egyptians. But the Hebrew people have proved themselves over and over to be worse than the Canaanites.

[16 : 33] They become, in a sense, the new Canaanites before they ever enter the land. And so they began so well, but it didn't last very long. Before long, they chose the cynical path of unbelief and doubting God.

Accusing God as trying to harm us. And they effectively placed God on trial and accused Him of being a criminal. The same thing a playwright did in Germany. Had a play and they were asking, who's responsible for the Holocaust?

In the end, it's your fault, God. No one could take responsibility for that terrible incident in history. Unbelief can lead you and I past the point of no return in verse 11, 16, and 19.

And so God says, as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. This is divine rest that is described in this passage. Howell Jones makes the helpful distinction between unbelief and disobedience.

He says the two are not identical. Unbelief, he says, is refusing to listen to God's Word. And you have a description of that in Numbers 14, the first 38 verses.

[17 : 45] Disobedience, he says, is actively opposing God's Word. And that's exactly what you see in Numbers 14, 39 through 45. And so we begin with unbelief and it moves to disobedience.

And what is the fear of the author of Hebrews? He doesn't want them to commit apostasy. Going past a point where they will never desire to repent of their sins and believe in the promises of God. And so he calls them and reminds them that unbelief is a dangerous thing. To begin to doubt the Word of God. And you know the story in Numbers, God sends out 12 people and he reiterates, I'm going to protect you, I will provide for you, I'm going to give you the land, I'm even going to give you victory over your enemies.

And when they went, all 12 said, it's a beautiful land. And the people are big. And 10 of the spies came back and instead of believing in God's Word, they chose to what? Focus on the obstacles, as many of us do.

But Lord, the people are so big. And they have weapons and they're fortified cities and all of that. And they began to influence the people in the nation.

[18 : 54] And the people in the nation are ready to rise up and choose new leaders and go back to Egypt. At least we have cucumbers and onions there. I mean, how much better could that be? Talk about memory loss.

And they're beginning to discuss this. And Joshua and Caleb speak up with boldness. And they say, we can eat them for breakfast, is basically what he's saying.

The same thing LeBron James said to the team they were playing about the over-easy forwards. We're going to eat them for breakfast. And that's what in the Hebrew Joshua says. We will devour them because God has promised.

And although it seems impossible for us to accomplish this victory, God said it. And so we will believe it. And so therefore we believe in the virgin birth because the scriptures teach it.

It doesn't seem to make any scientific sense. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. None of that can be proven in a laboratory. But God's Word says it.

[19 : 52] And so we will believe it. And so the twelve come back. Ten are traitors. They are criminals against God. Joshua believed. And all of those ten influenced the nation to turn their back against God.

Kent Hughes said this, quote, Faithlessness makes small mountains unclimbable and miniature seas uncrossable. And unbelief becomes a reality sometimes in all of our hearts.

It makes cowards of all of us. And our faith in God's Word and His promise and His love for us can quickly evaporate when we choose to focus on the problems and trials of life instead of the greater reality of God's promise to provide and protect for us.

He has already redeemed us from sin. Disobedience. Disobedience. Now moving on from unbelief. It's actively opposing God's Word.

And that's again what we see in Numbers 14. 39 and 45. It's revealing how Numbers is written.

When you read those two chapters and read chapter 20 that Moses is saying something.

[20 : 59] It's not necessarily in complete chronological order. but in between these two parentheses of unbelief here and unbelief here in chapter 20, the wilderness wanderings. And he is saying that these people were characterized by unbelief when they started their wilderness journey, and they were still characterized with unbelief when they ended it.

And how many fell in the wilderness as they wandered around aimlessly in the wilderness, in the desert. Beware of unbelief in the wilderness. And these people were disobedient against Moses, against God.

And so David picks the psalm up years later, perhaps centuries later, when the people are already in the land, and you would think that they fulfilled that promise. Rest is given. And David says, no, no, you might be in the land, but beware of not entering into God's rest.

And so there is a first key that helps us to understand that this rest is not simply possessing a land. And repossession of the land will never fulfill that promise of God's rest.

It goes back to creation. The goal of creation, the goal of redemption is the same. Adam lost that rest. And that rest can only be regained through Jesus Christ.

[22 : 15] So the author of Hebrews continues to teach what Moses and David taught centuries ago to us today. And he tells us, don't let unbelief fill your heart when you hear the word of God.

Believe it, submit to it, and thank God for it. The real truth about salvation is that a mere profession of faith is never something that guarantees that a person is going to heaven.

How many people have prayed a prayer to receive Christ only to turn their back upon Jesus, the church? Some of them have never even been part of a church. You can be baptized and involved in a church, and that still doesn't guarantee that you're a true Christian.

Many professing Christians have committed apostasy. Some have even died in a state of unbelief, not even believing that the gospel is true. And the reason why I mention all that is to remind us that God wants all Christians to persevere, not simply the church leaders, not simply those who are more mature.

Every Christian is called to persevere in the grace of God. It is never done in your own willpower, is it? It is done always in the grace of God.

[23 : 29] But Aquinas said we need grace to receive grace. And once we receive that grace, we always need grace on a daily basis until we make it to the heavenly Canaan.

Several commentators have noted here when we come to verses 16 through 19, how many questions are there? There are six questions. And they're formed in groups of twos.

There's a question and an answering question. There's all a simple point, apparently, to all of this.

In verse 16, Who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt, led by Moses?

Again, the point starting well doesn't mean you will finish well. And the second said in verse 17, And with whom was he provoked for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, rebelled, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

Again, high hopes are not enough to get us into heaven, are they? That isn't what brings us into this perseverance lifestyle in the grace of God. In verse 18, And to whom did he swear that they would never enter his rest?

[24 : 38] But to those who were disobedient. Again, unbelief and disobedience have terrible consequences. The ultimate consequence is eternity in hell. To hear God's word preached.

And I sometimes think that people who hear the preaching of God's word over a period of years in a church, but never respond to it, are worse off than Hitler. They're worse off than a Muslim who never heard the word of God.

Because you are rejecting things that God says. A person who lives in a different country, and they never hear the scriptures read to them, and they die in a state of unbelief.

I think that they are in a different condition than a person who hears the word of God week after week after week, and just chooses to ignore it. That is why it's a dangerous thing to fall into the hands of a living God under those circumstances.

You will be judged far greater with a far, I think, more intense judgment of God. If you hear his voice through the preaching of his word, through someone sharing or reading the Bible, and you just turn your back against it.

[25 : 43] And I think these passages of other people have pointed out, it's showing the descent into apostasy. The first set of questions, unbelief. The second set of questions, disobedience against God's word.

And the third set, it's just apostasy. There is no more hope of return. That is a sobering reality. One of the greatest migration stories in the history of the world.

It basically ends in disaster, doesn't it? It is stalled temporarily until God allows the younger people to grow up, and he brings them, the leadership of Joshua, into the land of promise.

So we have this severe warning reminding us when we hear God's voice, in whatever manner it is spoken today. It could be a church service, it could be a prayer meeting, it could be a vacation, Bible school, a youth meeting, whatever it is.

You're reading the word of God. We must ask God to help us to respond with belief and faith in our hearts. There are terrible consequences. Moses said that, David said that, and the author of Hebrews is telling this to us.

[26 : 50] I am told that Psalm 95 was a weekly call to worship in the synagogue. I don't know if that's true. Maybe they rotated different psalms as they began their synagogue worship.

But as you look at Psalm 95 and look at the call to praise God, and then in that call to worship, the people would have heard on a regular basis, beware if you hear God's voice today, do not harden your hearts.

Imagine if we had to sing that every week together before we worshiped, and together we're all singing, if I hear God's voice today, may I not harden my heart. And you realize God's judgment in hell and eternity is perfectly justifiable, isn't it?

As he describes the dangers of those who reject his word. And yet as we move on, there are both positive and negative things in our text. Verse 7, we already noted, The Holy Spirit is speaking to you today.

He speaks today and says, This is God's word. If you hear it, do not harden your heart. And again, if you're here today, and you've heard the gospel in this church for years, if not weeks, and if you're not responding in faith, you are hardening your heart against God.

[27 : 57] Not just me, not just your elders. You are hardening and rebelling against God. The living God, who came in the face of Jesus Christ.

Remain faithful to God every day of your pilgrimage on earth. Verses 12 through 15. Take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

As it is said today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. The author is not wasting ink as he continues to repeat that phrase. He doesn't want the people that he wrote to, to turn back and away from Jesus Christ.

He wants them to press on in the daily grace that God gives to us, because one day they will behold the glory of the risen Christ. And he calls them to persevere.

[29 : 02] And my understanding of today, today is the day that Adam fell, before Adam fell. The seventh day all the way today. It's all today. And Jesus gives today a new meaning.

But today will stop when Jesus returns. And that will be a today that will be over for those people that have rejected Jesus Christ. And they will go not to today, but to eternal darkness tonight. And we who have followed and believed in Jesus Christ, have been saved by his grace. That day will never end. It is an eternal day. And so for us, we in the grace of God will rejoice throughout eternity.

Perhaps singing Psalm 95, I don't know. But those that don't listen are in for a terrible, dark eternity. And past privileges and blessings do not guarantee future entrance into God's rest.

God's word to Israel in the past is meant to be instructed to us today. And Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 10, doesn't he? We need to not just listen, but listen and obey. And so in verses 12 through 13, guard or protect yourself from the sinful temptation of apostasy.

[30 : 14] What is unbelief? William Lane said, the pastoral concern of the author of Hebrews extends to every individual member of the congregation. His allusions to Numbers 14 are significant because they indicate that unbelief is not a lack of faith or trust.

Unbelief is the refusal to believe God. It leads inevitably to a turning away from God in a deliberate act of rejection. Guard your own heart against the sin of unbelief.

You know that from Proverbs 4.23. And I want to focus first on your own individual responsibility as one who professes faith in Jesus Christ to guard your own heart.

And then we'll talk briefly about our corporate responsibility. Those two can never be divorced, can they? We have responsibilities as individuals before God, and yet we have a responsibility corporately as the body of Christ to persevere together to the end.

What are some ways that you could guard your heart, practically speaking? How can you guard your heart this week and last week? And many of you are guarding your hearts, I believe. You read the scriptures, don't you?

[31 : 26] You regularly take time to study God's word. Ask what God says about everything in his word and study it. Read it. Pray and ask God to help you to understand it.

Confess your sins every day. I can think of sins in my own life to confess every day, not just once a week, not just once a month when you come to the Lord's Supper. Ask God to help you in your walk with him.

When you do partake of the Lord's Supper here, think about it before you come. Take a couple hours before you come to the service and ask God and think about things you've committed, specific sins.

Confess specifically and ask God to give you grace as you come and partake of the supper with his people. That's a wonderful way to remember Jesus.

Again, one commentator pointed out in his own ministry over the years of times when he would hear someone come to church and they heard the gospel and they're all excited about the gospel. They make a profession, they're baptized, they join the church and they're witnessing to everyone, their friends, their family members, co-workers.

[32 : 33] And he tells the story, this one particular man of a man that came into the church, a young man, and he was zealous for the Lord. And then his girlfriend left him. And so he left Jesus.

He left the church, turned his back on God, angry with God, and you wonder, is that illustrating the parable of the soils? Many people will profess Lord, Lord, and yet on that day they will hear the terrible words, I never knew you.

In the Philippines, in Metro Manila, we have a terrible problem of illegal squatters that come and make a little house wherever they want to make it, on the sidewalks and under bridges and all throughout the city there are illegal squatters and it's really hard to get them out of there once they're there.

There are thousands and thousands and thousands of illegal squatters and unbelief is a little bit like that. It wants to enter into your heart and it wants to set up a little hut and then they will continue building another little wall and expand it out and it wants to buy real estate in your house, how in your heart without paying for anything.

Don't show any sympathy or compassion upon unbelief when it enters your heart. Ask God to help you to root it out. Show no compassion for sin when it causes you to doubt the good promises of God.

[33 : 56] Again, John Piper recently wrote a book and he talks about how every minister of the gospel should begin to prepare people especially in America for hard times ahead. I'm not hoping that on anyone but if hard times come here, I hope that we never come back and hear that 20% of

I hope that you will still believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will still come to worship him even if you lose everything. That is something that we could face, isn't it?

Perseverance is also a community project. It is not something that is only individual and that is why we need the church. We need accountability in our lives. I need it in my life from my co-elders and deacons in our church and I've encouraged them to come and you speak to me if there's something wrong in my life.

[35:14] So here in verse 13, there is a corporate responsibility. I'm not convinced of the psychological teaching of codependency but I do believe from a covenant perspective, we are codependent in one another.

There was a story a few months ago when we first arrived to the United States we heard about a snowboarder that went snowboarding in California and he went all alone, he went to a place that we went up by Yuba Gap near Sacramento and he did a nice, must have done a nice jump into the air and then he went head first into a snow drift and couldn't get out and he died there, they found his body later and that's the danger of going on a trip or a pilgrimage or an event all by yourself in a place where there could be danger and that illustrates the need for us to have accountability and fellow pilgrims to help us.

Again, if you're struggling with something today whether you're a man or a woman, young or old, talk to your leaders. I'm sure they're not going to be surprised at whatever you're struggling with. I've seen and heard about all that I can imagine in ministry.

And yet you cannot exhaust that corporate one another in command simply by attending church on a Sunday morning. That's really important. I never like to miss worship unless I'm sick or there is an extreme emergency in our home.

And you are missing out on wonderful things in life. Some of the one another in commands are the best things in life, aren't they? Some of you know about that from your experience. And many of you are doing great at the one anothering within an assembly.

[illegible]

Tell them, I believe in God's word. I believe in Jesus. I'm a sinner. He died for me. I want to be baptized. I want to join this church and participate corporately in persevering with the people of God.

Remember last year the volcano in Iceland that caused disruption around the world. You remember that? Remember the ash that was coming out of that volcano in Iceland? It caused all kinds of flight cancellations throughout Europe and even the world. African flower growers in Kenya, one business was losing a million dollars a day simply because they couldn't export their flowers to Europe and sell them. And there was all kinds of economic damage that took place. And yet unbelievably, the damage that that can cause is for eternity. It isn't simply an economic disruption. It causes eternal damage to a soul created in the image of God. And I think that's why the author of Hebrews and David and Moses were so passionate about telling people when you hear God's word. Don't turn away from it. Embrace it. Believe it with faith in your heart. Verses 14 through 15 hold fast to Jesus Christ until the end. Don't you dare give up. We share in Christ, he says, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. And again, that translation, original confidence is one of several indicators in the book that these people were not being pilgrims progress. They were engaging in pilgrims regress. They had fallen back in their life.

They're not listening to the author of Hebrews who, with great pastoral wisdom and love for these people, doesn't want them or us to commit the same mistakes that the people of Israel made so long ago.

William Lane, I'm paraphrasing him at a point when he says that the writer of Hebrews regarded the first phase of Israel's trek to the wilderness as normative in the life of the people of God of all ages. That means us too. So he tells us that just as they made a journey from Egypt into the land of Canaan, we're supposed to, we also have been called out of something far greater than Egypt. We've been called out of the bondage of sin and death. We have been redeemed, and yet we are still called to press on towards the celestial city, the heavenly city. Let there be no unwillingness in our hearts to engage on pilgrimage in a call to holiness. Holiness, someone said, never goes out of style.

It is something we are called to live day by day, and every day we are called to leave Egypt and leave an exodus in the cost of following Jesus. True sharing in Christ means we must endure to the end.

[45:03] Hebrews repeats, I think, that phrase and that thinking over and over again. Perseverance in your Christian pilgrimage is not optional. It is a mandate. It is a command in Scripture.

Moses knew that. David knew that. And the author of Hebrews understood that. There is no assurance without perseverance. So brothers and sisters, we are called in the grace of God to continue our pilgrimage, continuing to persevere. And may we never be found to have unbelief in our hearts, not unbelief of this kind, that would result in us falling in the wilderness of our life. As we conclude this morning, you may remember about a year ago, I think it was in April, the Polish president was flying in the airplane with all their high-level dignitaries and business leaders, and they crashed, didn't they?

They had a message, there's fog ahead, you shouldn't land there. And I'm not sure if they ever found out why the pilot didn't listen to the instructions, but he wouldn't listen. Some people guess that the Polish president, the Polish president, a stubborn man, wanted his own way all the time, said, you better land this plane. I want to go to where we're going. I don't want to be diverted today. I've got a schedule, whatever it was. They didn't listen. And so all those people died in a plane crash, and the nation went into mourning. As you think about that event that happened, as we apply that to our own lives in closing this morning, you've heard the word of God. This is Hebrews speaking to you. Repeatedly you were told, and I am told, if we hear God's voice, let us not harden our hearts. The pilgrims in that day didn't listen. As Jason began the service this morning, he reminded us that God speaks to us in creation, doesn't he? We saw that we're seeing the blooms and the blossoms come out on the trees. That should cause anyone to say, there is a creator, and they know that, don't they? They believe in God, and yet

God has also spoken to us in his word. He has communicated with us. When Jesus came, the pilgrim of all time, Jesus didn't leave Egypt to enter into the land of Canaan to try to secure it. Jesus left the glories of heaven, and he came on a dangerous journey to earth in the incarnation. That is the greatest pilgrimage that has ever happened in the history of the world, and because Jesus came down and saves us by his grace, we can go up and join and live with him forever. We can share in his risen life, but you have to share in his death. And Jesus, the greatest pilgrim of all, when he came into this world, the Father said, this is my son. Listen to him at his baptism and at his transfiguration.

And the book of Hebrews opens in a brilliant verse, and it says, God has spoken definitively and climactically through his son, Jesus. Jesus is God's final living word. There isn't going to be another word. And we have all we need to understand salvation and faith in Jesus Christ. And then in Hebrews 12, 25, it again says, see that you do not refuse him who is speaking. Jesus lived, died, and rose again.

[48:24] And he is not physically present with us, that what he said still speaks to us today. As we study Hebrews in our worship, God is speaking to you through his word. And the author is telling us, do not refuse him who speaks. And so if you're here today, I don't care what your age is, if you understand that you're a sinner and that you are in need of a savior, your only hope is in Jesus Christ.

I would call you to believe in the name of Jesus Christ today. Call out in faith. Believe that he can save you today if you hear his voice. Do not harden your heart. That means don't you dare walk out that door unless you talk to someone and say, I believe that Jesus has saved me from my sin. Come quickly. Tomorrow may never be today. You come today. Today is the day of salvation. D.L. Moody, remember, preaching years ago, told the people on a Sunday night, go home and think

about what I said. And then came the great Chicago fire. And some of his members died. They were not Christians. They never believed in the gospel. And so he never did that anymore. He called people when he preached, come to faith in Jesus Christ today. And I ask you on behalf of the risen Lord to come today and believe that he alone can save you from your sinfulness. Whatever your age, whether you're male or female, young or old, come today. And if you believe, talk to one of your leaders today.

Tell them that you believe in Jesus Christ. And for we who are already professing faith in Jesus and believe that God has saved us by his rich and divine grace and mercy, may God give us the grace every day to journey through our wilderness and may unbelief never be found in our hearts.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. We pray, Lord, that you would convert lost sinners that are here today that have heard your word, that have heard your word many times.

[50 : 25] Lord, would your Holy Spirit work in their life and bring them to faith in Jesus Christ this morning before they leave today that may they profess faith. Lord, I pray that you would continue to extend your kingdom here in Bremen, build this church, bring people in to profess faith and into your church, into your kingdom. Lord, we're grateful for what you're doing here in this part of your vineyard.

Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for Jesus Christ, the one who came to die for us, the great pilgrim for sinners. And we thank you that that pilgrim is our friend.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.