February 5, 2023

Sermon 7

Hebrews 3:7-19

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I remember when Sarah and I were first starting to have kids. Well, she was having them, I was cheering. I remember Brody and Little, who are such a great resource for us, and how they would talk about how important it was to be consistent in discipline. And when it came time to discipline the kids, and really starting at a very young age, if you say you’re going to do something you have to do it, so that there would be no idle threats. There would be no, “Hey, listen, if you do that one more time I’m taking that away.” Then, they do it one more time and you don’t do it. It’s very important that you keep to your word and that it’s not just an idle threat, but it becomes a warning that, “For your own good, I’m going to hold you accountable.” Because what that creates – our children want to push those boundaries. Why? So that they know that they are there. What that actually does as you hold to that and you hold that boundary in place, is it creates an environment that’s stable. They know what’s acceptable and what’s not. And they know that they can trust your word. If that’s not in place, it creates an environment of chaos. “Sometimes I can do this; sometimes I can’t. Sometimes they are going to react this way; sometimes they are going to react that way” – that creates instability.

What we are going to see is that God is always faithful to His Word and that His warnings are ultimately fatherly. He’s like a good father who puts a warning in place so that you would know the boundary and not go any further. It’s for our own security. He does this in chapter 3.

I’m going to do a little review just by reading. We went through verse 6 last week and I want to read verses 1-6 again, just so it’s fresh in our mind. He says this,

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider (think about) Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. 3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4 (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

Alright, pause. We will pick up there in a second. He’s saying, “Think about Jesus.” He’s the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession, what we confess together as a body of believers, that Jesus is God. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the perfect Savior. All that we saw in chapter 2 – that He’s the Captain or the Champion of our salvation who was made like us so He could suffer with us but in our place would face off against our greatest enemies, Satan and death, and have victory over them, so that His victory could be our victory. We confess it. We believe in His life, and His death, and His resurrection, and our hope is that this isn’t it. This isn’t it but He’s coming back for us. Jesus is the Apostle – He represents God to us perfectly. And He’s our High Priest – He’s able to represent us perfectly before the Father. He’s worthy of glory, more so than even Moses. And if you remember, the point wasn’t to put Moses down and raise Jesus up – his point is where we’re going tonight. Moses was a faithful servant – that was good stuff. He’s a faithful servant. What was he faithful in? He says that primarily what Moses was faithful in was in telling of Christ. He told, he predicted, the coming of Christ, but not just through his words but through his actions.

I’ll ask you, Red Oak, what is Moses most famous for? That’s right, the exodus, right? He led the exodus. He led God’s people out of 400 years of slavery. Remember? Go to the Pharaoh and tell the Pharaoh, “Let my people go!!” Not just “go,” but so that they can go and worship Yahweh. So they can worship the One True God. He raises them up and Moses leads this exodus out of physical chains and physical slavery so that they are now free. But that’s not going to be it. He’s going to lead them through the wilderness, through the desert, to the Promised Land. Do you see what the writer of Hebrews is doing? Moses was faithful. He led this exodus and that preached the Gospel, because Jesus is greater than Moses. He’s greater than Moses because of who He is and He’s greater than Moses because Jesus leads a greater exodus. Because the slavery that He brings us out of isn’t physical chains to a Pharaoh on the Nile; He brings us out of a slavery to sin, and death, and Satan, a slavery of our soul that we could never break free from. And right now, Jesus is leading us through the wilderness of this life, to a promised land, to an eternal rest. Moses is great. God used him in a powerful way. Jesus is greater. Jesus is greater.

He says this,

6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house,…

If you remember from last week, that means that we are His people…if…

 if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

There’s a scary word in there. Do you see it? It should scare us. And we belong to Jesus “if” … we said a prayer and meant it with all of our hearts. Is that what he says? If we walked an aisle and were baptized by immersion. If we went to VBS. If our parents told us we were Christians from a young age. If we went to revival and the preacher said, “If you said that prayer, you don’t have to hope so, maybe so, think so. You can know so.” That’s not what he says – what does he say? It’s scary. Is he putting a condition on our salvation? We belong to Jesus… “if indeed we hold fast to our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” He’s going to say it again in verse 12. Look down.

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you…

This is our warning.

…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 (encourage one another) every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Here it is.

14 For we have come to share in Christ,…

We are partakers in Christ…

… if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

That’s scary. I would say this – it’s meant to be scary. These verses are put in here to shake us, to get our attention. So, questions should be swirling in our minds, theologically. What’s he saying here? Is he saying that if I don’t hold fast that I could fall away from the living God, that I could lose my salvation?

So, at Red Oak, we believe that when a person becomes a Christian that they cannot lose their salvation. We believe what Jesus said, “You are in my Father’s hand. No one is greater than my Father. No one can take you out of His grip.” We believe what Romans 8 teaches. God chose us before the foundation of the world and if He chose us, He’s going to call us, and justify us, and ultimately He will glorify us, and there’s nothing in all of creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We believe that. We love that doctrine. We love the doctrine of eternal security. I love it. I go to those passages often. So, why would he talk this way? Paul would say similar things. He would say, “if you continue.” I think it scares us and it catches us off guard because typically we don’t talk this way. Because, I think for a lot of us that we’ve been taught kind of a shallow version of eternal security, with phrases like, “Once saved always saved.” In fact, I’ll tell you this. Really, the first pastor I ever had, I heard him say, and I remember that it struck me even at the time where I was like, “That just doesn’t sound right,” but he said, “I’m so sure of my salvation that there is nothing I could do to ever lose it.” He said, “I could leave this pulpit from preaching and go sleep with a prostitute and she could go to Hell and I would go to Heaven.” The reason why that didn’t sit right with me is because of this. I didn’t know it then, but the Bible doesn’t teach that. The Bible doesn’t afford you and I, as Christians, that view of our relationship with Jesus. The view of our relationship with Jesus that it gives us is this – you belong to Jesus…if you hold fast to the end. The question isn’t, “Theologically, where does this fit in with my view of eternal security?” The first question is, “How do I take this warning to heart so it’s never true of me? So it’s never true of me that I’m the one who falls away? That I’m the one who turns my back on Jesus?” That’s what the warning is meant to do for us. So, I’m going to leave us in the tension of that moment and we’re going to come back to, “Okay, what does he mean by the ‘if’?” We’re coming back to it. If I start to pray at the end and I haven’t, John, you remind me, “Rob, ease the tension.” But for right now, I’m going to leave the tension there because we’re meant to feel it. In fact, in chapter 4, he’s going to come back and say, “Okay, about this warning, this word of God, this warning is like a sharp sword.” The point of it is that it’s supposed to pierce you, it’s supposed to cut you. You’re supposed to come underneath this warning and allow the warning of Scripture to pierce you to the deepest part of who you are; past bone, past marrow, into your heart, so that the thoughts, the ideas, the imaginations of your heart get exposed before God and you. That’s the purpose – it’s not supposed to be comfortable. Are you uncomfortable? I can keep going. No, we’re uncomfortable. Alright, so I’m going to leave that tension hanging and come back to it.

He says this,

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,…

The first thing I want to notice there is this. He’s going to quote Psalm 95. We read the whole thing and he’s going to quote part of it. He attributes it to the Holy Spirit, so that God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, already in the book of Hebrews, are all seen as the Author of Scripture. But he also talks about it in the present tense. Do you see that?

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today,…

The Holy Spirit is speaking this warning to us tonight, February 5, 2023. Today – if you’re listening to this on podcast, just whatever day it is for you, you can look at your calendar and then – today. He speaks to us today and He’s going to use this negative example from Israel’s past to warn us about our present. Psalm 95 becomes for us this portal that we’re going to be able to walk through, and put our feet down in the sand, and walk alongside the Israelites, as they have had a Gospel preached to them. In the next chapter, he’s going to say they had good news – this generation of Israelites – they had good news preached to them just like we have. Their good news was, “You are coming out of Egypt through the Exodus and you’re going into the Promised Land. I’m going to give you your own land. You’re going to have your own kings. I’m going to provide for you a land flowing with milk and honey.” They had a promise; they had good news just like we do. So, we’re going to walk through and see why He is using them to warn us.

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.’”

So, David is writing the Psalm and what he’s remembering… Remember when we read that Psalm all together, at the beginning of it, it’s awesome. It’s just worship and praise to God for who He is, and then he goes into this warning, “Hey, today, if you hear His voice…” Through His Word, if God is speaking to you, don’t harden your heart as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness. What’s he talking about?

If you remember in the Old Testament, in the exodus story, God brings them out of slavery. Remember? God brought the plagues upon Egypt one-by-one and the last was the worst, the death of the firstborn son. He brings them out and they had some kind of faith. The people had some kind of faith. They took the blood of the lamb and they put it on the doorway, and they packed all their bags, and they left behind the only life they had ever known. And they leave Egypt and they go out into the wilderness. Do you remember how God begins to lead them? How does He lead them by day? A pillar of cloud. And by night? A pillar of fire. Do you know what that is? Awesome. For real, don’t Veggie Tale this. These jokers saw with their eyes – Egyptians are weeping and wailing in the background and God begins to lead them through the night with a pillar of fire. It’s awesome.

 Along the way, they come up to the Red Sea. Remember? Pharaoh decides he wants his slaves back and he sends the most powerful army on the planet at that time after them, in their chariots, with their swords, trained soldiers against people who all they have ever known is slavery. And Moses lifts his staff over the water, and a strong eastern wind comes through and blows the ocean, and it splits in two, and they pass through the ocean on dry ground. And when Pharaoh and his troops try to follow, God closes the ocean and in one millisecond takes out the most powerful empire on the planet at the time, and they’ve never been the same.

They’re free. And He’s leading them, and guiding them, and giving them these promises. Remember, they get hungry, so what does God give them? Manna, magic bread from Heaven every morning. All they had to do was gather it and there were all these different ways that they would prepare it. And it was kind of like a sweet cake. I’m in. Some of you, this would drive you crazy. It did them. They were eating the same thing all the time. I am simple. I like to eat different stuff, but also, if you told me every morning there would be Burger Basket outside my tent, I’m shipshape. I eat popcorn almost every night. It’s true. It makes me happy. They had magic bread every day. God is providing for them in the wilderness.

Do you remember that one time – and this is what he’s pointing back to at the beginning of this quotation. He says, “The day of testing in the wilderness,” and it’s this day. It’s the day that they didn’t have any water to drink. They had no water to drink. They’ve seen the pillar of cloud, and they’ve seen the pillar of fire, they’ve eaten the manna, they saw Egypt destroyed, they saw the plagues come on Egypt and destroyed all the false gods that they worshipped. God just wipes the floor with them through the plagues. He shows that they’re not gods at all. They are deaf, dumb idols. But now they don’t have water, and they complain, and they grumble, and they say things like this, “Did you bring us into the wilderness just to die?! Our kids are going to die. Why are we out here?” So, Moses prays to God and God tells Moses, “Take the staff and strike the rock and water will come out.” And it does, and the people drink, and they live. But God says this. He says, “Their rebellion is that they keep putting me to the test. They don’t believe my word.” Meribah and Massah – rebellion and testing. And what happens is that at that moment, although they’ve seen God’s provision, they’ve had His protection, they have His word, they have the good news, they have their gospel – at the end of the day, what they demonstrate is that they don’t trust God. And it becomes characteristic of their time in the wilderness and this pattern repeats over, and over, and over, and over again, until it comes to a head.

One of the most mindblowing moments to me in this pattern is from Numbers 11:4-6. Right before this, God has just killed some of the Israelites for complaining. He sends a fire and consumes some of the Jews because they’re complaining, then this happens:

Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said,…

Now, listen.

“Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

“This manna.” - Mind blown. Say what? For real? “The fish that cost us nothing in Egypt. Nothing, except they would take our children and throw them in the Nile. Our men were just living to serve other men, living to die. Just work to die; that’s your only purpose. Our women were being taken advantage of in every possible way. It cost us nothing. We would rather have the temporary pleasure of melon, and leeks, and slavery rather than the manna that God provides and freedom in the wilderness.” Is that crazy? Is that crazy? Do you feel like you’re being set up? You are. Yeah, it’s crazy. I would rather go back into bondage so I can have a leek, whatever in the world a leek is, rather than God’s promise, His provision, His presence. What are they doing? They are headed toward the Promised Land and they are looking back over their shoulder at the temporary pleasures that they experienced while slaves. And it all comes to a head.

Remember that God sends the spies into the land for forty days. The spies go into the Promised Land, Canaan, and in this passage and the next chapter it’s referred to as their rest. They are going to rest from wandering and enter into God’s promise. And they go in and it’s just beautiful. It’s a land flowing with milk and honey. I always picture Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory right here, like with the chocolate river coming down. There’s a bush with bacon hanging off of it. It’s just awesome. It’s a land flowing with milk and honey. They cut down a cluster of grapes that was so big that it took two men to carry it. It’s perfect, it’s awesome. The land the Lord has given us is amazing. 12 spies go in, two of which are Caleb and Joshua. The other ten spies come back and they say, “Man, it’s awesome. But it doesn’t matter. We can’t have it. The people there are ginormous. They’re huge. They’re warriors and they look like giants. We’re like grasshoppers compared to them. It don’t matter; we’re stuck out here in the desert. And Caleb and Joshua literally tear their clothes and are like, “Don’t do this! Don’t do this right now! Don’t disobey God! Take Him at His word! God has promised to give us this land – who cares who’s living in there. Yahweh is with us!” And they say, “No, we can’t have it,” and the people are ready to stone Moses and Aaron and raise up a new leader who will take them back to Egypt. It’s this moment that God says, “Today is over.” What today? The today that he’s saying we live in right now. The today when we can apprehend God’s grace, hear His warning, and respond in faith. For them, that day ended. It was a new day – it was the day of the Lord – and they experienced His wrath. And God makes an oath and He says, “You will not enter my rest. You will not enter the Promised Land.” He’s actually fixing to destroy them but Moses, as a mediator, goes before God on behalf of the people and then God says, “Okay, I’m not going to annihilate them, but everyone who was 20 years old and up when you left Egypt, who have seen all my works, who have seen my miracles, who’ve experience the promise, who have tasted the goodness of my provision, and who have seen with their eyes the salvation I’m providing – all those people who saw that and yet rebelled, they’re not coming into the Promised Land.” And they died in the wilderness. They walked around for 40 years and they died in the wilderness. Then, the very children that they said, “You brought us out here so our children would die in the wilderness,” – those children got to experience the rest of the Lord.

So, why would he tell us that story right here? Why does he want us to hear that story? Verse 12,

12 Take care, brothers,…

Who’s he talking to? The Church, believers, us.

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,…

Throughout this letter, especially right here, he keeps equating disobedience with unbelief. Disobedience with unbelief. And he will equate obedience with real, saving faith – the kind of faith that Jesus authors. Real faith looks like obedience. Unbelief looks like disobedience. So, he’s saying, “Examine yourself.” To us, today, February 5, 2023, 6:17pm. “Examine yourself, church. Examine yourself, Red Oak. To see if there’s in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, causing you to fall away from the living God.” And that phrase, “fall away,” is where we get the term apostasy. That you would walk away from 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.

So, why would he tell us that story? Paul tells us, “Listen, everything that happened to Israel happened for our instruction.” He’s saying that the people who were following Moses to the Promised Land, to the promised rest, they didn’t get to enter because of unbelief. And Moses was faithful. Jesus is greater than Moses. His faithfulness is greater. The exodus, the salvation that He is leading, is greater. The eternal rest that He’s bringing us into is greater than the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. So, he’s saying to us, “Examine yourself that you’re not like them. Although you’ve seen the goodness of the Lord, although you’ve tasted how good His provision for us is, don’t taste and experience these things and then fall away.

I want to say here that the warnings in Hebrews are already starting to intensify and they are going to get more intense. Chapter 2 paints this picture of drifting at sea, a ship that’s missed its point of anchor, and it’s on the way to crash on the rocks. He’s saying, “Don’t drift. Pay closer attention to what you’ve heard lest you drift away.” And now he’s saying, “Examine your heart and see if there’s unbelief there so that you don’t fall away and commit apostasy. Now, in English “fall away” sounds like of passive but it’s really not. And I encourage you to go back – I’m not going to do it for time’s sake – but I encourage you to go back and read this from Exodus 17 and Number 11-14, where the Israelites are falling away from the Lord, where they’re committing apostasy, because what the Lord says about them is, “They despise me. They have not believed my word. They despise me. They rejected me. They rebelled against me. So, I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

I think sometimes, what believers will do with these warnings is that they will only allow the warning to take them halfway, which is kind of where we’re at, that uncomfortable place. And they will think, “That’s me! I don’t believe well enough. My hold on the Gospel is not strong enough. My grip isn’t going to keep me to the end. I’ve already messed up. I’ve already sinned. As a believer, I’ve sinned. I’ve committed apostasy. My faith isn’t real.” And if you’re not careful, if you only come underneath these warnings and jump out right here, you’ll miss the intended purpose of the warning, and that’ll create doubt and instability, and that’s not the purpose of the warning. We’ve got to stay underneath it and come out the other side. What the Bible is going to tell us, what the writer of Hebrews is going to tell us, is that your faith will be stronger, your convictions will be stronger, your assurance that you belong to Jesus will be stronger, as you come through this warning.

It’s not meant to cause doubt and instability, because what it’s ultimately going to expose is – yes, it’s painful and it’s uncomfortable – but what these people were doing was this. To put it into terms like today, what he was saying was what were they doing? They were looking over their shoulder at the fleeting pleasures of food and saying, “I’ll go back to slavery.” What would that be like for us? The deception of sin. As a believer, are there times, as a believer, when I have the provision of the Lord, His presence – even more so, cooler than a pillar of fire – I’d like to see it but even cooler than that , more powerful than that – is that the Holy Spirit lives in me. It’s better. That’s a better deal. I have His Word. Manna would have been cool to try but we have the very words of God, to sustain us through this wilderness. But as a believer with these gifts and a promise of an eternal rest, are there times that I look over my shoulder and think, “Oh, but if I could just touch that again”? “If I could just experience that one more time.” “If could just pursue that thing that the Lord’s told me I’m not allowed to pursue.” “If I could do with my body what I want to do with my body right now.” Are there those times? Yeah. But for the believer, for the believer, we hear this warning, God speaks this warning, and we repent. We put our eyes back on Jesus. For the person who commits apostasy, this is the person who ultimately stands up and says, “I don’t want it. I don’t want Jesus. I don’t want the rest. I don’t want His Word. I don’t want to hear it. I know that it’s true but I don’t want it. I know this is what He’s calling me to but I’m walking away from it.” They willfully reject the Word of the Lord. They willfully despise God in His provision. That’s terrifying and there are those who do that, and what they demonstrate is that they were never truly one of us. Because what he says is this, “And you are God’s house, if indeed you hold fast your confidence and your boasting in your hope, firm to the end.” And he’s not telling us how to be saved. He’s not saying, “And this is how you ultimately are saved. Just hold firm to the end.” No. What he’s saying is that this is what demonstrates that you are saved.

 Today,…today,…Red Oak…today do you hear His voice? Is He speaking to you through His Word and are you persevering? Today? Look at what he says again. It says,

We have come to share in Christ.

That is something that has already happened. It’s past tense. If indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. Something that’s true of us in the future. Holding fast to the end shows – it is the evidence that we have come to share in Christ. It proves that we are His house, we are His people. The implication is that if I don’t hold fast the assurance of our confidence, then I never was a partaker in Christ. Holding firm is the opposite of falling away. Holding firm is trusting and obeying God. Holding firm to the end, persevering, demonstrates that you belong to Jesus. Remember how I said that warning is supposed to pierce us to the deepest part of who we are? Past our sin, past our self-righteousness, past our doubt and insecurities, down to the core of who we are, and it reveals what’s really there? And for the believer, what these warnings do is they reveal that what’s there is a faith that Jesus has authored; and if He authored it, He will perfect it. In an unbeliever, what it will do is reveal that I have a faith that has no root, that can’t sustain itself. And in either case, that is a good place to be, because if you’re an unbeliever and these warnings reveal to you, “Yeah, I don’t want the things of the Lord. I don’t care what He has to say. I know that somewhere in my mind and at one time, I would have said, “Yes, I believe that,” but I don’t want it. You need that exposed because today, if you hear His voice you can apprehend His grace, you can receive His mercy, you can repent, and look to Jesus, and put your faith and trust in the perfect work of Jesus. And if you’re a believer, even though it’s painful, and it cuts deep, you realize, “There are so many times I’ve messed up. There are so many times that, just like the children of Israel, I looked over my shoulder and I desired the sinful, fleeting, deceptive pleasures of sin over against God’s Word.” What Jesus keeps doing, what He keeps doing, is He keeps persevering in me, because He won’t let go.

We’re going to cheat and jump ahead to chapter 12. Listen to how he says it here.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely,…

He knows us. He knows our frame.

…and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance…(with perseverance)… the race that is set before us,…

Here it is.

…2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Remember, we are hanging there in tension. Is it my grip on the Gospel that saves me? No. It’s not about our faithfulness. Jesus was faithful. Jesus was faithful, and as we look to Him, He strengthens our faith. Do you see it? Looking to Jesus, considering Jesus – therefore don’t grow weary. And sometimes it may feel like it – as you go through the trials and temptations of this wilderness – it may feel like you’re hanging on by your fingernails, but what you can know is that Jesus is strengthening your fingernails, and you will not let go. Because He’s the source of your faith, because He’s the Author of your faith, and He’s perfecting that faith, and Jesus does not fail. He does not fail. He’s already accomplished it. He already suffered for sinners. He endured the cross, despised its shame, and He rose up again in victory, and He sits enthroned right now in Heaven, and He prays for you. What does He pray? That you would persevere, that you would hang on, that you would endure faithfully to the end. And by His grace you will.

What these warnings do is they keep us looking back to Jesus. How do we hold firm? He told us at the beginning of chapter 3. Consider Jesus. Think about Jesus. Constantly drawing our attention back to the person and work of Jesus, and that strengthens our faith, and we don’t fall away. Warning passages are part of the means by which God keeps us, by which He is preserving us in the faith. We are meant to hear the warning, come under its harsh gaze, and allow it to penetrate into our core, and expose all that’s there, because ultimately what’s there for the believer is Jesus, the faith that He authors.

So, back to chapter 3.

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?

He walks through it and says it’s the people who had heard their good news.

There’s one more thing I want to point out and it’s this. He told us to consider Jesus, he told us to examine ourselves, but there’s a third thing, right? Consider Jesus, consider your own heart, and consider one another. Do you see it? Verse 13,

13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,”…

What’s he saying? He’s saying that our perseverance is a community effort. That we not only have responsibility in our own life to examine ourselves, look to Jesus, but to examine one another in brotherly love and point one another to Jesus, as often as we have opportunity. I’ll say this – I’m so thankful to be a part of this church. I’m one of your pastors but I’m part of this church, and for however long Red Oak has been a thing, and before that whatever we were before that, God has used this group of people, and as it’s grown, to help me persevere. It’s real. We’ve done this for one another. Every time you share testimony, and you share prayer requests, and you talk about what the Lord is teaching you and what He’s doing in your life, we are pointing one another to Christ and we are helping each other persevere. Every time somebody has called me out for sin in my life, an attitude I had, something I said that I shouldn’t have said, every time someone has asked me how my marriage is doing and how my kids are – all of that is pushing me towards Christ and I’m thankful to be a part of a church where this is a reality. We need to be strategic and intentional in doing this for one another. I’m thankful to be a part of a church where if I were to start to walk away from the Lord, there are people in this church that would call me back. We have that responsibility in one another’s lives and we see that play out.

So, again, I’ll end with this. The Lord may have brought you in here tonight primarily so that you would hear this message, so that you would realize that you’re the person who’s been walking away from a faith you once claimed and you never really believed it. That your rebellion against the Lord and your disobedience is just evidence that you never truly trusted Christ. To you, I would say, “That is God’s grace. It is His kindness that He would show you that. So respond in repentance and faith tonight.” As a believer, we just continue to look to Jesus, intentionally day-in-and-day-out fixing our eyes on Jesus, and He’ll keep us.

Let’s pray.

Lord, we love you. I thank you for your Word and I thank you for your Church. I pray that you will allow us to worship you now in spirit and truth. I do pray that if somebody is wrestling with their relationship with you and their understanding of the Gospel, if they’ve been walking away from you, I pray that you would call them back and that in your kindness you would lead them to repentance, and that you would author their faith, and that you would rescue them for your glory. I pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.