

Hearing God

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's judgment and the consequences of suppressing the truth, highlighting the pattern of God revealing Himself to us, our rejection or suppression of that revelation, and the resulting spiritual blindness.

Duration: 47:21

Scripture: Romans 1:18, 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, Hebrews 3:15, Hebrews 4:7

Topics: "Hearing God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of interpreting and applying parables or illustrations in order to derive spiritual value from them. He mentions using five to ten different illustrations in his teachings, taken from various aspects of life. The preacher also highlights the repeated message in Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7, urging listeners to not harden their hearts and to hear God's voice. The sermon references the story of Samuel, where the word of God was scarce, but Samuel listened and became a vessel for God's message. The preacher warns against picking and choosing what aspects of preaching to follow based on personal preferences, as this can lead to turning away from the truth and being drawn towards fables.

Transcript

Let's turn to Romans chapter 1, and I'm going to break the series on the book of Corinthians this morning. I know that it breaks into the flow, but I really want to share this with you. I think that we have spoken on the subject before, and yet I felt the need to go here again.

And we're going to begin in Romans chapter 1, and really the subject is to answer a question that came up in Sunday school last week, and that is, how do the Pharisees not understand? How did they not see who Jesus was? And the answer really is a very important one, because it affects every one of us, because we need to learn from them. We need to learn from their mistakes, lest we find ourselves, as Paul says in Corinthians, fall after the same example of unbelief. And so there is a spiritual principle that I'm going to share with you this morning, which if this is the first time you hear this, you may find a little disturbing.

And yet it's a very, very important principle that we need to understand from the Word of God, and it's an absolutely critical truth for us to understand. So let's read from Romans chapter 1 and verse 18, and I'm going to be going to quite a few different scriptures this morning, so keep your Bibles ready. Romans chapter 1 verse 18, And when they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but

became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness and the lust of their hearts to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions, for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burnt in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness.

They are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them. And so Paul begins this book, after having said, done the greetings, he now begins his message to the Romans, which is one of the most important books in the New Testament, because of the volume of teaching that it contains. And he begins this all by saying that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of man.

Now, we need to pay attention to what Paul is saying, and not just make assumptions about what he is saying. Because when you read the chapter, you'll find a lot of the chapter has to do with all sorts of sins, homosexuality, and all sorts of other stuff. And so we say, well, you know, we assume that that's what God is wrathful about.

That is what God is angry about. But the context is very, or the verse is very clear. It does not say that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men who sin perpetually.

That's not what it says. But the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men who hold the truth, or suppress the truth, in unrighteousness. And then it comes to all the sins.

And so the sins really are a consequence of men suppressing the truth, and are part of God's judgment. And so the whole thing really begins with this verse, suppressing the truth. What does it mean to suppress the truth? The old King James doesn't do it justice when it says who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

But the old King James does illuminate some of that truth because it speaks about people who hold it. They have it. But really the word should be hold it down.

They suppress it. They have the truth. And you'll see that right through the chapter, then the rest of the chapter, Paul goes through all the different ways in which God reveals himself.

He reveals himself in creation. He reveals himself in conscience. He reveals himself through his word.

He reveals himself through his son. And so God reveals himself, men have the truth. But instead of obeying the truth, they suppress it.

They hold it under. And so we know what it means to suppress something. We have feelings that we feel are inappropriate, and so we suppress them.

We push them down, and we don't allow them to come into our minds, and to begin to have an effect on us. And that's the problem. That's what people do with the truth.

And Jesus is, Paul in speaking here, has I think a whole, he's making a general statement. But it specifically applies to Adam and Eve. It specifically applies to Israel, because the context, you'll see the next chapter, he really brings this home down to Israel.

But he also has this, applies this to all people of all time. And so the danger then is that we get the truth, we have the truth. Whether it is from the Old Testament, whether it's from the New Testament, whether it's from creation or from conscience, we have the truth.

But what we do is we suppress that truth. Because it is inconvenient. Because it asks me to change.

Because it asks me to worship someone else other than myself. And for all sorts of other reasons, we don't like the truth. And so we suppress it.

Now that may be true of the whole truth, or it may be true of a part of the truth. And so there may be aspects of the truth that we like, but there may be other aspects of the truth we don't like. And so we suppress those aspects of the truth.

Now the point that he then makes in this chapter is that there is a consequence to that suppression. So when God speaks to me through His Word, and I suppress that, there is a consequence. And the consequence is this, that God sends me blindness.

And here's my whole message. I spoke to you this morning about the fact that that we have a central message. We have a single message.

Every time we preach the Word of God. And the whole message I'm going to give you this morning, and if you're going to fall asleep, then just remember this part. And that is that if we reject the truth, God will blind us.

And you say, well is that possible? Will God really do that? Well that's the point that I'm going to prove this morning, because I know that many people disagree with me, because they don't like the idea. They don't like the idea that God, who is supposed to be a gracious God, a loving God, can actually blind people, so that they don't see the truth. But let's examine the facts.

And so in this chapter, you'll find that He says, what may be known of God, verse 19, is manifest in them, in their hearts, in their conscience, in their minds, for God has shown it to them. Verse 20, for since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things, so that they are without excuse. So He's saying, nobody has an excuse.

Verse 21, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him, nor were they thankful, and they became futile in their thoughts. So having rejected the revelation of God, they become futile in their thoughts. Now the word futile means empty, doesn't go anywhere, just goes around in circles.

I'm sure we've met people like that. Their thoughts don't lead to anything, they can't come to any kind of rational conclusion about life. Their thinking just revolves around me and I, really.

And He says, that's what they became. Now how did they become that? Was that just something that happened, or was it something that God actively did in them? Now I don't want to analyze the whole chapter here, and we did the tape or the CD on that many years ago, and you can get that from Leo if you want. But let's go down to verse 26.

For this reason, God gave them up. Now remember that phrase, it's three times here, and we're going to see it again in Psalm 81. God gave them up to vile passions.

But then verse 28, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. What does it mean to retain something? To keep it.

So you can either keep things, or you can reject them. And so He says, God gave them revelation. God showed Himself to them.

But they did not want to keep that, they rejected it, because it was not convenient. So because they did not retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, or a reprobate mind. Can you see, and we're going to pick this pattern up right through the rest of Scripture.

God reveals Himself, number one. Number two, they reject or suppress that revelation, number two. And God then gives them over to a reprobate mind, so that they don't understand anything.

And so you can go through the rest of that chapter, and you can analyze that, and you'll find that that really is the message. It gives us many ways in which people suppress the truth, many different ways in which people reject the truth, and then in many different aspects of God, blinding them. Now let's go to Psalm 81.

And remember, this is David, right early in the history of Israel, the second king of Israel. Sorry, this is not David, this is Asaph. But it's still very early in the history of Israel, Psalm 81 and verse 11.

But my people would not heed my voice, and Israel would have none of me. Does that sound familiar to what Paul said in Romans chapter 1? Israel would not hear my voice, they would have none of me. Now verse 12.

So I gave them over. Now remember, three times in Romans, Paul says God either gave them over, or God gave them up. God gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels.

In other words, God spoke to them, they would not receive God. God gave them up, so that they would follow their own advice. Now obviously, this is a very kind way of saying to follow their own stupidity, because man's ways are foolish by definition.

God has wisdom, and when God's wisdom is withdrawn, when I no longer have God's wisdom, well then I'm really blinded. I'm really not seeing and understanding anything. Verse 13.

Oh that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways. I would soon subdue her enemies, and turn my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to him, and so on.

He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock. I would have satisfied you. So he's saying, if you'd just listen to me, I would have blessed you.

Bottom line. But you did not want to listen to me, and so I've given you over to follow your own stubborn heart. Now if we go to Isaiah chapter 61.

Sorry, Isaiah chapter 6. And this is a famous chapter where Isaiah says, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. And Isaiah has this revelation, and God says, of God, and his glory, and his holiness. And God says, who will I send, and who will go for us? And Isaiah says, here am I. Send me.

And so God touches his lips with the coal from off the altar, and God says, go. And Isaiah is now commissioned. But what is Isaiah commissioned to preach? And this is very, very important.

What is Isaiah's message? Is Isaiah's message, God is good, and God is going to bless Israel? No. Isaiah's message is, God is done with you, Israel. Now if we go then to verse 8, the end of verse 8. Then I said, here am I. Send me.

Verse 9. He said, go and tell this people. Here's the message. Here's the heart of Isaiah's message.

Now remember we spoke about getting the overall message, getting the principle, getting the bottom line out of the message. What is the bottom line of all of Isaiah's 66 chapters? It's based on this. It comes down to this message.

Verse 9. Go and tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return, and be healed.

And then I said, Lord, how long? And he answered, until the cities are laid waste, and without habitation, and houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate. The Lord has removed men far away to forsaken places, and so on. So what's Isaiah's message? You're going to hear, but you're not going to understand.

You're going to see, but you won't get it. You won't perceive, because you have made the heart of this people dull. This is God's judgment against Israel.

Now to answer the question, then why did the Pharisees not understand? If they had all the scriptures, how could they not understand? Because God had blinded them. Because God had blinded them, because they rejected the revelation that they had in the first place. You say, well, is that really true? Well, let's go to the book of Matthew.

And in Matthew chapter 13, and it's interesting, because this is quoted in every one of the four Gospels. And in Matthew chapter 13, I think it's important to understand the context. What's happening here, is Jesus is telling parables.

He tells the parable of the sower, who goes out to sow seed, and some seed falls on good ground, some falls on bad ground. And then his disciples come to him, and they say to him, well, why are you speaking to them in parables? Why are you just telling them stories? Because remember, Jesus does not give the interpretation. And a parable without an interpretation is meaningless.

I use parables all the time, or illustrations we call them today. I will illustrate certain truths by things of life, things that I see, things that happen around us. But if we just use that illustration without an explanation, without a spiritual application to the illustration, it doesn't have any value.

In any one of my 45-minute teachings, you will find anywhere between five and ten, I don't know, I've never counted, five and ten different illustrations, just from life, just from things that I see and observe. Now if Leo then had to take the tape of any one of those messages, and cut out all the stories, all the examples that I use, from life, from the news, from politics, from history, from whatever, and he just took all of the stories, and he put them on one CD, and you take the CD and you listen to it. Does that have any spiritual benefit whatsoever? Just the stories, just the illustration? No, it has no value.

The value of the illustrations, the value of the parables of the stories, lies in the interpretation. What does it mean in the light of the Scriptures? The stories in themselves are meaningless, they are just stories, that's all they are, they are parables. And Jesus just tells them the parables, He just gives them the stories, but He doesn't give them the meaning.

And without understanding, without even a key to unlock the parable, without being able to interpret the parable, it is absolutely meaningless. And so they say to Jesus, why do you tell them all these stories? And what is Jesus' answer? Jesus' answer is, it's a waste of time to explain anything to them. I mean that's really the bottom line.

So let's go to Matthew chapter 13 and verse 14. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, hearing you will hear and shall not understand, seeing you will see and not perceive, for the heart of this people have grown dull, and the ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand were their hearts in turn, so that I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.

And so Jesus is at the bottom, and then Jesus gives the interpretation, He gives the disciples the interpretation to the parable. He doesn't give it to the Pharisees. Why? Because He says they won't see, they won't get it anyway.

And so four times in each one of the Gospels, Jesus applies Isaiah to the Pharisees, applies it to the leaders of Israel, and He says they can't see even if they want to see, because they have been blinded. Now when did this happen? We can say, well maybe it happened when Isaiah was preaching. No, actually it happened even further back than that, and so go with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Now I want you to notice that some of the scriptures I've given you are from the Old Testament, but some of them are from the New Testament, and I have encountered they roughly, in fact they're more from the New Testament than they are from the Old Testament.

And so this is not just an Old Testament principle, this is a New Testament principle as well. So 2 Corinthians I'm a little confused, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, and we know the passage because it speaks about the Spirit and the letter, and we get caught up in that, and yet he is comparing the Old Testament to the New, he's comparing the Lord to the New Testament in Christ. But then I want us to go down to verse 13, verse 12.

Therefore since we have such hope we use great boldness or plainness of speech, unlike Moses who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded, for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because that veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. There's the whole thing, that's exactly how it happens. And so Paul is explaining this in pretty minute detail.

You remember what he's referring to, Moses came down from the mountain having spent time in the presence of God, actually 80 days, 40 days, and he came down and then he goes back another 40 days, and he comes down and his face shines reflecting, radiating the glory of God. Now remember what had happened. God wanted to speak to Israel directly to begin with, Exodus chapter 19 and Exodus chapter 20.

And so God begins to speak to Israel, he speaks the ten words of the Ten Commandments. Israel's response is, we don't want God to speak to us. God is too awesome, he is too fearsome, we can't have God speak to us.

Moses you go and ask God what he wants to say, and then you come and tell us, and we will obey. So it begins with Israel rejecting God's desire to speak to them. And they said what we need is, we need a watered-down version of what God has to say.

We need Moses to take what God says and put it in a shape and a form that is more easily palatable, easily absorbable for us. But God, we can't have him speak to us, he's too awesome. And that's where the problem began.

So God wanted to speak to them, and they said no, God you speak through Moses, because we don't understand you, we think that you're fearsome, we understand Moses. That's where the problem began. So God reveals himself to us, and he wants to reveal himself to us personally, directly through his word, and our response is, no, this is too much hard work.

We'll pay the preacher, the preacher can go and ask God, and then he can come and tell us what God has to say. Now preachers have a job, we understand that, we see that clearly from both Testaments, but at the same time, when God wants to speak to you personally, do you say, Lord here am I, speak, your servant is listening. Remember that was Samuel.

Eli, who should have been the man who understood the voice of God, who was the high priest at that time, Samuel goes to Eli and he says, you called me, because Samuel was a boy, he didn't understand the voice of God. But Eli doesn't understand the voice of God, and three times God calls Samuel, and three times Samuel goes to Eli, and every time Eli says, I didn't call you, Eli doesn't even recognize that this could be God, until the final time. And then Samuel, the fourth time God calls, and Samuel says, Lord, here am I. And so as Samuel opens himself to the Lord, the Lord begins to speak to him.

Now remember, that whole story about Samuel begins with these terribly scary words. It says that the Word of God was scarce in those days, and there was no open revelation. In other words, God was no longer speaking to Israel.

This was one of the times that God had ceased to speak to Israel, and then God begins to find Samuel, and Samuel listens, and God speaks to Samuel, and God speaks through Samuel. As a result of that, really one man only, David, hears the voice of God, through Samuel, and David is a man after God's own heart. But most of Israel didn't hear what God was saying.

This was not the only time that God was silent. There were many periods in the history of Israel that God was silent, and specifically the period between the Old and the New Testament, a period of 400 years,

God did not speak at all, because he had done speaking. And then he begins to speak through John the Baptist, and through Jesus.

So it begins then with them rejecting God wanting to speak to them directly. So then Moses goes up. Moses comes down with the law, and in between they break the law, and there's the celebration around the golden calf, and the worship of the golden calf, and all of that.

And then at the end of all of that, Moses comes down, reflects the glory of God. Now remember, God was revealing himself. The thunder, and the lightning, and the earthquake was a revelation of God's glory, of God's power, and they didn't want that.

So they said, Moses you come and tell us. So Moses comes down, and what does Moses do? He reflects the glory of God. He does not have the glory of God.

He is like the moon. The sun is the full expression of the glory of the sun, but the moon simply reflects that glory. And Moses just reflects the glory of God, and it shines off his face.

And what does Israel do? They say we can't have this either. We can't have God speak to us directly, and we cannot have God's even reveal himself through Moses, because that's too much. And so they said to Moses, you put a veil on your face, and the purpose of the veil was to filter out the glory of God.

I assume that Moses could still see, if you look at the burqas that the woman in the Middle East wear, you know those veils that they cover themselves with, over their eyes there is a latticework. It's like a lace, and so you can see through, but you can't see in. And so Moses says the glory must still have been able to shine through there, but it was filtered out.

It was watered down. And that's exactly what we do, and that's the warning for us in the New Testament. We don't say, God we don't want you to speak.

We'll never do that. But what we do do is we say, God we need to filter what you're saying, because what you say is a little bit hard. What you require of us is maybe too much.

And so we filter it out, and we put into our own minds filters, so that when we read the Word of God, we filter out the bits that we don't like, and we receive the bits that we do like. Like a certain well-known man who took a Bible and literally took a razor blade to it, and he cut out all the bits that he didn't like, and he published the Bible. You can go and buy that Bible today.

It's called the Jefferson Bible, and he cut out with a razor blade literally all the bits he doesn't like. But we do exactly the same. You say, well we don't do it.

Well from my perspective, we do. Because while I'm preaching, I can watch the filters come down. The moment I get into an area which people are uncomfortable with, or that becomes a little bit personal, the filters, the veil comes down.

And I know. Some people are not hearing a single word I'm saying. Not because they don't understand my English, but they don't want to hear what I have to say.

In fact, that's the dangerous thing. We say, well you know, I'm receiving all of the rest of the Word of God, but these areas I'm not prepared to receive, because they conflict with my culture, they conflict with my point of view, with my philosophy, with whatever. They make demands on me that I'm not prepared to

make.

They require of me to give up certain things. They require of me to do certain things, and I'm not prepared to go there, and so I don't even want to hear it. Now folks, we do this all the time with one another.

We do it with the television. We live in a world in which we are bombarded with information all the time, and we're constantly developed the skills to filter out the stuff that we don't want to hear. I watch a lot of news, but while I'm watching news, I'm reading.

Now it doesn't mean that I can multitask. I can't. But I hear certain words on the TV, and then I'll drop my book or whatever I'm reading, and I'll listen to that part.

I won't hear the rest of it, but I'll hear that part. If you ask me about the weather for the valley, I can tell you what the weather is going to be like for the valley, but don't ask me about the Inland Empire, and LA, and the coastal regions, and everywhere else, because I didn't hear that part, because it's not interesting or important to me. So we develop these skills, but we bring these skills into the church, and we begin to filter out the bits that we don't like.

Now where this thing began with me, and I'm not going to tell you all the stories, but I can tell you many stories of very powerful events in my life, of people that I knew who loved God, who knew His Word, who were well educated in the Word, very spiritual people, who turned away from the truth, and began to believe all sorts of nonsense, and the question is how did they get there? This is how they got there, because we filter the truth. But here's the problem. We cannot veil God's glory.

We cannot silence God. We don't have that kind of power, and yet that's what they try to do. They try to silence God when He spoke through Moses.

They try to silence God when He revealed, when He spoke from the mountain. They try to silence Him when He tried to reveal Himself through Moses, but God says you cannot silence me. You cannot veil God.

So what does God do? He says if you want to filter, where's that filter going to be? Not on Moses's face, not on the glory of God. The filter will be on your heart, and so God takes the veil that they put on Moses's face, and He puts it on their hearts. That's literally what this passage says, and so He says even now when they read Moses, they don't understand, because the veil has been put on their hearts.

He says nevertheless in Christ, when we come to Christ, that veil is lifted. But here's the problem. What happens when the veil is lifted, and we all know that when we came to Christ, suddenly we understood, suddenly we saw the truth, but now what happens that when as a Christian I go back and I put the veil on the Word again, the same thing happens again.

So I put a veil on the Word of God, I put a filter on the preacher, and God says I'm not going to have my word veiled or filtered. If you want a filter, it's going to be on your heart, and the consequence is you're not going to get it. You're going to see, not understand.

What a terrible place to be in. Now folks, this is not just Old Testament. Paul is specifically writing to the Corinthians, and he is saying this is what happened to Israel, and remember in chapter 1, verse 10, he said, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, he says these things happened as examples to us, lest we fall off to the same example of unbelief.

And so Paul is saying learn from Israel. If God blinded Israel, could he blind the church? Could he blind Christians? Yes he can, because the principle still stands. The principle has never been changed.

The principle is very simple, as we've said, as I reiterate. The principle is God speaks. We reject God's voice.

God causes blindness. That's the process, and it's really pretty simple. Now if we go to, let's go to 2 Timothy chapter 4, and I don't want to spend too much time in this verse, but it's an important verse.

The problem is that we have slightly different translations depending on the theology of the translators, largely. Verse 2, we know so well. Preach the Word, 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 2. Preach the Word, be ready in season, out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. Now this is not Old Testament, this is New Testament, and this is future. So Paul is saying sometime in the future, and it's now.

They will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers. That's where we are today. People are buying from a smorgasbord of preachers, those that please them.

The same way as you go into a restaurant that has a buffet, you pick and choose what you want. And if you don't like to eat carrots, well then you eat something else. And that's what he is describing, a smorgasbord or a buffet of preachers, and people are picking and choosing the bits that they like.

I like this preacher because he makes me feel good in this area. I like that preacher because he makes me feel intelligent. I like this aspect, but we pick and choose what we like, because we have itching ears.

Well I'm not saying you, but modern Christians. Now here's the thing, verse 4, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. Now here's the problem with the translations.

Some translations say that they will turn their ears away from the truth and wander off. The problem with that is that there is a very definite message that he is giving in this verse in the Greek. When it says they will turn their ears away from the truth, that is the active voice.

Now what that means in the Greek simply is that the object is the doer of the action. It's active. In other words, they turn away from the truth.

So the people who hear, they themselves make a decision to turn away from truth. Exactly what we've been saying this morning. Then the next step that happens is that they are turned aside to fables.

That is in the passive voice. Now simply what that means is that they are not the doer of the action. They are simply those who experience what somebody else does.

So the first one is active in the sense they do, they turn away. The second is passive. They do nothing.

In other words, somebody else is doing the turning. That's literally what it means. Somebody else does the turning or something else does the turning.

Who is that that does the turning? Now he doesn't say because he assumes that we remember what he said in Corinthians and what he said in Romans and what Isaiah said and what Asaph said in Psalm 81.

God does the turning. So if you insert that, and I believe quite legitimately because that's the context, let's read that again.

And they will turn their ears away from the truth and God will turn them aside to fables. Now folks, that explains why people believe some of the nonsense they believe today. And you won't believe some of the nonsense that people believe.

I mean the biggest, latest, greatest craze amongst Christians has to do with aliens and with monsters up there that are, you know, I mean it's just unbelievable stuff. It's science fiction in the church. It doesn't even come anywhere near from the Scriptures.

They use all sorts of other books and writings and stuff to come up with these with these teachings. You say, how can people believe this kind of stuff? It's not even remotely near the Bible. Because they rejected the truth, God turned them aside to fables, stories, and that's all it is.

Now folks, this is the bottom line. This is a serious issue. And I believe the warning is there for every one of us.

If I wanted to take the time, and I really didn't have the time this morning, to go through all the examples that I can quote of people that I knew that ended up believing the most unbelievable nonsense, it all comes back to the same principle. Rejecting the voice of God. Because, and folks, it's not rejecting his voice on everything.

It may be just one area. One area that God is speaking to you about and saying, you need to change here, or you need to believe this, or whatever it is. Just one area.

But as we said in the Sunday School two weeks ago, unfortunately we think that we have filters, but our filters are really not very good. Our filters are like my spam filter on my computer. It filters out some of the spam, but it also filters out good stuff.

And so I have to go through there every day and pick out the good stuff that's got thrown away. But unfortunately the veil that we put on our face, or that God puts on our face, we think that we can pick and choose, but unfortunately we lose the truth in the process. Now let me close in Hebrews chapter 3 and 4. Two chapters, but I'm not going to go through those chapters.

I'm just going to once again just bring out the one truth out of here. And I'm not even going to get into the context. You can do that for yourself, because we've run out of time.

But Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 7. Today, not yesterday, not tomorrow, today. There's only one today, and that is now, today. If you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Notice, not today, when you hear his voice. I've heard it preached that way many times. That's not what it says.

It doesn't say when you hear his voice. It says if you will hear his voice. What is the secret to hearing the voice of God? Not hardening my heart.

That's all it is. It's as simple as that. If my heart is soft and open before God, like Samuel, I will hear his voice.

If my heart is dull and heavy of hearing, like Eli, I will not hear his voice. It's all there is to it. Do we want to hear the voice of God? Yes, we all want to hear the voice of God.

Well, then there's one thing we need to do. Don't harden your heart. Don't harden your heart on issues of obedience.

Don't harden your heart on issues of sin. Don't harden your heart on anything that God speaks to you about. Because again, we can't selectively harden our hearts.

When we begin to harden our hearts, how do we do that? By suppressing the truth. God speaks. I can hear, I can feel God speaking to me about whatever it is.

But I don't like it. And so I brace myself. I harden myself.

I steel myself. I tense myself against it. And in bracing myself against it, I brace myself against anything that God has to say.

And I will hear less and less the better I get at suppressing the truth. Because unfortunately, here's the thing, that suppressing the truth is not something that happens in one moment. But it's something we get better at as time goes along.

Because initially, when God begins to speak to us about whatever it is, that's painful. It's very uncomfortable. But guess what? It gets easier as you get along.

So if you find the meetings in this church uncomfortable, well, most people just don't bother to come back again. But you know, if you stay here long enough, it'll get easier. Because we get better at filtering out the Word of God.

We get desensitized to the Word of God. But these are dangerous things to do. This is a dangerous place to be at.

So today, not tomorrow, today, if you will hear His voice, don't harden your heart. And that really is my plea for you this morning. And that's my plea for us as a church.

And while we explain, you know, we can explain what happened to Israel, we can explain what happened to many people that we know by these things, that's not the point of my message this morning. My point is that this needs to be a warning to every one of us, to myself included, that today, if you want to hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Now you think that's important? Yes, it is important.

Because it's repeated again and again in verse 15 of chapter 3 of Hebrews 3. Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. Chapter 4 in verse 7. Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. Father, we have spoken about awesome things this morning.

And Lord, they are fearsome, and Lord, they are disconcerting. And we pray, Lord, that we may not be like Israel, who veiled the glory of God and found a veil upon their own hearts. Lord, that we may not be like Israel, that you said that hearing they will not hear, and seeing they will not understand.

But Lord, help us to hear, help us to understand, help us, Lord, to be teachable, help us to be soft and broken before you. And Lord, that even when the message is inconvenient, Lord, that we will still receive it. Forgive us, Lord, for the times that we do suppress the truth.

But Lord, help us that we may never suppress the truth, but that we may allow the truth to have its work in our lives, changing us evermore into the image of your Son. And Lord, while some of the truth is inconvenient and some of it makes demands upon us, we know, Lord, that it is all for one purpose, and that is that we would be glorified with Jesus, that He may become real in our lives, that we may become more like Him and changed into His own image. And Lord, just as Moses was changed into your image in the sense that he reflected your glory after spending that time in your presence with an open face, an reminds us in Corinthians that we with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.

Help us, Lord, to have open faces in the sense that our hearts and our minds are open to hear you, to receive your Word, and to respond to it. In Jesus' name we pray. We pray, Lord, that you'd go with us, keep us, and protect us.

We pray for those who are not here for various reasons, that you'd be with them and bless them also. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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